



## **SOCIO POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE TELANGANA MOVEMENT**

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### **Introduction**

The term "social movements" was originally introduced by German Sociologist Lorenz von Stein in 1850 in his publication "History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present" (Stein, 1850). These movements encompass informal groups of individuals and/or organizations united by specific political or social causes, whether advocating for, resisting, or seeking to reverse social change. Social change involves the idea of societal progress or socio-cultural development, indicating that society evolves through dialectical or evolutionary processes influenced by various factors such as cultural, religious, economic, political, scientific, or technological forces. Social movements may push for radical or revolutionary transformations, aiming for fundamental changes to existing social and institutional frameworks and relationships. A socio-political movement typically calls for structural reforms within the system and may focus on one or multiple issues central to a social group or community, with the aim of mobilizing citizens and/or government officials to address the concerns central to the movement's agenda. Political movements represent the efforts of a social group to achieve political recognition and benefits within the societal structure.

This study aims to explore the complexities of socio-political mobilization and the factors contributing to its emergence, with a focus on the movement advocating for the creation of a separate Telangana region. It examines how identity, regional deprivation, and the framework of political opportunities interact to shape the dynamics and structure of political mobilization within Telangana. Additionally, it seeks to understand the enduring nature of the Telangana separatist movement and the factors that have garnered significant popular support.

Regionalism has been a significant framework for analyzing socio-economic, cultural, and political dynamics within India. Economically, the focus on regional disparities has raised concerns about potential disintegration and unrest stemming from extreme inequalities. Consequently, efforts by the Planning Commission have prioritized addressing these concerns. Culturally, the diverse and multi-ethnic nature of Indian society has attracted attention from scholars and politicians alike. The rise of regional political parties and their increased importance at the national level since the 1990s has underscored the significance of regional dynamics, reflecting a social reality rooted in geographical disparities (Hintze, 1924).

The demand for separate states not solely based on linguistic lines represents a notable shift in Indian political dynamics. While early movements primarily sought states based on language, which still hold sway in contemporary politics, there has been a transition towards demands for separate states based on alternative criteria. The Telangana movement exemplifies this evolution within Indian politics (Tillin, 2013), representing a part of what she terms the "post-linguistic turn" in regional political movements. Within this framework, the emergence and persistence of regional political movements present an intriguing subject for examining Indian politics through the lens of regional identities. This raises the question: if language no longer serves as the primary marker of identity, what factors contribute to the rise and endurance of regional political movements in India? Exploring this phenomenon through the lens of the movement advocating for the creation of a separate Telangana region presents both an intriguing case and a puzzle, offering insights into the changing political landscape of the nation.



## **Social Movements in India in the Independence Period**

In the post-Second World War era, the dissolution of empires and the emergence of new nation-states were notable outcomes driven by nationalist movements in countries like India, Egypt, Indonesia, and various others. Consequently, the most significant social movements of the past century have largely revolved around class-based struggles or national liberation efforts. Throughout much of the twentieth century, social movements were predominantly categorized as either class-based, such as movements among the working class and peasants, or anti-colonial movements. While anti-colonial movements rallied entire populations in liberation struggles against colonial rule, class-based movements aimed to unite different social classes in advocating for their respective rights. The fight against colonialism has held comparable significance to the struggle against capitalism, given the historical intertwining of capitalism and colonialism, often through imperialistic practices. Therefore, social movements have frequently targeted both forms of exploitation concurrently. Nationalist movements, for instance, have mobilized against foreign rule while also challenging the dominance of foreign capital. The establishment of welfare states in India, providing protections for workers' rights and instituting universal education, healthcare, and social security, can be attributed in part to the political pressure exerted by communist and socialist movements.

## **Forms of Regional Movements**

The restructuring of Indian states in 1956 failed to effectively address regional disparities, leading to ongoing movements for autonomy, independence, or secession within states (Thakur, 2018). These movements, categorized as statehood, autonomy, or secessionist, seek varying degrees of self-governance (Kumar, 2016). While the Indian constitution allows for state creation and autonomy, it explicitly prohibits secession (Mishra, 2019).

The genesis of regional movements lies in interregional conflicts, often rooted in nativist sentiments and cultural pride, and region-state conflicts, where regions perceive state policies as discriminatory and exploitative (Chatterjee, 2017). These movements challenge the dominance of the state and the hegemony of dominant regional groups (Singh, 2006). Sub-regional identities gain prominence when internal colonialism exacerbates inter-regional disparities (Rao, 2014). This phenomenon drives demands for separate states in economically neglected regions like Vidarbha and Telangana (Sinha, 2013).

Unlike nationalism, which seeks a separate state, regionalism advocates for autonomy within the national framework, prioritizing local interests over national ones (Sen, 2018). Regionalism is distinct from localism or sectionalism by its cultural or ethnic basis, often leading to demands for sub-national identities (Pai, 2020).

## **Formation of Telangana state:**

The movement gained momentum in 2007, with student-led protests and TRS's active involvement. In 2009, KCR initiated a hunger strike, prompting the government to announce the creation of Telangana. However, delays and opposition in Andhra and Rayalaseema regions stalled progress. Eventually, a committee headed by Justice Srikrishna was formed to study the issue, and in 2014, the Union Cabinet approved the division of Andhra Pradesh into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, culminating in Telangana's formation on June 2, 2014.

Political responses to statehood movements are influenced by expediency and context, with parties supporting or opposing demands based on electoral considerations. The Telangana movement exemplifies the complex dynamics of state formation, highlighting the significance of territorial and



ethno linguistic identities, development, and governance in shaping India's political landscape. The demand for separate states not solely based on linguistic lines represents a notable shift in Indian political dynamics. While early movements primarily sought states based on language, which still hold sway in contemporary politics, there has been a transition towards demands for separate states based on alternative criteria. The Telangana movement exemplifies this evolution within Indian politics (Tillin, 2013), representing a part of what she terms the "post-linguistic turn" in regional political movements. Within this framework, the emergence and persistence of regional political movements present an intriguing subject for examining Indian politics through the lens of regional identities. This raises the question: if language no longer serves as the primary marker of identity, what factors contribute to the rise and endurance of regional political movements in India? Exploring this phenomenon through the lens of the movement advocating for the creation of a separate Telangana region presents both an intriguing case and a puzzle, offering insights into the changing political landscape of the nation.

In post-colonial societies across the developing world, regional disparities and calls for separate statehood have emerged due to policies aimed at promoting social, economic, and political modernization. These policies intended to guide these nations towards establishing structures resembling those of the Anglo-American world to foster overall development and prosperity. However, in pursuing this objective, the cultural and social dimensions of diversity were often overlooked, leading to feelings of frustration and disparity among various groups and regions, ultimately fueling demands for separate statehood or territorial administrative units to assert self-governance.

### **Findings of the study**

1. From its initial phases of cultural deprivation and humiliation to the eventual assertion of cultural and political autonomy, the Telangana movement demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of grassroots movements in responding to changing socio-economic and political contexts.
2. Telangana movement highlights the role of non-party organizations and diverse societal groups, including women, caste, and artisan groups, in shaping the trajectory and outcomes of the movement.
3. Through distinct phases of resistance and activism, spanning from cultural deprivation to political assertion, the movement galvanized Telangana's populace towards the realization of their long-standing aspiration for statehood.
4. The Cultural Renaissance in Telangana served as a powerful catalyst, revitalizing cultural pride and laying the foundation for political mobilization.
5. Cultural performances and storytelling emerged as potent tools, fostering solidarity and public engagement, enriching the movement's tapestry. In essence, the chapter vividly illustrates the transformative potential of grassroots activism and collective empowerment in driving societal and political change.
6. The movement thrived on the active engagement of various groups, including women, caste associations, artisan groups, and native media. Their collective efforts fortified the movement, lending strength and resilience to its cause.
7. Women emerged as pivotal change agents, exhibiting exceptional leadership and determination, pivotal in propelling the movement forward.
8. Overcoming traditional barriers, caste associations, and artisan groups coalesced, fostering unity behind the common objective of statehood, amplifying the Telangana people's collective voice.



9. The influence of native media also wielded significant influence, shaping public discourse and mobilizing support through cultural expressions like Dhoom-Dham events, reflecting the movement's vibrant essence.
10. The enduring legacy of the Telangana movement stands as a testament to the resilience, determination, and unity of its people, serving as an enduring beacon inspiring future generations in their pursuit of justice and democratic ideals.

## Conclusion

The current phase of the movement, led by civil society groups, commenced in 1989 and gained momentum from 1996 onwards. Joint Action Committees (JACs) were established starting in 2006. These JACs served as umbrella organizations dedicated to advocating for the attainment of statehood for Telangana. They emerged in response to the distinct Telangana movement and encompassed various sectoral organizations, including the Employees JAC, Student JAC, Political JAC, Lawyers JAC, Women JAC, and Doctors JAC, among others. JACs were also established at multiple regional levels, including the state, district, mandal, and village levels. These groups played a pivotal role in the Telangana agitation and were instrumental in achieving the formation of Telangana State. Throughout the movement, the people of the Telangana region employed a range of peaceful tactics, including street protests, non-cooperation, hunger strikes, and received support from local media. The success of the Telangana movement can be attributed to its issue-oriented approach, which transformed it into a people-driven movement.

Therefore, three major themes emerge that aid in understanding the Telangana movement: identity, culture, and the decentralized nature of the movement with the emergence of civil society. In this regard, JACs played a pivotal role in transforming the agitation into a mass movement, intensifying its momentum, and contributing to cultural revivalism in Telangana. The Telangana culture was rejuvenated by the movement, breathing new life into a culture that had been marginalized and suppressed under Andhra domination. In this context, the overarching objective of the present study is to comprehend the contribution of the JACs in the final phase of the movement toward achieving Telangana State.

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