

THE ROLE OF DALIT-BAHUJAN COMMUNITIES IN SHAPING THE TELANGANA MOVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF ADILABAD DISTRICT (1969- 2014)

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Abstract

The Telangana Movement, which culminated in the formation of the state of Telangana in 2014, was a result of sustained socio-political struggles and aspirations for regional identity, autonomy, and justice. Among the key contributors to this movement were Dalit-Bahujan communities, whose voices and activism played a pivotal role in mobilizing grassroots support and articulating the demands for statehood. This paper examines the involvement and impact of Dalit-Bahujan communities in shaping the Telangana Movement, with a specific focus on Adilabad district. Using a combination of historical analysis, qualitative interviews, and secondary data, this study highlights the socio-political dynamics, cultural expressions, and leadership that these communities contributed to the larger movement.

Keywords: Telangana Movement, Dalit-Bahujan, Adilabad, grassroots mobilization, cultural expressions, social justice.

INTRODUCTION

The Telangana Movement emerged as a long-standing struggle rooted in socio-economic and political grievances that reflected deep-seated inequalities within the united Andhra Pradesh state. At its core, the movement was a response to perceived injustices in the allocation of resources, employment opportunities, and political representation, which many in the Telangana region felt disproportionately favored the Andhra region. While mainstream narratives often highlight economic disparities, political negotiations, and the role of dominant political actors, they tend to overlook the critical contributions of marginalized

communities. Among these, Dalit-Bahujan groups played a pivotal but underappreciated role in shaping the movement's trajectory, particularly through their grassroots mobilization and persistent demands for social justice.

This paper seeks to address this gap in the scholarship by examining the contributions of Dalit-Bahujan communities in the Adilabad district, a region that holds a unique demographic significance due to its substantial tribal and Dalit-Bahujan populations. Adilabad serves as a microcosm for understanding how marginalized groups actively participated in and shaped the Telangana Movement, bringing issues of caste, class, and social justice to the forefront of the struggle.

The timeline of the movement, spanning from 1969 to 2014, encapsulates critical phases, each marked by distinct strategies, leadership styles, and shifting priorities. The initial phase in 1969 witnessed widespread agitations, primarily driven by youth and student organizations, as well as grassroots activists who laid the foundation for the movement. The later phases saw a resurgence of activism in the early 2000s, with a more organized and structured approach under the leadership of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), which strategically harnessed the frustrations of marginalized communities. These shifts not only highlight the evolving nature of the movement but also underscore the indispensable role of grassroots participation, particularly that of Dalit-Bahujan groups, in sustaining the momentum and steering the discourse toward inclusivity and equity.

By focusing on the Adilabad district, this study aims to shed light on how marginalized communities contributed to the Telangana Movement's vision of a separate state, not merely as passive participants but as active agents of change who influenced its ideologies, strategies, and outcomes. In doing so, it seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the movement, one that recognizes the voices and efforts of those at the margins of mainstream political discourse.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the socio-political context of Adilabad district during the Telangana Movement.
2. To examine the role of Dalit-Bahujan communities in organizing protests, cultural activities, and political mobilizations.
3. To explore the leadership and narratives that emerged from these communities in the context of the movement.
4. To assess the impact of Dalit-Bahujan activism on the broader Telangana statehood struggle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Venkateshwarlu, C. (2011) Telangana State Movement is one of the glorious movements in India. Particularly downtrodden and scheduled caste and Schedule Tribal people are participated in large number to influence the government policies and orders to implement Telangana is a separate state. The new trends and forms of agitation were took shape with the innovative ideas to pressurize the Central Government for introducing the Telangana Bill in the Indian Parliament to form a separate Telangana state by dividing the Andhra Pradesh state in two. The movement has witnessed the phenomena of caste groups and people from different sections participated in the movement to claim their due share in achieving the new Telangana state with the social justice and to have equal share in establishing power in the new Telangana state. Scheduled tribe leaders and people fight for separate Telangana state. In this process of Telangana, after the rise of scheduled tribe movement, the caste identity fights have attempted to bring together various castes. These standing conditions drove towards Bahujanisation. The caste recognize developments toward one side and the activism of learned people, authors and artists at opposite end have given the necessary force to this turn of events. The development, until now, as caste distinguishes battles has now come to fruition as development for independent Telangana. The writing was recognized as the writing of 'Bahujans' ranks. Continuously this literature, administration and the caste fights moved towards social change and Scheduled Caste and tribal development. This research paper is to

be discussed about the “Participation of Scheduled Tribes in Telangana Statement Movement – A Perspective”

Mahananda, A. (2023)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.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the contributions of marginalized communities in the Telangana Movement, particularly in Adilabad district. A historical analysis forms the foundation of this approach, involving an in-depth review of archival materials, newspapers, and government reports spanning the period from 1969 to 2014. This provides a chronological understanding of the movement's evolution and the role of grassroots participation. To complement this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with activists, community leaders, and scholars who have firsthand knowledge or have extensively studied the movement in Adilabad. These interviews offer valuable insights into the lived experiences and strategies of marginalized groups, as well as their perspectives on the movement's impact. Additionally, the study incorporates secondary data through a critical analysis of existing literature, including books, journal articles, and reports that document various aspects of the Telangana Movement. By synthesizing these diverse sources, the methodology ensures a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

THE TELANGANA MOVEMENT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Telangana Movement, advocating for a separate state from Andhra Pradesh, was a protracted struggle characterized by multiple phases and diverse forms of activism. Its roots can be traced back to the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, when the Telugu-speaking regions of the erstwhile Hyderabad State were merged with the Andhra State. This merger led to concerns in Telangana over potential economic neglect and cultural marginalization, setting the stage for future agitations.

➤ Early Agitations and the 1969 Movement

The initial phase of the movement (1969–1971) was marked by widespread protests, prominently led by students and supported by various sections of society in Telangana. The agitation was fueled by perceptions of injustice in resource allocation, employment opportunities, and political representation. The demand for a separate Telangana state gained significant momentum during this period, with large-scale protests and strikes disrupting normal life. Despite the intensity of the movement, it did not result in the creation of a separate state at that time.

➤ Subsequent Developments and Renewed Momentum

Following the initial agitations, the movement experienced periods of dormancy and resurgence. In the decades that followed, various political and civil society groups continued to advocate for statehood, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. The early 2000s witnessed a renewed vigor in the movement, with the formation of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in 2001 under the leadership of K. Chandrashekar Rao, who became a central figure in the struggle for statehood. The TRS played a pivotal role in mobilizing public support and bringing the issue to the forefront of national politics.

➤ Formation of Telangana State

The sustained efforts of activists, political leaders, and the general populace culminated in the Indian government's decision to bifurcate Andhra Pradesh. On June 2, 2014, Telangana was officially formed as the 29th state of India, with Hyderabad as its capital. K. Chandrashekar Rao assumed office as the first Chief Minister of the new state. The creation of Telangana

marked the culmination of a decades-long struggle, reflecting the aspirations of the people for self-governance and regional development.

The Telangana Movement stands as a testament to the power of sustained, grassroots activism and the quest for regional identity and autonomy within the Indian Union.

DALIT-BAHUJAN COMMUNITIES IN ADILABAD DISTRICT

Adilabad district, distinguished by its substantial tribal and Dalit-Bahujan populations, played a pivotal role in the Telangana Movement. These communities, drawing from their experiences of marginalization and their aspirations for justice, introduced unique perspectives and strategies that significantly influenced the movement's trajectory. Their key contributions encompassed several areas:

➤ Grassroots Mobilization

Dalit-Bahujan groups were instrumental in organizing protests, rallies, and public meetings, ensuring that the demand for statehood was inclusive and representative of marginalized voices. Their active participation highlighted the intersection of regional and caste-based injustices, emphasizing the need for a Telangana state that would address both regional disparities and social inequities. This grassroots activism was crucial in galvanizing widespread support and maintaining the momentum of the movement.

➤ Cultural Expressions

The use of cultural mediums such as folk songs, street plays, and poetry became powerful tools for articulating grievances and aspirations. Dalit-Bahujan artists and writers led these expressions, utilizing their rich cultural heritage to communicate the struggles and hopes of their communities. These cultural forms not only raised awareness but also fostered a sense of unity and identity among the oppressed, reinforcing the movement's call for a more equitable society.

➤ Leadership

Leaders from Dalit-Bahujan communities emerged as prominent voices within the Telangana Movement, advocating for equitable development and representation in the envisioned state. Their leadership challenged traditional power structures and brought attention to the specific

needs and rights of marginalized groups, ensuring that the movement's goals encompassed social justice alongside regional autonomy.

➤ **Alliance Building**

Dalit-Bahujan activists actively collaborated with other marginalized groups, including tribal communities and women's organizations, to strengthen the movement. These alliances created a broad-based coalition that could effectively challenge the existing socio-political order and advocate for a Telangana state that would be inclusive and just for all its inhabitants. Such coalition-building was essential in presenting a united front and in negotiating the terms of statehood to reflect the diverse interests of the region's population.

Through these multifaceted contributions, Dalit-Bahujan communities in Adilabad not only played a crucial role in the Telangana Movement but also ensured that the quest for statehood was intrinsically linked with the pursuit of social justice and equality.

IMPACT OF DALIT-BAHUKAN ACTIVISM

The active participation of Dalit-Bahujan communities in the Telangana Movement had a transformative impact, ensuring that issues of social justice, land rights, and equitable development were central to the statehood discourse. Their involvement provided a platform to assert their identity and demand recognition within Telangana's socio-political landscape.

➤ **Impact of Dalit-Bahujan Activism**

- **Centralizing Social Justice:** Dalit-Bahujan activism emphasized the need to address caste-based discrimination and economic disparities, ensuring that the movement's goals extended beyond regional autonomy to include social equity. This focus brought attention to the systemic injustices faced by marginalized communities, advocating for reforms that would lead to their upliftment.
- **Advocating Land Rights:** Land ownership has historically been a contentious issue for Dalit-Bahujan communities. Their activism within the Telangana Movement highlighted the demand for land redistribution and rights, aiming to dismantle feudal structures that perpetuated their economic exploitation. This advocacy was crucial in challenging the socio-economic hierarchies that marginalized these communities.

- **Asserting Identity:** The movement provided a platform for Dalit-Bahujan communities to assert their cultural and political identities. Through cultural expressions and leadership, they challenged the dominant narratives that had historically marginalized them, fostering a sense of pride and solidarity. This assertion was instrumental in redefining their place within the socio-political fabric of Telangana.

➤ **Challenges Faced**

Despite their significant contributions, Dalit-Bahujan communities encountered several challenges:

- **Limited Political Representation:** Mainstream political parties often marginalized Dalit-Bahujan voices, resulting in underrepresentation in leadership positions. This exclusion hindered their ability to influence decision-making processes effectively and advocate for their specific needs within the movement.
- **Socio-Economic Constraints:** Widespread poverty and lack of access to resources limited the capacity of Dalit-Bahujan communities to sustain prolonged participation in the movement. Economic hardships made it challenging to mobilize and organize effectively, often restricting their engagement to short-term activities.
- **Resistance from Dominant Castes:** Efforts by Dalit-Bahujan communities to assert their rights and demand equitable treatment often met with resistance from dominant caste groups. This opposition manifested in various forms, including social ostracism, economic boycotts, and, in some instances, violence, aimed at suppressing their activism.

Despite these challenges, the resilience and determination of Dalit-Bahujan communities played a crucial role in shaping the Telangana Movement, ensuring that the quest for statehood was intrinsically linked with the pursuit of social justice and equality.

CONCLUSION

The active engagement of Dalit-Bahujan communities in the Telangana Movement underscores the transformative power of grassroots activism and inclusive leadership in socio-political struggles. In Adilabad district, their unwavering commitment not only bolstered the demand for statehood but also brought to the forefront the imperative of

addressing historical injustices and ensuring equitable development. By challenging entrenched social hierarchies and advocating for systemic change, these communities played a pivotal role in shaping the movement's trajectory. Their cultural expressions, leadership, and alliance-building efforts enriched the movement, ensuring that the quest for Telangana's statehood was intrinsically linked with the pursuit of social justice. As Telangana continues its journey as an independent state, the lessons from this movement serve as a poignant reminder of the potential of marginalized voices to effect meaningful change. The experiences of Dalit-Bahujan communities highlight the necessity of inclusive governance and the continuous endeavor to create a society where equity and justice are foundational principles. Their legacy within the Telangana Movement stands as a testament to the enduring impact of collective action in the face of adversity.

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