

**AGENDA SETTING ROLE OF THE PRESS ON TELANGANA ISSUE***A Content Analysis of two English Dailies***Dr. G. K. Sahu, Asstt. Prof., Dept. of Mass Communication, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh****Dr. A. Apparao, Senior Production Associate, ETV News, Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad****Abstract**

*The demand for a separate Telengana state is one of the most contentious as well as politically volatile issues the nation is facing ever since Independence. The people belonging to the region have been agitating from time to time and political leaders under different banner keeping the issue burning and gaining political mileage. However, the people of the region have been subjected to suffering because of these developments. They are neither getting a separate state nor getting their due share within the undivided state. The plight of the people of Telengana goes back to pre-Independence days. Under the Nizam's rule majority of the people were oppressed a lot. Keeping in view of the controversy and importance of the issue, the authors made an attempt to assess the news media's agenda, if any, on the contentious Telangana issue. For the purpose of the study two English dailies: the Deccan Chronicle and the Times of India were purposively chosen. The former is regional English daily largely confined to Andhra Pradesh and the latter is the largest circulated English daily in the country. The contents of the newspapers under study were quantitatively measured and then subjected to framing analysis in order to assess their agenda on the issue.*

**Key Words:** Agenda Setting, Framing Analysis, Telengana Issue, News Media, Sakala Janula Samme.

**Introduction**

After Independence, the most important task in the Indian republic was to form the borders of different states. Among the many proposals one of the important proposals was to reorganize the state on the basis of regional languages. The main aim of this was, to make the administration easier and would help replace the caste and religion-based identities with less controversial linguistic identities. In 1948, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar submitted a Memorandum to the Dar Commission for the formation of Maharashtra state with Bombay as its capital for Marathi speaking people. But it was opposed by KM Munshi, a Gujarati leader. The demand for creation of a Telugu-majority state in the parts of the Madras State had started by Potti Sreeramulu during 1952. As a result the Telugu-majority Andhra State was formed in 1953. This sparked off agitations all over the country, with linguistic groups demanding separate statehoods. Keeping in view of the rising demand of separate state and emotions of the people on these lines, the Central Government constituted the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) in 1953 to recommend the reorganization of state boundaries along the linguistic lines. On the basis of the SRC recommendation the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 was passed. But after demarcation of states on linguistic basis few areas of the states felt they have been neglected and deprived of the facilities and benefits which had been committed at the time of demarcation. This disappointment among the neglected area with time become more profound and it had given birth to a demand for the creation of new states and this collective anger became louder and violent.

At present those areas are demanding for the formation of separate new states are, Bodoland in Assam, Gorkhaland in West Bengal, Purvanchal and Harit Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh, Kosal in Odisha, Mithila in Bihar, Tulu Nadu a prosperous region between Karnataka and Kerala. Vindhya Pradesh a region in Madhya Pradesh and Telangana in Andhra Pradesh. Some of these areas in recent past became regular headline in the media for their demand. Among others, the separate telangana state issue becomes the central topic of

discussion. And the telangana area presently the hot bed for political and violent activities. In recent times every day in all the electronic as well as print media have covered with at least two to three stories on separate telangana statehood demand. To know how much importance given to this issue by the news media, especially the mainstream newspapers of our country, the authors have decided to carry out a study by selecting two prominent English newspapers of the region.

### **Telangana Movement: Historical Backdrop**

Telangana is a region in the state of Andhra Pradesh, bordering with the states of Maharashtra on the north and north-west, Karnataka on the west, Chattisgarh on the north-east, Odisha and Coastal Andhra region on the east and Rayalaseema region on the south. The Telangana region has an area of 114,840 square kilometers (44,340 sq miles), and a population of 35,286,757 (2011 census) which is 41.6% of population of the state of Andhra Pradesh. It has 10 districts, Adilabad, Hyderabad, Khammam, Karimnagar, Mahbubnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Rangareddy and Warangal. The Krishna and Godavari rivers flow through the region from west to east. References about the region and its tribes can be found in the Mahabharat. The epic mentions the region as the Telinga kingdom and its inhabitants as Telavana tribes, who fought on the Pandava side in the great war of Mahabharata. Later the region had been ruled by many great dynasties like Sathavahanas, Chalukyas, Kakatiyas, Mughals and the Qutubshahis. After the disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the early 18th century, the Asafjahi dynasty established a separate state known as Hyderabad. During the British rule the Asafjahis entered into a treaty of subsidiary alliance with the British Empire, and was the largest and most populous princely state in India. Telangana was never under direct British rule, unlike the Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh, which were part of British India's Madras presidency.

After Independence, the Nizam of Hyderabad did not want to merge with Indian Union but after negotiations, he finally entered into a "Stand Still Agreement" on November 29, 1947, with India for one year to maintain status quo. However, in the meantime the Nizam tried to increase his defense capabilities and also sent a delegation to the United Nations to refer the Hyderabad case to the Security Council. Witnessing all these developments the Government of India taken a strong decision and the Hyderabad State was annexed on 17 September 1948, in an operation by the Indian Army called Operation Polo. After annexation Hyderabad was placed under the Military Governor till the end of 1949. In January 1950, M. K. Vellodi, a Senior Civil Servant was made the Chief Minister of the State and the Nizam was designated "Raj Pramukh". After the 1952 General Elections, the first popular ministry headed by B. Rama Krishna Rao took charge of the State. During this period the people of the region organized protests to send bureaucrats back to Madras. Meanwhile, the people in the Telugu-speaking areas of Andhra region had undertaken protests under the leadership of Potti Sri Ramulu to create a separate Andhra State with Kurnool as its capital.

One of the important point to be noted here that the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was not in favour of an immediate merger of Telangana region with Andhra state, despite their common language. Paragraph 382 of the States Reorganisation Commission Report (SRC) noted: "opinion in Andhra is overwhelmingly in favour of the larger unit; public opinion in Telangana has still to crystallize itself. Important leaders of public opinion in Andhra themselves seem to appreciate that the unification of Telangana with Andhra, though desirable, should be based on a voluntary and willing association of the people and that it is primarily for the people of Telangana to take a decision about their future". The commission proposed that the Telangana region be constituted as a separate state with a provision for unification with Andhra state, after the 1961 general elections, if a resolution could be passed in the

Telangana state assembly with a two-third majority. In addition, the Prime Minister of the time, Jawaharlal Nehru, also was not in favour of merging Telangana with the Andhra state. He ridiculed the demand for Visalandhra as an idea bearing a “tint of expansionist imperialism” (Indian Express, October 17, 1953). Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, the then Chief Minister of Hyderabad State was also not in favour of the merger as he felt that the majority of the people in the region were against it. However, he supported the Congress party's central leadership decision to merge Telangana and Andhra. Andhra state assembly passed a resolution on 25 November 1955 to provide safeguards to Telangana. According to the resolution, "Assembly would further like to assure the people in Telangana that the development of that area would be deemed to be special charge, and that certain priorities and special protection will be given for the improvement of that area, such as reservation in services and educational institutions on the basis of population and irrigation development." Telangana leaders did not believe the safeguards would work. With lobbying from Andhra Congress leaders and with pressure from the Central leadership of Congress party, an agreement was reached between Telangana leaders and Andhra leaders on 20 February 1956 to merge Telangana and Andhra with promises to safeguard Telangana's interests, called the Gentlemen's Agreement.

After formation of Andhra Pradesh, the Mulki Rules, and Gentlemen's Agreements were not honoured, and by 1968, more than 25,000 from Andhra region, have occupied jobs in Telangana region, and there was a feeling of betrayal among the students and employees of the region for not implementing the Gentlemen's Agreements while forming Andhra Pradesh. Especially, employees felt that in spite of having good qualifications, and competence, they were not getting jobs in their region, whereas non-locals were occupying those positions, because of the nepotism of the senior officers who hail from non-Telangana region. The Government jobs were filled with people hailing from Andhra region ignoring Mulki Rules & Gentlemen's Agreement and promotions were not given based on Seniority and to the Locals, but were filled with non-locals being transferred from Andhra Region. By this time, the surplus funds collected in the form of taxes etc., to the state exchequer from Telangana region were diverted to Andhra region and natural resources like coal and water were diverted to develop Andhra region. This led to a historical agitation which is called as “Jai Telengana Movement” in 1968-69. Though the movement was started in Osmania University, very soon it was spread all over the region, Government employees and opposition members of the state legislative assembly swiftly threatened “direct action” in support of the students by observing pen-down strike. There were protests all over the region, people from all walks of life including employees, teachers, students, intellectuals, women, and general public joined the movement. Even, the political leaders like Sri Konda Laxman Bapuji, the then Minister resigned and joined the movement.

Six months after the agitation Chenna Reddy emerged as a dominant leader and became the President of Telangana Praja Samiti. He met the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi along with Brahmananda Reddy, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on January 1, 1971. During the discussion Indira Gandhi made the following conditions: First, the Telenga Praja Samiti should not contest the general elections. Second, she asked to give five years to implement her ten point formula in the region. Third, after five years, if two-thirds of the legislators of the Telengana region express their support for separation, the center would agree to form a separate Telangana State. However, TPS members overwhelmingly rejected Indira Gandhi's offer and contested in the general election and won 10 out of the 14 Parliament seats it contested in the mid-term elections. However, the Congress Party won the mid-term elections with a huge majority and got 352 seats. Because of this Indira Gandhi did not need the support of the 10 TPS MPs in the Parliament. The Telengana politicians of that time made the political calculations that in the upcoming state assembly elections, even if Chenna Reddy won 70% or more of the seats in the Telangana region, Congress was almost certain to win

by a landslide in the Kosta and Rayalaseema regions. If that happened, TPS would be confined to opposition benches in the state assembly and could not become a formidable force with its minuscule 10 seats in the Parliament. As a result, Chenna Reddy and his followers dissolved the separate Telangana Movement on a mere “hope” that Indira Gandhi later would concede to their demands. Meanwhile by the end of September 1971, Congress legislators elected education minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, who hailed from the Telangana region, as their leader and made him the Chief Minister of the state. The TPS member Achyut Reddy was inducted into the 14-member cabinet of P. V. Narasimha Rao government. Thus another episode of the Telangana movement which had taken hundreds of lives, caused massive collateral damage to public assets, and pushed the state economically backward by many years came to an end for the time being.

The separate Telangana issue again gained momentum during 1990s. This time the front runner was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which wanted to gain political mileage by promising a separate Telangana State in the general election. A new political front, Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), led by Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), was formed in 2001 with the single-point agenda of creating a separate Telangana State with Hyderabad as its capital. With these new developments the Congress party made an electoral alliance with TRC and promised a separate Telangana State during the 2004 Assembly and Parliament elections. The Congress came to power in the state and formed a coalition government at the centre. TRS joined the coalition government in 2004 and was successful in making a separate Telangana State a part of the Common Minimum Programme of the coalition government. The Congress did not keep its promise and because of this on September 2006, TRS withdrew its support from the Congress-led coalition government. In July 2008, after resigning from the TDP, Devender Goud and E. Peddi Reddy formed a new party called Nava Telangana Praja Party (NTPP) with the formation of a separate Telangana State as its main objective. On this backdrop, the TDP made extensive deliberations within the party on the issue and announced its support for the creation of separate Telangana State on 9 October 2008. Another new political formation emerged during this period was the Praja Rajyam Party (PRP), founded by Telugu film actor Chiranjeevi, also supported Telangana statehood. Meanwhile, the Nava Telangana Praja Party announced its merger with Praja Rajyam Party.

Perhaps in order to bring the Telengana Movement to the centre stage and to force the congress party to introduce the Telengana Bill in the Parliament TRS President, K. Chandra Sekhar Rao started a fast-unto-death on 29 November 2009. Later he was arrested by the government. The people belonging to all walks of life in the region including the students, teachers, and employees of different organisations actively participated in the movement. Most of the shops and working places were shut down in the Telangana region on 6 and 7 December 2009. The opposition parties in the state organised an all-party meet on 7 December and made a resolution in support of the creation of a separate Telengana State. On 9 December, Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram made an announcement that the Central government would start the process of forming a separate Telangana State. After this announcement KCR ended his 11-day fast. The public opinion in the state was divided on two lines of thinking: pro and against the formation of a new state. The people belonging to the Telengana region celebrated the central government’s decision whereas the people belonging to the Coastal and Rayalaseema regions protested against it. Keeping in view of the protests in the coastal region, the Central Government on 23rd December announced that no action on Telangana would be taken until a consensus was reached by all parties. Rallies, hunger strikes and suicides continued throughout Telangana to protest against the delay in the formation of a new State.

On 3rd February 2010, the central government appointed a five-member Sri Krishna committee to examine the issue and asked to submit its report by 31st December. The committee submitted its report to the Ministry of Home Affairs within stipulated time and provided the following six options for the solution of the issue:

1. Maintaining Status Quo - Keeping the Andhra Pradesh State as it is with no change in the Telangana, Seemandhra and coastal regions.
2. Bifurcating the state of Andhra Pradesh into Seemandhra and Telengana regions with both of them developing their own capitals in due course of time. Hyderabad to be converted to a Union Territory - This proposal was similar to the Punjab-Haryana-Chandigarh model.
3. Dividing Andhra Pradesh into two states - One of Rayala-Telangana with Hyderabad as its capital and second one of the Coastal Andhra Pradesh
4. Dividing Andhra Pradesh into Seemandhra and Telangana with enlarged Hyderabad Metropolis as a separate Union Territory that will be linked geographically to district Guntur in coastal Andhra via Nalgonda district in the southeast and via Mahboobnagar district in the south to Kurnool district in Rayalaseema
5. Bifurcation of the State into Telangana and Seemandhra as per existing boundaries with Hyderabad as the capital of Telangana and Seemandhra to have a new capital. This was the second most preferred option according to the report.
6. Keeping the State united and providing for creation of a statutorily empowered Telangana Regional Council for socio-economic development and of Telangana region. This was the most preferred option.

Majority of the leaders belonging to the Telangana region had rejected the recommendations of the Sri Krishna Committee report. However, the proponents of the United State Movement, including Samaikhya Andhra JAC and the Praja Rajyam Party, welcomed the report. Protests in Telangana were continued in the form of strikes, hunger strikes, suicides, giving petitions and roses to public officials, and the boycotting of public events.

### **Sakala Janula Samme (All people's strike)**

In order to mobilize people in support of its demand for a separate Telengana State TRS organized a public meeting in Karimnagar on 12th September 2011. Over a million people belonging to all walks of life including leaders belonging to different political formations like TJAC, BJP and New Democracy Party participated in it. The TRS declared its Sakala Janula Samme means All People's Strike from 13th September, 2011. People belonging to the entire Telengana region overwhelmingly participated in the strike. Government employees throughout Telangana stayed out of work, lawyers boycotted courts and 60,000 coal miners of Singareni Collieries (SCCL Ltd.) also joined the strike. Cinema halls in the region closed down for two days at the call given by Telangana Film Chamber. On 16th September, government teachers joined the strike and Private school managements declared one day holiday in support of the strike. The employees of State Road Transport Corporation and State Electricity Board joined the strike on 19th September. On a call given by JAC, national highways and railway lines blocked and autos stopped commuting passengers on 24th and 25th September causing disruption to transport services. The Hyderabad city was affected with a bandh called by the JAC on 30<sup>th</sup> September. On 2nd October, the agitating leaders including KCR met the Prime minister Manmohan Sugh to expedite their demand on Telengana State. The meeting ended without any positive results. Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N Kiran Kumar Reddy issued a warning against the agitators and said that his government will initiate stern action against those who are



trying to create law and order problem or cause any inconvenience to the public property. Eight Congress MPs from Telangana resigned in July demanding a separate state of Telangana insisted the speaker to accept their resignations on 12th October.

The Coal miners called off their strike on 17<sup>th</sup> October. The government employees unions called off their strike on 24<sup>th</sup> October. In the meantime the congress has decided to speed up the deliberations to face the crisis. The Congress party's AP state in-charge Ghulam Nabi Azad, submitted an internal report to Congress President Sonia Gandhi after having the consultation with key leaders of Telangana, Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra regions for over two months. PM Manmohan Singh indicated that resolving the Telangana statehood issue might “take some time.” History has enough evidence in its pages, that whenever the issue of bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh rose, it always ended with loss of innocent lives and damage to the public property. The issue of bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh has been considered as one of the most sensitive issue in the political history of independent India. The strike ended with an assurance from the then Home Minister P. Chidambaram and appointment of a committee to review the possibility of the state bifurcation. One of the important consequences of this agitation was that it revived again the old and long existing emotions and feelings in favour of a separate Telangana State. The 42 day long strike called as Sakala Janalu Samme undertaken in a nonviolent and peaceful manner had completely paralyzed life.

### **Theoretical Framework**

It is not possible for news media to cover each and every event or issue because of lack of time and organizational constraints. They can provide information about a limited number of events and issues. For this journalists must choose, process and filter the news, the news media must focus attention on a few key priorities—those that are deemed newsworthy. Over a period of time the issues for which news media given prominence will become issues of importance for the public. The agenda setting theory developed by McCombs and Shaw is based on this fundamental principle Though McCombs and Shaw introduced the agenda-setting theory through their Chapel Hill, North Carolina study in 1972, the genesis of the idea behind this theory goes back to Walter Lippmann's 1922 book, *Public Opinion*. According to Lippmann the thought process of the public and the pictures they are drawing in their heads about the outside world largely influenced by the mass media. It is not possible for the general public to have a firsthand experience about world outside there, here mass media come to their rescue and become a primary source of information. Lippmann had claimed that the media acts as a mediator between people and the outside. Benard Cohen further expanded the idea of Lippmann. According to him the role of the press not necessarily restricted to dissemination information. As he noted: “The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about” (Cohen, 1963, 13). The agenda-setting function of mass media basically based on this idea of Cohen.

McCombs and Shaw further expanded Cohen's theory by presenting their more thorough study. In 1968 they undertook a study on the media coverage on presidential campaign and found that the main effect of the news media was to set an agenda. In fact, mass media sets the order of importance of current issues as well as sets the terms of reference for the debate on those issues.

Our perception and understanding about the world to a large extent determined by the mass media. As a result the issues to which media projects as important will become issues of importance for the people. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind. The news media not only

disseminates factual information to audiences about different issues but also educates them about how much importance to attach to a specific issue in accordance with the importance given to it by the news media. News media provide a host of cues about the salience of the topics in the daily news – lead story on page one, other front page display, large headlines, etc. The agenda setting influence of the news media not necessarily restricted to grabbing the audience attention towards a specific issue, it also develops public understanding and perspective on a specific direction.

The media agenda plays an influential role in determining the public agenda. However, Information and cues about object and attribute salience provided by the news media are far from the only determinants of the public agenda. In a democracy, people at large have sufficient wisdom to determine the course of their nation, their state, and their local communities. Hence, the agenda-setting function of the mass media implies a potentially massive influence whose full dimensions and consequences have yet to be investigated and appreciated (Shaw, 1979:101). The salience of objects in the mass media is linked to the formation of opinions by the audience. With the increasing salience of atrocities against women in the news media, for example, more people move away from a neutral position and form an opinion about these atrocities. At the same time media sets its agenda only when its audiences perceive their news stories as relevant.

### **Agenda Setting Role of Newspapers: A Comparative Study**

For the purpose of the study, content analysis method has been employed to track down the coverage of Telangana issue in two major English dailies of the state. The Deccan Chronicle and the Times of India have been purposively chosen because of their wide circulation, readership, and reputation among the diverse group of people in the region. The authors analysed the contents of the selected newspapers to present their trends of coverage on the Telangana issue. To assess the coverage on Telangana issue, the entire period of Sakal Jannalu Samme (that is, from 13th September 2011 to 24th October 2011) were taken into consideration. The contents related to Telangana agitation have been organised into different categories in order to make the study more focused. For the purpose of the present study, various kind of report had been published in different formats have been classified into the following categories: stories got published, stories published in the front page, number of photos published, front page photographs, number of letters to editor published, number of editorials and features stories published, number of stories published in box, number of impact and side stories published and number of cartoons published.

***Table-1: Coverage of Stories related to Telangana Issue***

Newspaper	No. of Stories	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	311	11912003
The Deccan Chronicle	301	8312628

The table above shows that the Times of India published more number of stories and given more space to the ongoing developments on Telangana than that of the Deccan Chronicle. The Times of India published 311 stories with 11912003 square centimeters of space during the entire period whereas the Deccan Chronicle published 301 stories with 8312628 square centimeters of space in the same period. During the period of Sakala Jannalu Samme, both of the newspapers were given equal importance to the day to day events like any other issue. In the initial stage of strike the number of stories covered very less and the stories were presented mostly in single column. But afterwards when the strike gained momentum both of the newspapers increased their attention towards the issue and given adequate coverage. Again towards the end of the strike there was again decrease in numbers of stories and even on the last day of the strike there were only two to three stories published. The stories related to the issue were placed mostly in the front and regional pages of the newspapers under the study. The stories were covered by the newspapers' own

reporters on the field. Most of the stories about the telangana issue were about the events unfolded during the period. In these stories, the proper background of this issue was not provided by either of the newspapers under study. Mostly the stories were based on the statements of leaders of different parties. The headlines of these stories were very simple and clear, such as, “Government service come to a halt as T employees begin stir”, “Azad urges govt staff to call off T strike”, “Leaders to visit Delhi for the last time”, “RTC, rail roko concern for G1 candidates”, and so on. Some of the headlines constituted of statements of the agitating leaders such as “we won’t rest until T goal is achieved: KCR, “T – solution after 3 months, says CM”, “NMU calls off strike: KCR says Govt engineering it”, and so on.

After careful analysis of the news reports published by both of the newspapers under study it can be presumed that the newspapers given unbiased coverage on the events that were unfolded during the entire study period. The news stories and their headlines seem to be written in matter of fact manner without necessary emphasis and adequate background about the issue. In a democratic set up the role of mass media not necessarily restricted to providing information about the events but also raising issues and increasing public consciousness about them. In developing country like India the real role of mass media lies in educating people about the problems confronting the nation and generating public opinion about the real issues. It is in this regard the mass media in our country not fulfilled its responsibility adequately. Over a period of time mass media seems to be detached from the ground realities of the country with its overemphasis on objectivity. For the sake of maintaining objectivity it often neglects to provide the context. The news reports of both of the newspapers under study seems to be neglected this important dimension in covering the burning issue like Telengana.

**Table-2: Coverage of Stories related to Telangana Issue in the Front Page**

Newspaper	No. of Stories	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	40	291699.25
The Deccan Chronicle	54	303998

The placement of a story in a specific page determines the importance attached to the issue/development/event by the newspaper. Newspapers invariably place the most important stories in their front page. The space in the front page considered as precious by all newspapers. Though the Times of India in total has covered more number stories than that of the Deccan Chronicle (see Table-1), but it has lagged behind the Deccan Chronicle in terms of front page coverage on the issue. During the study period, the Deccan Chronicle covered 54 stories with 303998 square centimeters of space in its front page, whereas the Times of India covered 40 stories and allocated 291699 square centimeters of space. This indicates the importance attached to the Telengana issue by the Deccan Chronicle in its agenda. Among stories that were occupied space in the front page, most of them were based on the different activities in Delhi and at the State capital. For example, most of the headlines of the front page stories were like “T – gets new democracy push”, “Give T, advani tells Sonia, PM”, “Azad invites CM, Botsa for T-talk ' and “Companies to ask Delhi for over T row”.

**Table-3: Coverage of photographs related to Telangana Issue**

Newspaper	No. of photos	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	90	491625
The Deccan Chronicle	53	232934

During the period of Sakala Janula Samme the numbers of photographs published by both the newspapers were varying a lot. The numbers of photographs published in the Times of India were far ahead of the Deccan Chronicle. The Times of India published as many as 90 photographs which occupied 491625 sq.cms of space, whereas the Deccan Chronicle published only 53 of them with an allocation of 232934 sq.



centimeters of space. The photographs published by both the newspapers were based on day to day events. The photographs mostly related to the problems faced by the people because of the strike like the sufferings of the commuters because of bus strike or the sanitation problem caused to the public because of the strike or the photographs on highways blockage by the demonstrators. At the same time some of the photographs also depicted conflict between the police and the demonstrators. There was also a photograph of a person who is threatening to commit suicide by jumping from a tower was published.

**Table-4: Coverage of Photographs related to Telangana Issue on the Front Page**

Newspaper	No. of photos	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	15	8154
The Deccan Chronicle	8	4200

Though the Times of India published less number of stories in its front page than that of the Deccan Chronicle, but it has published more number of photographs and allocated more space for this than the Deccan Chronicle. During the study period the Times of India published 15 photographs with an allocated space of 8154 sq. centimeters, whereas, the Deccan Chronicle published only 8 photographs with a space of 4200 sq. centimeters. Most of the photographs were related to problems faced by the people in performing their day to daily routine because of the strike. This indicates the real agenda of the newspapers under study.

**Table-5: Coverage of Letters to the Editor on Telengana**

Newspaper	No. of letters	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	0	0
The Deccan Chronicle	38	13754

In the letters to the editor section, the Deccan Chronicle published 38 letters with an area 13754 sq.cms. It is very disheartening to note that not a single letter published in The Times of India during the entire period of strike. The letters published in the Deccan Chronicle mostly related to the grievances of the general public and their reaction toward the strike. For example, some of them were like “strike should be stopped immediately as the public ultimately has to pay the price for it and government employees abide with the government only”, “The garbage in the posh localities have been cleaned but in middle class and poor localities have not cleaned, appeal to the agitators not to put the common men on hardship”. “in this telangana tussle common people are at the receiving end and there should be a quick solution”, “Due to the unrest in the state the education sector have paralysed, government must resolve the issue soon”, etc. These are some letters those were published in the letters to editor section of editorial page. The newspapers presented only the views and grievances of the general public those who have suffered during the agitation. This indicates that the newspaper is not sympathetic towards the agitators. Not a single letter was published from the perspective of agitators. The newspaper agenda seems not to be in favour of a separate Telanga state.

**Table-6: Coverage of Editorials/ Articles on Telengana**

Newspaper	No. of editorials/articles	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	2	1968
The Deccan Chronicle	0	

The editorial/feature section of both of the newspaper shows the apathy of both of the newspapers towards the Telengana issue. During the entire study period not a single editorial was published by both of the newspapers under study. During this period the entire telangana region of Andhra Pradesh was burning. The newspapers didn't consider the seriousness of the situation. Perhaps the Telengana issue was not in their agenda. The times of India published two articles about the Telengana issue devoting 1968 square centimeters of space. The article “What Telangana say about our democracy” by Mr. Manoj Mitta discussed in detail about how the national leaders from Jawaharlal Nehru to the present generation politicians like the

late Congress Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy and TRS leader K Chandrasekhara Rao conducting political business with the emotions and sentiments of the people. Another story provides a historical sketch about the role played by female rulers of the Telangana region who defied the British Empire during colonial rule.

**Table-7: Coverage of Inbox Stories**

Newspaper	No. of stories	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	19	17712
The Deccan Chronicle	32	55920

The Table above reveals that the Deccan Chronicle had published more number of stories in boxed columns than that of the Times of India. The Times of India published 19 stories by allocating 17712 sq.cms of space and the Deccan Chronicle published 32 stories and with 55920 sq. centimeters. In the most of boxed columns, the newspapers had given priority to the important stories of the day, such as, important decisions or statements of the TJAC or government or the political party or student union. Some of the headlines of the boxed stories are “KCR to fast unto death, strike will continue : TJAC”, “Full court will meet on advocate strike” “ T-strike hits CBSE, ICSE, exam plan”, “ Komiti Reddy Resignation accepted” and so on. Majority of the boxed stories published in the front page of both of the newspapers.

**Table-8: Coverage of Side and Impact Stories**

Newspaper	No. of stories	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	38	265,578,75
The Deccan Chronicle	23	55454

Most importantly both of these newspapers had given importance to the impact and effect stories of the strike. Sometimes there were few stories in which it had been narrated that how the general public, business community and government feeling the heat because of the strike and how their day to day activities and their livelihood had been affected by the strike. For example a story with headline “Daily wage workers buckle under same impact” in this story it had been narrated that because of the strike how daily wage worker facing problems to get work and how lack of wage led them to live in empty stomach. Another headline was “farmers bear the brunt of T strike” this story was about how strike was affecting the supply of electricity. The shortage of electricity led to damage of crops and owing to this the farmers were under deep pressure to pay back the loan that they had been taken from different banks. There were some human interest stories also published in both newspapers. For example, the story “Gods feel the T strike pinch too” the story was about the strike affecting the attendance of devotees to different religious places and the temples look like desert places even during the peak hour. Another human interest story was “NRI grooms caught in T tangle”. These kind of the side and impact stories occupied considerable space in both of the newspapers. There were also some attention grabbing and humorous headlines published by both of the newspapers during this period. For example, the headlines “Gold loses its glitter, city takes to diamond”, “T agitation affects caste census”, “faltering T stand ruining us: traders”, “telangana businessmen hit tax blues” etc. are self explanatory on how these newspapers trivializing a serious issue like Telangana. Overall the Times of India published 38 stories by allocating a space of 265578 square centimeters. The Deccan Chronicle published 23 stories and the space allocated was 55454 square centimeters.

**Table-9: Coverage of Cartoons on Telangana Issue**

Newspaper	No. of stories	Area covered(sq.cms)
The Times of India	4	156
The Deccan Chronicle	0	0

The Times of India published four cartoons with an allocated space of 156 square centimeters, whereas, the Deccan Chronicle published none. The cartoons were about the negative implications of the strike on people. All of the four cartoons published in The Times of India were placed within the news story to grab

the reader's attention. These cartoons meant for further illustration of the stories at the level of abstraction. For example, news story with a headline “ Farmers bear the brunt of T strike” narrates the plight of the farmers because of the disruption in the electricity supply with an accompanied cartoon showing a farmer and thunderbolt, which is falling on his head.

### Conclusion

The newspapers under study covered the *Sakala Janula Samme* with utmost caution so that it will not hurt the sentiment of the dominant group in the state. Most of the stories covered by both of the newspapers were about the events or statements of the leaders. Instead of taking the side of the truth, the newspapers adopted a cautious approach not hurting the sentiment of different groups of people in the state. The news stories and their headlines seem to be written in matter of fact manner without necessary emphasis and adequate background about the issue. In a democratic set up the role of news media not necessarily restricted to providing information about the events but also raising issues and increasing public consciousness about them. In a developing country like India the real role of mass media lies in educating people about the problems confronting the nation and generating public opinion about the real issues. It is in this regard the mass media in our country not fulfilled its responsibility adequately. Over a period of time mass media seems to be detached from the ground realities of the country with its overemphasis on objectivity. For the sake of maintaining objectivity it often neglects to provide the context.

The agenda of a news media: the importance it gives to a specific issue and its opinion about the issue generally reflected in its editorial page coverage. The editorial page also plays a very important role in shaping public opinion on a controversial issue. The editorial page generally constituted of editorials reflects the opinion of the paper, articles reflects the opinion of the independent authors, and letters to the editor that reflects the opinion as well as grievances of the readers. Not a single editorial was published by both of the newspapers during this period. The newspapers didn't consider the seriousness of the situation. Perhaps the Telengana issue was not in their agenda. This reflects how the news media detaching itself from the ground realities and losing its credibility over the years.

It is also very disheartening to note that not a single letter published in The Times of India during the entire period of strike. This means either the newspaper not included any letter related to the agitation or the readers of the newspaper did not considered the issue as important. In either case it is a bad reflection of the paper. The Deccan Chronicle published adequate letters related to the agitation. However, most of the letters published in the Deccan Chronicle related to the grievances of the general public and their reaction toward the strike. This indicates that the newspaper is not sympathetic towards the agitators. Not a single letter was published from the perspective of agitators. The newspaper agenda seems not to be in favour of a separate Telangana state. Another important dimension of the coverage of Telengana issue in these newspapers is that most of the stories published in both of the newspapers were confined within regional and front pages.

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