

# Emergence of Dalit-Bahujan Students' Movement: A Study of University Campuses in Western Odisha

Contemporary Voice of Dalit  
1–14

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DOI: 10.1177/2455328X231168545  
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## Abstract

Historically, it has been observed that student movements have been essential in bringing about social change in the world. In the Indian context, the majority of these student organizations, whether they follow a leftist or a rightist ideology, have always tried to hide their Brahminical foundations and have ignored the problems of marginalized students on university campuses. When it comes to Odisha, one can witness the Brahmin and Karana castes' historical monopoly over political power in the state, and as a result, neglecting caste issues in political parties and other academic institutions in many ways. In this project, the researcher has followed the qualitative approach and used the phenomenological technique to understand the lived experiences of the Dalit-Bahujan students located on three university campuses in western Odisha. The present study has demonstrated clearly how the hardships, struggles and measures taken by the Dalit-Bahujan student movements on the university campuses. Finally, it clearly outlined the different elements that motivated the Dalit-Bahujan students to join the movement and helped them to recognize their own responsibility for passing on this legacy to future generations.

## Keywords

Caste, Dalit, Bahujan, university, student movements

## Introduction

Historically, student movements have played a crucial role in bringing change to society across the world. In India, traditionally, the upper caste student groups have dominated the ranks of student leadership and movement until recent decades; this discourse has hidden their Brahminical face under the ideologies of left, right or centre (Suna, 2017). But on the other hand, Brahminism's doctrine and logic have constantly been changing, and the Ambedkarites are consistently challenging their traditional oppressive structures in academic institutions and society (ibid.). The early scholars and academicians concerning the Indian student movements and campus politics barely spoke about Dalit and lower caste issues. Still, very recently, Dalit-Bahujan political activism became popular and got academic

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consideration (Shah, 2009). Students from Dalit and lower caste students in Indian colleges and campuses have primarily had their experiences with caste discrimination and inequality in higher education (Desai & Kulkarni, 2008; Pandey & Pandey, 2018). As a result, one can see how caste issues have shown episodically in other ethnographic accounts and also seen in academic campus political culture (Kumar, 2004). Hence, Dalits and students from marginalized backgrounds have challenged the prevailing Hindu practices and beliefs and asserted their cultural uniqueness and self-autonomy on academic campuses (Gundimeda, 2009).

In Odisha, the historical hegemony of Brahmins and Karanas over the political power in the state despite the large percentage of the SCs, STs and OBCs that constitute 17%, 23% and 54%, respectively (Sagar, 2019). In the state universities, most existing student groups like ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad) that comes from the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), SFI (Students Federations of India) are from CPI (communist party of India), NSUI (National Students' Union of India) from INC (Indian National Congress) and BCJD (Biju Chhatra Janata Dal) from BJD (Biju Janata Dal) have captured the leadership of mainstream students politics in the Odisha. Despite all this dominance of upper caste leadership in academic institutions in the state, the Dalit-Bahujan politics along with the Dalit-Bahujan student movements in the universities are gradually increasing through various grassroots organizations in the state (Deep, 2016).

This study is important not only for Dalit-Bahujan students who are speaking out against a very Brahminical educational institution but also for the greater Dalit-Bahujan movement in Odisha to comprehend the ongoing politics on university campuses. According to Mahanand (2017), 'the students' movement is rising to end discrimination against Dalit-Bahujan students and also to drive out the ruling class social framework and Brahminism'. The researcher used a qualitative technique in this study in which the phenomenological method has been applied to capture the lived experiences of the involved Dalit-Bahujan students in three universities of Odisha, namely, (1) Kalahandi University, Bhawanipatna, (2) Rajendra University, Balangir and (3) Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur. The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide and with the help of the snowball sampling method conducted face-to-face interviews with Dalit-Bahujan leaders and collected data from the field.

## **Student Movements in India: A Historical Context**

The student movements in India have had historical contributions starting from the independence movement. As per Altbach (2012), 'Student unrest in India has been one of the most serious educational and political problems for over a century'. These students were not only participating in the independence movement against the British Raj but also asserting their rights in their respective universities and the government (Shah, 2009). Jayaram (1979) states 'The concerns of student politics in the country ranged from issues related to academic life to larger country-wide social issues'. In this way, various movements emerged from the youths aiming to get freedom from the British as well as from the academic difficulties (Jayaram, 1979).

## **Student Movements in the Pre-Independence Era**

In the Pre-Independence time, the student movements in India played a significant role in freedom struggle movements, and this was a landmark moment in modern Indian history. The nationalist movement, for the first time, has given a semblance of political identity to the youths of the nation

(Altbach, 2012). For the time, the All India College Student Conference was organized under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai at Nagpur in December 1920 and later in the 1930s, the All India Student Conference was held in coordination with Congressmen and leftist people. At this juncture, student movements became a radical element in national discourse (Altbach, 2012).

During the 1930s, the students participating in the independence struggle started participating in the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' led by Gandhi and became part of the militant activities (Hazary, 1988). The first national students' organization, the All India Student Federation (AISF), was formed in 1936. After a year, the All India Muslim Student was formed under the organizational support of the All India Muslim League in the year of 1937. But, in 1940, the AISF got separated due to ideological conflicts between the leftist students and the nationalist students (Hazary, 1988). After this, the nationalist students started participating in the 'Quit India Movement' initiated by Congress in 1942, which followed the ideas of Gandhi and Socialism (Shah, 2009). This movement led to the formation of the 'All India Student Congress' in 1945. They started participating in the freedom struggle and tried to achieve political freedom from the British (Shah, 2009).

## **Student Movements in Post-Independence**

On 15th August 1947, India got independence from the British and became an independent India. After this, the Congress leaders had the feeling that there was no need for a student movement at this moment as we did struggle together against the British to become independent; for this, we fought, and now they have gone. In this note, Weiner (1962) states that 'The student Congress did dissolve itself and called for the creation of a National Union of Students'. At this time, the only strong opposition student group that remained was AISF, which had been working since 1936 by carrying communist ideology and becoming a powerful force in Indian academic campus life (Di Bona, 1966). On the other hand, Hazary (1988) states that 'The decrease of ideological politics issues after independence has driven to the rise of campus politics issues that pointed at particular students' issues'. As a result, the witnessing of mass student movements, strikes and agitations was seen on various campuses in the country and, more importantly, toppled some of the state governments (Hazary, 1988). Weiner (1962) states that 'the State with the foremost dynamic and radical student movement in West Bengal that has taken part in several mass movements, counting tram fare strike, the Bengal-Bihar merger debate, a few agitations over high food prices, and a teacher strike for higher compensation'. In this meantime, one of the most ever remembered issues happened, that is, the 'The Emergency' 1975 led by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. On this note, Jayaram (1979) points out,

Recognizing the disruptive potential of the student movement, Mrs Indira Gandhi's government dealt harshly with student activism and jailed many key student leaders further they took various measures to suppress the student activism, and the government arrested, detained, and tortured student leaders belonging to or sympathetic to the opposition parties.

In light of this, the Sampurna Kranti Movement, which is also famously known as J P movement, emerged in Bihar under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan (JP). The JP movement targeted more significant societal challenges such as election reforms, corruption eradication, food security and educational reformation. The movement was nonviolent, transcending caste and political considerations (Hingorani, 1955, p. 45). JP was against the nationwide emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and called for her to resign. This movement had incredible popularity among the masses, and she

called off this nationwide emergency. A bunch of parties of different ideological orientations, under JP's guidance, formed the Janata Party and, for the first-time non-congress political party, set up a government in the centre as well in Bihar (Hingorani, 1955).

Another landmark movement was seen in Gujarat in the 1970s, known as the 'Navnirman Movement' against corruption. Shah (2009) states that 'It was the first successful movement after independence that overthrew the elected government. Furthermore, the Navnirman movement, which led to the dissolution of the state assembly, changed the country's political arithmetic in the 1970s'. In addition, Sinha (2007) states,

In Gujarat, probably for the first time in the history of the Indian student movement, larger societal issues like rampant corruption in high places, black market, rising prices, and unemployment became the crucial issues. All these agitations led by students were able to get the public's attention in the state, which eventually led to a mass movement.

As Mehta (1975) states, 'In Gujarat, for the first time, seasoned politicians had to accept their defeat; this is a unique contribution of Gujarat students and its people to the functioning of democracy in India'.

## **The Rise of Dalit-Bahujan Students' Politics in India**

Dalit-Bahujan politics got prominence after the emergence of Kanshi Ram in the 1970s. After Babasaheb Ambedkar, Indian political discourse would have remained incomplete for Dalit-Bahujan without acknowledging the task driven by Kanshi Ram. Because of this movement, the historically oppressed communities could dream about political power; otherwise, they might end up merely being vote banks of upper castes candidates (Walunj, 2020). Kanshiram's movement was not just political but also cultural. He was carrying the Hegelian principles of rational consciousness and propagating to Dalit-Bahujan and making efforts to debunk Brahmanism and raise anti-caste awareness (Kalyani, 2021). In his book, 'The Chamcha Age', Kanshiram says that the Dalit leaders working in these mainstream political parties are stooges of the casteist 'Manuvadis', and hence, there is a need to have an independent Dalit-Bahujan politics in the country (Narayan, 2020). This was the critique of existing mainstream political parties and led him to form BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) to get stunning electoral success. This act completely changed the whole political atmosphere, particularly in North India (Narayan, 2020).

In light of Dalit-Bahujan students' aspirations and struggles, Thirumal and Christy (2018) say that

Dalit Bahujan students relentlessly dream and struggle to experience an intellectual ambience in elite institutions sans caste prejudice to recreate their 'being' in radically new ways in a society that otherwise seems to be forgetting what resistance with a conscience can deliver in reimagining life and politics afresh.

Since the 1990s, the iconography of Phule, Shahu, Birsa and Ambedkar has become part and parcel of and vocabulary of the Dalit-Bahujan student in the university spaces. This was completely ignored before, as the major student groups were from upper castes and followed the ideologies of Marx, Stalin, Lenin and Bhagat Singh (Thool & Shende, 2017). The rise of the United Dalit Student Forum (UDSF), the first social organization in JNU, became the awaking factor for the Dalit-Bahujan students in the campus. But, after the emergence of BAPSA (Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students' Association), which is a political organization, the Dalit-Bahujan students started challenging the occupied left and upper castes student groups through debates and political processes. As a result, they are successfully doing campaigns for equal rights, spaces and finally advocating for annihilation of caste (Thool & Shende, 2017).

According to political scholar and social activist Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd, one positive political altar seen after Rohith Vemula's passing (Sukumar, 2016) is the 'collective assertion' that began inside the educational institutions and spread rapidly to the state and, to some extent to the central or national politics (Shantha, 2019). In addition, the Ambedkarite associations, which had customarily remained sceptical of the left parties, are willing to give them a few breathing spaces and battle the right-wing BJP together. The left parties, which historically ignored Ambedkar's vision of a constitutional majority rule government, were suddenly seen utilizing Phule and Ambedkar banners at the side of Marx (Shantha, 2019).

Subodh Kunwer, who was the Central Committee member of BAPSA, said during an interview, 'The university spaces have always been a space that was a republic, not for the Dalit-Bahujan students but rather republic of the Savarna student, by the Savarna student and for the Savarna student'. But, due to the consistent struggles of Dalit-Bahujan students in the academic spaces, the dominant narratives are changing drastically (Pisharody, 2018). The current climate of suppression of students, their education and their rights speak volumes for the vile Hindutva politics raging in academic universities. They are typically targeting Dalit-Bahujan students and faculties to guarantee that the academic campuses should only become spaces of Savarna learning (Pisharody, 2018). This clearly shows the dominance of upper caste leadership on academic campuses, and hence, there is a need for the Dalit-Bahujan students' organization so that they can represent themselves in these spaces and claim their constitutional rights and entitlements.

## **The Background of Odisha's Politics**

Odisha was separated from the province of Bihar and became an independent state in the year of 1936 (Mohanty, 1984). After India gained independence, the first and second general elections happened in 1952 and 1957. The total constituencies were 107 and 101 for all but 21 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and 28 for Scheduled Tribes (Mohanty, 1984). In the political history of Odisha, no single party had domination from 1952 to 1961 as the Congress party did fail to give stable leadership in the state legislative assembly (Pradhan, 1973). As a result, the 'Ganatantra Parishad' became the second-largest party in the state, primarily representing the western region. On the other side, Congress represents the eastern Odisha region (Pradhan, 1973). At the regional level, caste plays a crucial role in dividing people because of the enforcement of cultural homogeneity. Hence, the smaller group takes social and political advantage from the majority groups or communities (Sarangi, 2006).

In Odisha, the Brahmins, Karanas and Kshatriyas from the coastal regions have dominated Odisha politics. Hence, most chief ministers and senior politicians are from the same areas. On the other hand, the western Odisha, despite being mineral-rich, the issues of the western regions have been neglected as the politicians are from the coastal areas. Hence, they have only focused on developing coastal regions (Pradhani, 2018). Bhubaneswar is the state's capital, and thus it is making rapid strides to compete with other advanced cities in India. Therefore, the state is creating an infrastructure for foreign investments and inviting them to set up their offices without looking at the benefits of the other parts of the state (Pradhani, 2018).

The Patnaik surname has become synonymous with Odisha's political history since 70 years of independence (Pradhan, 2019). The populations of SCs, STs and OBCs constitute 17%, 22.8% and 54%, respectively. Still, the Patnaik belong to the 'Karana' caste, which comprises 1% of the state's population, dominating the political landscape in Odisha (Pradhan, 2019). After establishing the state in 1950, Orissa's

government was in the hands of the INC and continued until the emergence of the BJD in 2000. In 2009, the state's name was formally changed from Orissa to Odisha (Huke, 2009). In Odisha, BJD has been ruling for more than 20 years even though its policies are anti-SC and -ST communities (Pati, 2009). The BJD government has signed various projects under liberalization, causing significant displacement of STs and exploitation of SCs. Hence, these communities have been consistently fighting against this government due to its anti-policies against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Kar, 2015).

Nanda and Jojo (2022) state that in the development, distribution and use of state resources, the eastern regional upper castes, which held state power, gained the most significant advantage over the western region. On the other hand, the western area has remained under the authority of upper castes, feudal and landlords, who have shared power with their eastern allies for self-interest but have done little to advance resource redistribution. In Odisha, Bailey (1957) found that village authority remained unchanged even after the state transitioned from a traditional caste structure to a democratic state. In a democratic society, the same Oriya ruling castes were appointed to numerous positions. De Haan and Dubey (2005) go even further, attributing the regional discrepancies in Odisha to 'entitlement failure' and 'social discrimination and deprivation in access to education, economics and markets, resulting out of exploitative social and economic processes'. Due to the 'continuing dominance of traditional elites, enormously heterogeneous population, limited growth of decentralization, low degree of political awareness among impoverished people, and the role played by NGOs, civil society', this has historical and colonial roots.

## **Student Politics in Odisha**

Student politics has long been recognized as a vital social and political transformation source. Students from all across the world have been documented for their active participation in initiatives to protect and defend democratic values. Students are the only group in society who are free to express themselves openly, and they have historically played a significant part in social movements (Loader et al., 2015). On the other hand, the university campus provides a crucial area for non-politicians to be exposed to political ideas and debates and a variety of possibilities to participate in civic activities in general (Loader et al., 2015).

Despite a generally peaceful atmosphere on the campuses, Orissa has seen some big student agitations. The anti-fee-rise strike of 1951 and student participation in the 1956 protest against the SRC<sup>1</sup> report, which demanded the union of two Oriya-speaking districts with Orissa, were two of the decade's highlights (Hazary, 1988). In addition, the all-Orissa student agitation against the Ministry in 1964 is considered the pinnacle of student political engagement in Orissa. Students, with the help of opposition politicians and public sympathy, sought to draw attention to the State Chief Minister's alleged corrupt administration and were successful in prompting an investigation that resulted in the Chief Minister's resignation, causing severe humiliation to the Congress government (Hazary, 1988).

According to the research, the majority of the student leaders were from lower-middle-class homes. The majority come from literate households and are Hindus of an upper caste who wield power in campus politics. This upper caste dominance in Indian society may be seen in student politics in academic institutions. These findings hold true throughout all four decades of our research, and there appears to be a persistent trend in the leadership's background from 1938 to 1969 (Hazary, 1982). This implies that upper-caste organizations have considerably influenced student politics in academic institutions for a



long time. As a result, the voices from the marginalized and oppressed communities have remained unheard throughout history.

## **The Rise of Dalit-Bahujan Politics in Odisha**

In Odisha, historically, there have been numerous movements against Brahmanical culture and politics, such as Buddhism in ancient Odisha, Bhima Bhoi (cultural and religious movement against Brahmanism) and tribal resistance against Brahminical culture (Deep, 2016). Mayadhar Mansingh writes,

This Mahima or Alekh religion does not recognise the caste system of the Hindus and is severely iconoclastic. It asks people to have faith only in the one invisible power that created this world and to worship Him and Him only. Except for its faith in a personal God, the tenets of this religion closely resemble Buddhism. Many scholars indeed think that this Alekh religion is nothing but a revival of Buddhism in Orissa in a new garb. (Mansinha, 1962, p. 151).

After this movement, the followers of Mahima Dharma organized a protest on 1st March 1881 to enter the Jagannath temple and started claiming that this temple did not belong to Brahmins but rather belonged to tribal and lower castes (Mallik, 2004). Further, Mallik states that ‘The temple entry movement led by Bhima Bhoi and his followers was in intention to enter the premises of Puri Jagannath temple by Dalits and tribals, as Lord Jagannath belongs to a tribal cult, which was stolen by the Brahmins and Rajas’ (Mallik, 2004). Malik (2021) states that

While comparing the Dalit movements in other parts of India with the state of Odisha, it can be analysed that the contemporary thundering atmosphere and Dalit consciousness in Tamil Nadu and other regions of India were deeply influenced and awakened by the Dalit Panthers’ movement of Maharashtra, but it failed to impact the Dalits of Odisha and the Odia society. Neither the movements of the Mahars, Ad-Dharmis and Panthers could have impacted the Dalits of Odisha nor did the ideologies of Periyar, Phule and Ambedkar have created great changes to the caste-ridden Odia society.

Dalit-Bahujan politics had existed in Odisha since 1995 when Kanshi Ram first visited the state. Since then, the BSP has mobilized lower-caste people to follow Babasaheb Ambedkar’s path (Kumar, 2020). The emergence of Dalit-Bahujan politics in Odisha already started through various organizations and platforms, such as BAMCEF, KMT (Kalinga Mitra Trust), BMP (Bahujan Mukti Party), API (Ambedkarite Party of India) and so on (Kumar, 2020). Deep (2016) mentioned that Ambedkarism has recently emerged in Odisha, notably in Western Odisha, due to many activities. Therefore, the emerging trend of Dalit-Bahujan students also participating in these processes and raising voices against the Brahmanical academic space and fighting for their rights.

## **Data Analysis and Conclusion**

The study’s findings illustrate the complicated and changing realities of Dalit-Bahujan student politics in Odisha and also provide a nuanced understanding of their mobilization strategy and challenges faced on university campuses. The findings are not isolated; instead, they reflect broader tendencies that are equated with Dalit-Bahujan student politics across universities in India. The critical issues that arose from the study’s findings on Dalit-Bahujan student politics activity at various universities are highlighted below.

### **Motivational Factors and Mobilization Strategies**

1. *The impact of families on Dalit-Bahujan student leaders:* Most Dalit-Bahujan student leaders come from low-income families and are first-generation college students. As a result, family members or relatives who have had prior exposure to education and a basic grasp of the social movements are more likely to encourage their younger relatives to pursue higher education and actively participate in the student movements. Family members or relatives who are illiterate or unaware of the social movements, on the other hand, are more inclined to believe that whatever their children do or participate in college is beneficial for them because they love and believe in them.
2. *Linking personal experiences with the ongoing movement:* Fraser (2021) states, ‘Instead of embracing the dominant construction of public concerns, some of these organisations and individuals form alternative counter publics based on their own subjective experiences of social marginalisation’. Dalit-Bahujan students are joining and becoming members of Dalit-Bahujan student organizations in universities, as only these organizations are dedicated to working on their causes. Furthermore, most Dalit-Bahujan students feel free to express themselves in these areas and platforms. Again, the Dalit-Bahujan students have comparable experiences in these settings since they face several challenges on campus and daily. These organizations are evolving into a personal space where Dalit-Bahujan students may talk, debate and resolve issues by caring and sharing without fear.
3. *Ideology plays an important role in affiliation with the Dalit-Bahujan student movements:* It was revealed that ideology is critical for Dalit-Bahujan students who are unsure or hesitant to join the Dalit-Bahujan student movements. They initially refused to participate, but after witnessing the Dalit-Bahujan student leaders’ hard work and dedication on campus, they decided to do so. The Dalit-Bahujan students may relate to and draw similar experiences with the continuous challenges they confront as a result of the ideology, and they see the need to participate in the Dalit-Bahujan student movements.
4. *Peer support is the key to mobilising unaware Dalit-Bahujan students:* Peer support is essential in mobilizing Dalit-Bahujan students and bringing them together on- and off-campus. Because of peer support, kids are banding together and assisting one another in various ways. These peers, for example, assist incoming students in various ways, from academic difficulties to personal issues and making them aware of everything. As a result, they would be unable to organize a Dalit-Bahujan student groups on university campuses without peer support because they hail from various areas and backgrounds. Because of peer support, Dalit-Bahujan pupils have more opportunities to get to know one another and build bonds.

### **Mobilization Strategies**

Garalytė (2020) states that ‘Dalit activists in university campuses had more freedom for political experimentation and establishing broader sociopolitical alliances resulting in novel forms of cultural politics’. Therefore, internal mobilization was critical in resolving the numerous challenges faced by new students on university campuses who were unaware of existing Dalit-Bahujan student organizations and were unfamiliar with Birsā-Phule-Ambedkar ideology. The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations’ internal mobilization and different interventions on university campuses have increased participation from newly admitted students in the existing Dalit-Bahujan student organizations. Furthermore, internal lobbying by Dalit-Bahujan student organizations on university campuses assists in developing self-confidence and enthusiasm among fellow Dalit-Bahujan students.



In light of outside mobilization, Jaoul (2012) states that ‘Dalit student activists actively engaged in appropriating social space by installing Dalit symbolic icons on the university campuses, bringing up caste issues to public attention and thus temporarily turning certain campuses into political strongholds’. Hence, Gorringer (2005) has also pointed out that ‘Until the post-colonial modernity, public space in India was largely the privilege of upper castes and few areas in India constitute public space in any meaningful sense since space has usually been hierarchically patterned’. As a result, Dalit-Bahujan students are mobilizing internal students who are studying or working on university campuses and connecting with more prominent Dalit-Bahujan leaders and activists. Through protests and rallies, Dalit-Bahujan students are bringing the challenges and issues faced by colleges/universities into the public eye. As a result, Dalit-Bahujan students pressure local governments by submitting memorandums opposing the colleges/universities administration’s monopoly. The Dalit-Bahujan students’ solidarity with their fellow students is not limited to rallies and demonstrations.

### *The Challenges Faced by the Dalit-Bahujan Student Organizations*

Dalit-Bahujan students are facing various challenges in academic institutions. As Deshpande (2016) states, ‘Indian universities face one of the biggest challenges of accommodating, educating and empowering new social groups called the lower castes’. As a result, the lower castes are marginalized and unable to participate equally in universities and be excluded from public life. On this note, Ovichegan (2015) and Sukumar (2016) state that ‘For youth entering and studying in a university is an exciting journey, but for Dalits and other lower caste members the university years sometimes turn into a bitter experience, in not so infrequent cases leading to suicides’. Despite being subjected to many forms of discrimination by Dalit and lower-caste students at universities, some students organize themselves and assert their rights.

1. *Individual struggles*: It has been found that the majority of Dalit-Bahujan students that attend university campuses come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as most of their parents work as daily wage labourers or marginal farmers. Most Dalit-Bahujan student leaders work as tutors and earn money while sending money to their families every month. After joining Dalit-Bahujan student organizations on university campuses, Dalit-Bahujan students continue their studies. As Dalit-Bahujan student organizations built platforms to care for and share with their fellow team members on university campuses, they share their everyday experiences and work together to solve emergent problems.
2. *Family’s restrictions*: A family plays a crucial influence in the engagement of Dalit-Bahujan students. However, it has been observed that most parents are illiterate, and as a result, they are unable to comprehend the social movements, particularly the student movements. As a result, Dalit-Bahujan students are doing their best to educate them on proper practices and dispel traditional ideas full of blind beliefs and superstitions. As a result, several families have already rejected superstitions to follow Birsa Phule Ambedkar’s concepts and practices in their daily lives.
3. *Unsympathetic approaches by the university administration*: The Dalit-Bahujan students were seen to experience numerous issues on university campuses due to the administration. The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations make every effort to organize events or sessions for the Dalit-Bahujan students in need. They experienced obstacles and challenges both in academics and on campus. Unfortunately, the administration was constantly denied permission to hold similar events on university campuses by the Dalit-Bahujan students’ organization. On the contrary, the

administration consistently encourages and supports ABVP student organizations in their efforts to organize events and sessions.

The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations had to debate and obtain prior permission from the administration and go through lengthy procedures. According to Dalit-Bahujan student organizations, the administrations are very Brahminical. With regards to institutional discrimination, Mahanand (2017) states that

The TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) administration's policies show that the institute is not attempting to cultivate the affirmative action and inclusiveness values so widely preached. As a result, marginalised populations are clearly excluded from higher education centres, where admittance is only granted to upper castes and upper classes who can afford these high prices without the aid of scholarships.

4. *Challenges constructed by the other student groups:* The right- and left-wing student organizations labelled them as casteist and anti-national organizations, spreading rumours among regular students. The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations are the only ones that strive diligently for equality without discrimination, based on the Indian Constitution's principles of equality, liberty and justice.
5. *Obstacles within Dalit-Bahujan student's organizations:* It was observed that the Dalit-Bahujan student organizations are facing various problems within the organization. Despite all this, the Dalit-Bahujan student leaders have been dealing with all such issues and challenges in equal participation with caring and sharing with each group member and finding the solution. As a result, the Dalit-Bahujan student organizations are emerging as strong student groups on university campuses because of their bonding and belief in the core ideology of the organization.
6. *Mainstream media biases and discriminations:* Singh (2019) states that 'Social media has reshaped caste mobilization. As a result, the Subaltern castes have used it to create discourse, ideate, and connect with each other, and the world'. The Brahminical media is causing various challenges for Dalit-Bahujan student organizations in the mainstream media. As a result of their repeated biases, Dalit-Bahujan students rarely entertain the mainstream media. As a result, Dalit-Bahujan student organizations frequently use social media to disseminate their philosophy and information about recent occurrences on university campuses.
7. *Difficulty of mobilizing unpoliticized Dalit-Bahujan students:* Dalit-Bahujan student organizations confront numerous challenges from fellow Dalit-Bahujan students, casteist university administrators and other left-right-wing student groups on university campuses. Furthermore, they are subjected to direct humiliation and discrimination by university faculty members. Despite these issues, Dalit-Bahujan student organizations have constantly mobilized to benefit their fellow Dalit-Bahujan students. Despite this, students have been fighting casteist administrations and existing left-right student groups to restore their rights and entitlements through constitutional means. As a result, other Dalit-Bahujan students unaware of Birsa-Phule-Ambedkar's ideals are progressively joining and becoming active members of Dalit-Bahujan student organizations on university campuses.
8. *Financial crisis:* It was revealed that the Dalit-Bahujan student organizations are having financial difficulties. Despite this, Dalit-Bahujan student organizations strive relentlessly to spread the Birsa-Phule-Ambedkar ideology inside and outside the university. Furthermore, Dalit-Bahujan student organizations use their current resources while attempting to administer the organization. As a result, despite their financial difficulties, the Dalit-Bahujan student leaders' dedication and tireless efforts have enabled them to successfully mobilize and get support from other oppressed Dalit-Bahujan students enrolled on university campuses.

### *Personal Impact, Individual Development and Future Aspirations on Dalit-Bahujan Student Leaders*

1. *Creating positive impact:* Dalit-Bahujan student organization's influence on university campuses towards Dalit-Bahujan leaders is beneficial. These organizations provide opportunities for first-generation Dalit-Bahujan students to thrive and contribute on campus. As a result, students in the Dalit-Bahujan student organization on university campuses are learning a lot, thinking about it and putting it into practice in their daily lives. Furthermore, Dalit-Bahujan student organizations and senior members provide assistance and counselling to newcomers and juniors. There are times when Dalit-Bahujan students endure difficulties, but those difficulties strengthen them.
2. *Involvement in student movements changes the mindsets:* Dalit-Bahujan student movements on university campuses has a substantial impact on the first-generation rural Dalit-Bahujans' thinking process, ability to ask rational questions, and critical comprehension, among other things. Through the Birsa-Ambedkar-Phule ideology, fellow Dalit-Bahujan students have replaced conventional views based on superstitions and hazy beliefs with scientific ideas and rational reasoning. Furthermore, Dalit-Bahujan students are working relentlessly on university campuses to raise awareness about the issue among their fellow Dalit-Bahujan students through numerous activities and events.
3. *Enhancing self-consciousness and making sympathetic towards society:* Student's organizations for Dalit-Bahujans have a tremendous impact on the development of fellow Dalit-Bahujan leaders. Because of the organization, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and first-generation families become more aware of their daily lives, prior experiences and current discrimination by the Brahmanical Social Order. The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations also assist them in comprehending the reasons for the persistent discrimination of lower caste students on university campuses by college/university administrations. By continuing to follow up with newcomers or juniors, Dalit-Bahujan student organizations can raise knowledge of the historical and current societal concerns that Dalit-Bahujan communities and students confront. As a result, the Dalit-Bahujan students who are part of the organization concentrate on the organization's goals.
4. *Enhancing knowledge and skills:* Dalit-Bahujan student organizations are becoming increasingly powerful and inspiring to Dalit-Bahujan students. Student organizations for Dalit and Bahujan students give them opportunities to learn, relearn, reflect, criticize, etc. The linked Dalit-Bahujan students realize and ask themselves about the current Dalit-Bahujan student movements on the campus and social action because of organizations. The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations also help develop leadership abilities and other talents among their peers. As a result, Dalit-Bahujan students are becoming more aware of their responsibilities and working relentlessly to improve the lives of Dalit-Bahujan students and organizations in general.

### *Future Aspirations of the Dalit-Bahujan Student Movements*

The Dalit-Bahujan student organizations' future objectives on university campuses are entirely dependent on their leaders' existing positions and efforts. For this, the leaders of the Dalit-Bahujan student organizations' claimed to be the future leaders of the country's broader Dalit-Bahujan social movements, as well as Dalit-Bahujan students in particular. They also argue that their student activities are necessary for spreading ideology across the state and nation. Dalit-Bahujan students' activities on university campuses are increasingly rising due to their hard work and dedication. As a result, more Dalit-Bahujan students join the existing Dalit-Bahujan student organizations on university campuses. Furthermore, the

Dalit-Bahujan student organization leaders believe that the formation of a Dalit-Bahujan student organization is critical for our community. However, they also stated that existing members should be aware of its necessity. Otherwise, it risks collapsing shortly because it requires constant support from all organization members. Furthermore, the Dalit-Bahujan students asserted that if we could coordinate and work together as a team, we could form a formidable Dalit-Bahujan student organization. As a result, the Dalit-Bahujan student organizations have the potential to become the most potent rising force against the Brahminical social system.

## Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated clearly how the hardships, struggles and measures taken by the Dalit-Bahujan student movements at the three universities in Odisha. Additionally, it clearly outlined the different elements that motivated the Dalit-Bahujan students to join the movements and helped them recognize their own responsibility for passing on this legacy to future generations. The Dalit-Bahujan students are always in conflict and struggle because of this, not just with other existing student groups but also with the Brahminical administration, which does everything in its power to denigrate and discriminate against the Dalit-Bahujan students. Despite this, Dalit-Bahujan students are tenaciously organizing other Dalit-Bahujan students to reclaim spaces, self-respect and dignity through constitutional means.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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## Note

1. The States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was constituted by the Central Government of India in August 1953 to recommend the reorganization of state boundaries.

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