

Research Article

Telangana Movement and Growth of Iconography (Time-biased Media)

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Abstract

Harold Innis divided the media into time-biased and space-biased in his book *The Bias of Communication*, 1951. The two play a vital role in society concerning information dissemination, while time and space have unique qualities in informing, inspiring and shaping societies, human beings have used the time and space media selectively to propagate their agenda. Iconography is vital in furthering ideas across generations in time and space, making legends true and inspiring people. In the Telangana movement, Iconography played an important role and it is evident that iconography became the focal point in the six decades of Telangana people's struggle. The question arises, whether the statues and monuments or those replaced with others hold the same significance all the time or if they tend to lose the sheen once the goal is achieved. Many such statues and monuments that are erected post-independence are by and large neglected by leaders and the general public. The significance and relevance once ascribed to these statues and monuments slowly faded away, and the cause that was once the driving force no longer binds the people after the success.

Keywords

Iconography, Telangana, Time Biased, Space Biased, Telugu Talli, Telangana Talli

1. Introduction

Harold Innis divided the media into time-biased and space-biased in his book *The Bias of Communication*, 1951. The two play a vital role in society concerning information dissemination, while time and space have unique qualities in informing, inspiring and shaping societies, human beings have used the time and space media selectively to propagate their agenda. According to Ruma Chakrvarthi "Iconography aids in establishing a context and helps to link the beliefs and myths of the past to the practices of the present [1]." Hinduism in India has a long and strong tradition of representing oral legends in physical forms like sculptures/idols and other representative forms.

In Indian culture, symbolism is crucial in all aspects of life, from our Sastras to celebrations and festivals. It's a terminology of its own. The significance of iconography is unavoidable both in history & social evolution and spiritual portrayal [2]."

It is well known that the majority of the stupas/sculptures/monuments are largely connected to Hindu religion, culture and other traditions, we also come across monuments that are purposefully built to commemorate a few individuals or events, these iconographies play a key role in binding the people and society together for the common good. "An icon is a symbol of someone or something that is revered,

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or a religious representation of a spiritual ideal. It may be a person, like Nelson Mandela, who is revered for his life. It may be water, revered for its life-giving property, or a pipal tree for its oxygen production [3].” Iconography is vital in furthering ideas across generations in time and space, making legends true and inspiring people.

Iconography is vital in furthering ideas across generations in time and space, making legends true and inspiring people. Alois Reigl argues that “A monument with ‘intentional commemorative value aims to preserve a moment in the consciousness of later generations and therefore to remain alive and present in perpetuity.” India is full of such instances where we have erected statues and monuments to remember people, incidents and places forever both physically and consciously. While some of these statues and monuments represent history, these also tell the story from the oppressive and liberators' points of view, it is for the public to decide how they would like to see and understand these statues and monuments, over a period as the meaning changes in time, Resane argues That “Monuments are erected as part of a visual culture that continually reminds us of something or someone important; yet, the symbolic value of monuments may change. Such values may acquire or lose importance, depending on fluctuating socio-political dispensations and dispositions [4, 5].”

Coming to the Telangana movement and the role of Iconography it is very evident that iconography became the focal point in the six decades of Telangana people's struggle. The separate state movement of Telangana started the day it was merged with the Andhra region in 1956. People from Telangana opposed the merger of Andhra and Telangana as it became evident that the politicians and industrialists from Andhra would dominate the political and economic landscape, to pacify the people of Telangana the ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement’ was signed that would protect the political, economic and cultural interests of the Telangana people. Soon after the merger none of the conditions were met nor implemented by the Andhra politicians this led to the separate state movement that became stronger and stronger over the decades. Telangana's history has survived by oral traditions passed down over the generations, the Telangana society is largely a time-bias society if one dwells through the history of struggles and triumphs during the Nizam rule and the later phases of the Telangana movement that lasted for over six decades. Many of the struggles and victories of Telangana were documented in the form of songs (oral) as Telangana was largely an illiterate region, the legends, events and unsung heroes of movements were remembered and celebrated through songs. Many such oral narratives took the physical form and these physical forms (iconography) have stood the test of time and inspired people from various walks of life, one such physical form is Telangana Amaraveerula Stupam, this monument became the heart of the Telangana movement. According to Choudhury and Armstrong “The monuments are highly symbolic and ideological [representations] that define a world

in social, cultural, and political terms. They can create and define the public sphere, community, and identity [6].”

According to Ghosh “installing statues stabilized a colonialist version of history by making it publicly visible, seemingly permanent, and educational [7].” The main agenda behind the installation of the Telugu Talli statue in 1975 by Andhra rulers was to make it publicly visible, seemingly permanent and educational, many such statues of Telugu Talli were installed in the capital city of Hyderabad and other regional district offices and main junctions to pacify the Telangana public anger in the guise of unification of Telugu speaking people and upholding the pride of Telugu community, The erection of the Telugu Talli statue was done soon after the second phase of the Telangana movement of 1969 where 300 plus students and other leaders sacrificed their lives for the separate state, in memory of those who were killed, the leaders of the Telangana movement erected Amaraveerula Stupam at the heart of the capital city right in front of the legislative assembly in 1970.

Erecting the Amaraveerula Stupam in the heart of the capital city was a moral victory for the people of Telangana and the movement leaders even when there was confrontation from the government, it became the symbol of resistance and reminded the people of Telangana of the sacrifices made by countless fighters for being independent and ruled by themselves rather than others. It is also to be noted that people have been documenting history in various forms across the centuries and mainly those that can withstand the time (time bias media) According to Innis ‘time and space’ concept of communication.

“A medium of communication has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting [8].”



Figure 1. Amaraveerula Stupam/Telangana Martyrs Memorial.

Amaraveerula stupam: This Iconography also known as the

Telangana Martyrs Memorial was able to withstand the test of time without losing its sheen and inspired millions across Telangana to keep fighting for justice and their rights, The memorial is only (25feet (7.6m) high. The monument also called the Gun-park for the reason that 369 students were gunned down during the movement by state police became the symbol of resistance, courage, and sacrifice made by the students and others fighting for the Telangana cause.

The Amaraveerula stupas were erected in some regions across Telangana and could be seen as a counter to the Telugu Talli statues installed by the rulers from the Andhra region. The fight for separate Telangana was never lost, student organisations, working employee unions and many intellectuals of Telangana kept the movement alive by fighting against the injustice in jobs, irrigation, development projects and racial abuses and discrimination meted out to the Telangana public, by the Andhra dominated politicians irrespective of governments, Congress or Telugu Desam parties that were in power. In the third phase of the Telangana movement unlike in the first and second phases, the Telangana Rashtra Samithi party and its founder Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao also known as KCR in consultation with likeminded people and intellectuals underscored creating a separate identity for Telangana people by proposing to erect a statue (Telangana Talli) that manifests the Telangana peoples culture and their aspirations (a makeover of Telugu Talli), that will unite the Telangana people in the fight for achieving separate state. Accordingly, a statue was erected in 2003 at the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS now Bharat Rashtra Samithi also known as BRS) party headquarters in Hyderabad. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi party and many civil society organisations and student unions that were part of the movement erected the Amaraveerula stupas and Telangana Talli statues in a few towns/city centres across the Telangana region during the initial stages of the movement, installing and erecting the Amaraveerula stupas and Telangana Talli statues strengthened the movement at the grassroots levels, this enabled in creating a separate identity (Telangana identity) among the public and "infused the much-needed confidence.

"People first respond to visual imagery on an emotional, unconscious level before rational interpretation takes place. Additionally, the visual representation of objects and people tends to evoke feelings because of the direct relationship between the image and the object it represents [9]."

The incident associated with the Amaraveerula stupam and its history is in the collective memory of the people of Telangana who were associated and led with the movement from the front, it is this emotional feeling that established a relationship between the monuments/statues and their people, which gives hope and inspires people to live and fight for their goals. The Amaraveerula stupam for decades stood silently

and inspired generations to fight for self-dependence. Iconography played a vital role in the third phase of the Telangana movement, political parties, workers' unions, intellectuals, students' unions and the general public became active in the movement as these various parties and unions erected both the Amaraveerula stupam and Telangana Talli statues in almost all the district and village centers across Telangana, it could be said that hundreds of villages have a Telangana Talli statue at the village center today. Political parties and various unions and organisations who were at the forefront of the movement started their activities only after visiting Amaraveerula stupam and paying homage to the fighters who lost their lives, it is to be noted that the third phase of the movement added another iconography i.e. Telangana Talli statue, thus becoming the symbol of resistance across Telangana.

It is known that iconography is the source of inspiration and hope for many socio-political movements across the world, monument and statues of Nelson Mandella, Mahatma Gandhi, and B R Ambedkar for example still inspire and hope to millions of people around the world while some of the iconography was condemned for various reasons, the socio-political and cultural revolutions that we are seeing across the world gave new iconography to the world by replacing the older. Telangana movement is no different from others, it gave a new icon replacing the older one i.e. Telangana Talli according to Daba "Statue play an indispensable role through representing the history, culture, socio-political system of the society. They function as gathering place to strengthen the society's cohesion [10]." The Telangana Rashtra Samithi party led by KCR cashed in on the opportunity of anti-Andhra sentiments by appropriating the Telangana Talli statue for furthering the movement and uniting the people of Telangana. An interesting point to note is that neither the political parties, unions nor the general public questioned the idea or ideology of appropriation of the Telangana Talli statue.

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi party leaders and its cadres went on to erect thousands of Amaraveerula stupam and Telangana Talli statues making them apparent, this made the public emotionally and mentally attached to this iconography. The political leaders garlanded and worshipped Amaraveerula stupam and Telangana Talli statues in front of the media and public in regular party and public meetings and on special occasions making it emotional and sentimental during its decade-long fight for a separate state. The movement has brought a considerable change in accepting one statue (the latter) and rejecting the other (the former) by the people in Telangana. One can closely inspect the various aspects of these statues and understand the reasons for the rejection and the appropriation of another. The statues when compared show a wide range of differences concerning composition, style, culture and significance attached to the region.



Figure 2. Statues of and Andhra Pradesh Telugu talli and Telangana Talli statues.

“Telugu Talli: The statue depicts a mother goddess with a crown on her head. She is draped in a sari and a flower garland around her neck typical of the region. She holds the earthen pot with a coconut placed on top of it in her right hand. This earthen pot (Kalasam) is seen as a symbol of good luck. In her left hand, she holds a few strands of paddy. The Andhra region is known for its paddy cultivation; the Andhra region is green with cultivation for a major part of the year [11].”

Telangana Talli: The Telangana Talli statue is also depicted as a mother. She is draped in a sari but the design is unique to the region. Unlike the floral garland found around the neck of the Telugu Talli, the Telangana Talli has three layers of gold ornaments. In her right hand she holds a few strands of corn (Maize crop) that was the staple food in the region in her left hand she holds the Bathukamma (arrangement of different flowers found in the region in a pyramid shape) worshipping the goddess Gauri [12].”

The third phase of the Telangana movement led by KCR was able to utilize all the resources available, especially with the use of time-biased media (erecting statues and memorials) to reach out to the people and make them connect emotionally and culturally, the movement leaders were also able to use the space-biased media (Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Television) during the decade long movement to connect and reach out to the people in and outside the region and country. The leader of Telangana Rashtra Samithi made it more obvious and explicit to motivate the people of Telangana by raising the sentiments at regular intervals with acts of commemorating and glorifying the iconography, thus making them the nerve centres for all political and cultural activities in the region. The younger generation who are unaware of these monuments voluntarily and emotionally got connected and identified themselves with those who fought and sacrificed their life in earlier struggles. The growth of these monuments signified the importance people of the region attributed to them during the movement. It is to be noted that nowhere during the last six decades of struggle, did Telangana protestors vandalised the statues of Telugu Talli, unlike what happened in various socio-political and social justice movements, that one has witnessed in India and the world over, where prominent and historical figures statues, busts and monuments were defaced or vandalised by protestors seeking

justice starting from the post-colonial era to modern day socio-political, cultural and racial struggles.

2. New Iconography (Monuments and Statues) and Their Impact



Figure 3. New Amaraveerula stupam (martyrs memorial).



Figure 4. The Old and New Telangana Talli statues.

The government under the leadership of KCR soon after the formation of Telangana (29th state in the Indian Union) built a new Amaraveerula stupam (martyrs memorial) in memory of people who have lost and given their lives voluntarily in the movement. Critiques argue that the new monument built with a very high budget is uninspiring and is more appropriate for the tourist destination, the memorial is built on the banks of Hussainsagar Lake, built at the cost of 179 crores. Its designer Mr. Ramana said “The building is dedicated to the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for the cause of the state. The flame is symbolic of their contribution and a tribute to their cause. The structure will retrace the history of the struggle for Telangana state, besides emerging as a top tourist spot [13].” Apart from this monument, the newly elected government of the Indian National Congress party (congress party) in Telangana erected an altered version of the Telangana Talli statue recently, this has not gone well with the Telangana Rashtra

Samithi party and other political parties, The Telangana Rashtra Samithi publicly announced that they would replace the newly erected Telangana Talli statue with the latter soon after assuming the power, it is worth mentioning that the general public of Telangana region was unaffected by this new development.

According to Forsdick “to replace one statue with another statue, or commissioning a new art installation necessarily entails elevating one narrative over others – and, by extension, foreclosing history.” The Chief Minister in an interview said “When I see the Telugu Talli statue, it reminds me of my mother. Others are saying the same. Mother is the only one we identify with in any part of the world. Mother is the embodiment of our culture and traditions, for Telangana, whose formation was the culmination of a social movement spanning over six decades, there was no symbol until the formation of a separate state, he was fulfilling the aspirations of the people by declaring state symbols one after another [14, 15].” what the Chief Minister of Telangana said was false, as we had the Telangana Talli statue erected in 2003 at the party headquarters of Telangana Rashtra Samithi, the party that led the third phase of Telangana movement to its logical conclusion with the people's support. The government led by KCR never officially declared the Telangana Talli statue (former) as the official statue of the newly formed state, this gave the newly elected government a chance to alter the narrative by modifying the features of the Telangana Talli statue.

In this context, the question arises, whether the statues and monuments or those that are replaced with others, hold the same significance all the time or if they tend to lose the sheen once the goal is achieved, “The social, political, and cultural significance of statues means that waves of statue- and monument-building frequently coincide with ‘hot’ periods of nation-building”. We all have witnessed how colonial-era monuments and statues are vandalised and replaced with other post-independent heroes in many colonised countries. Many such statues and monuments that are erected post-independence are by and large neglected by leaders and the general public. The significance and relevance once ascribed to these statues and monuments slowly faded away, and the cause that was once the driving force no longer binds the people after the success. But for the people of Telangana, the Telangana Talli (Mother Telangana) statue (former) is a divine force that inspired and united the people during the movement, people were emotionally attached to the statue both politically, emotionally and culturally. According to Tinsley “When statues are contested, they become hyper-visible. Supporters and detractors alike proclaim their importance, even as they ascribe oppositional meanings to the statue [16].” Erasing this memory of the past, associated with the Telangana movement and Telangana Talli statue and propagating a new narrative will be difficult for the ruling congress party, as memories associated with the past are not easily erased.

3. Conclusion

For centuries man has drawn inspiration from nature and in the process of evolution, many civilisations and societies have also drawn inspiration from their kind, and for many reasons, to commemorate such individuals/groups for their valour and sacrifices we have erected many monuments and statues over the centuries and these iconographies, that is time biased has been playing a vital role in furthering the causes across the globe. Many such monuments and statues hold a beacon for people to fight and achieve their goals. One such beacon of hope was the Telangana Martyrs Memorial built in 1970 for Telangana students' sacrifices for achieving a separate state within the Indian Union. The Telangana movement lasted for six decades, in the past six decades, millions of people in Telangana drew their inspiration from the Telangana Martyrs Memorial and the newly erected Telangana Talli statue by the TRS party to unite the people of Telangana. The two Iconography of the region have been instrumental in furthering the Telangana cause and ultimately achieving it. It has also been noticed that monuments and statues get erected in huge numbers or get replaced or vandalised during socio-political, cultural and racial movements, compared to other movements the Telangana movement was peaceful and nonviolent, the only difference being political parties altering the Telangana statues for propagating their version of Telangana Talli (Mother Telangana).

Abbreviations

TRS	Telangana Rashtra Samithi
BRS	Bharat Rashtra Samithi
KCR	Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao

Author Contributions

Nagraj Ankesrapu is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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