



A Profile of Dalit Movement – Response of the Civil Society: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh

**AKEPOGU
JAMMANNA**

UGC Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of History, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur.

**Prof. PASALA
SUDHAKAR**

Registrar, Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University - Visakhapatnam.

ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to throw light on the, caste discrimination and oppression being experienced by Dalits and their reactionary attitude to consolidate themselves to face the challenges of upper caste dominance. It is against this growing irrelevance of various grassroots movements that the Dalit movements in India emerging, or seems like emerging. The Dalit consciousness is by no means limited to the scheduled castes. It has begun to symbolize a much broader spectre of the oppressed and hitherto excluded social strata. It is based on an attempted though by no mean still realized solidarity of the poor and the discriminated classes of the people, long held back and frustrated, its leadership divided and brought over, distanced from the masses and co-opted within the mainstream and in establishment structures and positions.

KEYWORDS

The object of Dalit movement was obviously to emancipate the Dalits from the thralldom of untouchability and caste system. However, the strategies, ideologies, approaches, ways and means were varied from leader to leader, place to place and time to time. The 'Dalit Consciousness' came to the fore in different forms and shades.¹

A notable feature of the Indian society in recent years is that from out of disadvantaged people who are dealt with by the law as well as in the idiom of social justice as homogeneous classes (Dalit, minorities, women, etc), and categories asserting their further discrimination have emerged seeking society's attention to their particular plight. The situation calls for a sensitive response that will neither deny them further discrimination nor use it as a stick to beat the parent category with.²

The Dalit movement in India charted a distinctive course highlighting the Dalit question but at the same time making it integral to the larger question of emancipation and enablement. But it is at cross-roads today and the larger issues of emancipation and Dalit oppression as integral to it seems to have been sidelined. The internal conflicts and fragmentation within the Dalit movement and its inability to set the course of public life are amply in evidence everywhere.³

Three distinct concerns of Dalit movement in India may be highlighted in this context. It recognized that the denial of selfhood to Dalits in the prevailing social relations that are embedded in both the public and social institutions from early on manifests in such deprivation as self respect, human dignity and rights. It joined hands with concerns of other similarly oppressed groups in struggling for those sources, which would facilitate the development of a confident self. It can be said that even today this remains one of the primary drives of the Dalit movement holding out the possibility of bringing Dalits and the allied groups on a common platform.

The issue of dignity and self hood are centrally related to the question of culture. Dalits laid claim to such resources as language, religion, symbols and traditions and on their basis attempted to carve out a distinctive cultural autonomy for their future. This legacy which it shared to a great extent with the self-respect movement remains in tatters today as a succession of ruling regimes have attempted to own up these resources and tried to use them and reproduce their dominance over Dalits. Besides, Dalits through their movement have gener-

ated their own cultural resources. But a fragmented Dalit movement has not been able to effectively make use of these resources. A number of concerns that the social movement of Dalit have raised closely reflect on their search for a self, which can elicit its due recognition and anchored in an egalitarian community.

THE PROBLEM FACED BY DALIT MOVEMENTS:

The problems faced by Dalit Movements are not new. Throughout history, they have been fighting the planned conspiracy of the dominant forces. Here are few to think about:

The Dalit Movement, which says 'Annihilation of Caste alone is social liberation' but in reality they're own caste identity becomes very important. But, one has to be extremely careful to see the present and the future. At present the need for negotiation is undeniable but a collective future strategy is the need of the hour. "Because of this, no Dalit movement encompassing the whole of Andhra Pradesh is going beyond caste identity. Although they are majority on population basis, yet geographically being spread over, they are always counted as minority"

Since the Dalits are economically backward, they don't have enough funds and infrastructure to build a movement and find it difficult to cope up with funds or like left or people's movement they should pay attention to street collection of funds. In addition to this, "The movement is very much affected by loss of life and property owing to the high handed cruel atrocities of the dominant castes and the police." Whenever Dalit movements take a definite stand at the time of elections; the government and the dominant caste file false cases on them and unleash violent control over them. Whenever they go against the ruling Government, they are arrested and cases are framed against them. This has been adopted as a technique to destroy a movement.⁴

STRUGGLES IN ANDHRA PRADESH:-

It is observed that the approaches used by scholars to study the social movements of Dalits are not uniform. As a result, they have failed to bring out the shortcomings of the movements to provide insights into the problems.

The following important events are identified here around which the scheduled castes agitations in Andhra Pradesh are concentrated. 1962 Sanjivaiah became the first Dalit Chief

Minister of Andhra Pradesh, 1969 Kanchikacherla Kotesu was burnt alive, 1983 Burning of 4 persons in Padiri Kuppam in Chittoor district, 1985 The Karamchedu massacre took place on July 17th in Prakasam District resulting in the formation of Dalit Mahasabha, 1990 Chundururu carnage took place on August 6th in Guntur district. The breaking of Dalit Mahasabha, 1992 A Dalit writers, artists and intellectuals collective formed in Hyderabad, 1996 Madiga Dandora was formed in coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, 2000 Vempenta Incident in Kurnool district where Dalits were killed through the alleged involvement of Naxlite groups, 2001 Dalit human rights organization as an NGO initiative formed to represent the Dalit issue at WCAR at Durban, 2003 The Scheduled Castes reservations were categorized by the Government as ABC and D.⁵

The Kanchikacherla Kotesu case became a landmark in the history of Dalit struggles in Andhra Pradesh. This incident helped the ruling castes to become conscious of their hegemony over the Dalits in the advanced districts of Andhra Pradesh. The PadiriKuppam case is the beginning of a new political regime based on anti-Brahmin struggle and consolidation of caste power of a Sudra caste in Andhra Pradesh. Caste is always seen in India in its practice, otherwise it has no meaning. Therefore, when a particular caste becomes strong, it tries to show its power in relation to another caste, mostly the deprived caste like scheduled castes. This is what has happened in Padiri Kuppam and in Karamchedu. The Karamchedu massacre was so brutal that two Dalit minor girls were raped and their private parts mutilated. The brutal massacre gave a conscious development of an organisation to protest against the incident. The formation of the Dalitha Mahasabha was a long felt need of the Dalits in the state, as the mainstream Dalit struggles in the state were confined to job reservation by the organised few till the incident happened in Karamchedu. Within 5 years after the Karamchedu incident, the Chundururu incident took place in the neighbouring district of Guntur. But, the usual Daliting i.e., breaking into pieces has taken place within the Dalith Mahasabha when the Chundururu issue came up for agitation.⁶

However, these two important events moved the intellectuals and writers belonging to the scheduled castes and some backward castes to form into an organisation to reflect on the woes of Dalits in Andhra Pradesh. The Madigas of Andhra Pradesh, the victims of Kaamchedu became conscious of their conditions and rights. They perceived that injustice is done to them by Malas within the Dalit group and therefore wanted a separate identity for their group. This helped to form a separate organisation called 'Madiga Dandora'. The Malas protested against this and formed a separate organisation called 'Mala Mahanadu'. The ghastly incident in Vempenta where about a half a dozen Dalits were killed passed out without any significant attention in the melee of internal bickering. Keeping the world conference against racism, the NGO sector reacted positively to take the Dalit issue to the International Forum through the formation of Dalit human rights group. The government of Andhra Pradesh has passed a government order dividing the scheduled castes reservations into ABCD groups in 2000. The Malas challenged it in the Supreme Court and it was struck down by Supreme Court as unconstitutional. Interestingly all the struggles in the state moved around the above issues and took place in the advanced districts of coastal Andhra Pradesh.⁷

AN EVALUATION OF THE STRUGGLES:

It is now difficult to evaluate the struggles in terms of any of the methodologies that have been used by scholars. We have not been able to develop a political economy of Dalit movements in India. The Marxist scholars have used the European categories to study Indian caste and have not been totally succeeded in evaluating the struggles and movements. But, we can evaluate the struggles in terms of the empirical data in relation to other major events in the Andhra Society, so as to get some meaningful conclusions. We are trying to relate the incidents and events in the context of the overall change and a development in Andhra society here.

But this may not help Dalit activist to arrive at meaningful conclusions for the continuation of his work with people. It is our view that so far the scheduled castes struggles were burdened with social and psychological issues without paying much attention to the economic issues, which perhaps are responsible for the events that we have identified already. This does not mean there is a base – super structure relationship here. Gail Omvedt and others have employed those categories and are now disappointed. Therefore, without going into the methodological questions, we present here the three phases of the agitations / struggles in Andhra Pradesh after the formation of the state.⁸

It argues that the contours and changes in the Dalit movement can be made sense of through the impact created on the and by the three major massacres against Dalits, in Karamchedu in 1985, Chundururu in 1991 and Vempenta in 1998. Around these gruesome events, the Dalit movement shaped and re-shaped its agenda, political discourse and strategy of transformation. In course of its struggles against caste atrocities, it perceived the Naxalite movement as both an ally and at times representative of the same caste hierarchy that society at large replicated. The issue of solidarity between these movements therefore becomes extremely crucial not only in shaping these movements but also in determining the nature of social transformation in times to come. Ironically, in a transitory phase glorifying and eulogizing the 'proliferation' and 'fragmentation' of identities and struggles, there seem to be radically new possibilities to forge solidarity.

Karamchedu: The Independent Dalit Movement:

The Karamchedu massacre had its roots in the complex economic, political and cultural changes that this village witnessed over the past quarter century. In the 1970's the Kamma small peasants of Karamchedu, who were well versed with tobacco cultivation, began to migrate to far off districts like Karimnagar and began to cultivate tobacco on larger portions of land. While the migrant Kamma farmers struck gold in tobacco and cotton cultivation elsewhere, the others in Karamchedu did experience the spill over effects⁹. The scheduled castes filled this vacuum and graduated to share cropping and field tenancy. Most scheduled caste (SC) families graduated to become small peasants. Some among the youth also got educated and acquired jobs.

These changes in the economic positions of the SCs were in conflict with their extremely demeaning social position in the village. Practices of untouchability, extreme subordination, sexual exploitation of women and bonded labour, all began to be questioned and experienced in a changed context. Politically Karamchedu did have a history of Left politics, which made a decisive difference to their consciousness. "Almost isolating the landlords, the Kamma small peasants, tenants and agricultural labours along with the Dalits and others aligned themselves with the communist party. The incident clearly depicts a cultural assertion by the Dalits and the intolerance of the Kamma's to the changing situation. On July 16th a Kamma boy bathed a buffalo at the steps of the water tank of the Dalits and directed the dirty water into the tank which was meant for their drinking water. A lame Dalit youth and a young Dalit woman protested against this.¹⁰ The Kamma community retaliated against this protest by massacring several Dalits in the early hours of 17th July. Six Dalit men were killed and more than 25 others, including several women, were injured. The incident has severe repercussions in terms of the physical and mental health of the Dalit community of the village.

This assertion for an autonomous movement demanded autonomy from both the state institutions and the mainstream parties and also the radical left movement led by the various ML groups. Dalit leaders protested and rejected the Marxist Leninist (henceforth ML) group's depiction of the incident as 'landlords attack against labourers' (title of the pamphlet distributed by the People's War Group (henceforth the PWG). Instead, they represented it as an attack by 'Kamma landlords'

on 'Madiga coolies'. Along with demanding autonomy from the ML groups, Dalit leaders rejected state institutions and even the Dalit leaders within them, both political representatives as well as bureaucrats. As a symbolic representation of an autonomous struggle, Dalit leaders decided that only Dalits' would occupy the dais and address others on the issue of Karamchedu. In course of two months struggle after the incident, Dalit leaders also argued that there is need for 'Dalit organic intellectuals', who could alone conceptualize the aspirations of Dalits along with 'political power for Dalits' as the essential demand of an independent Dalit movement.

KARAMCHEDU:

It is interesting to despite the diversification into urban economic activities and migration to far-off places, the Kammas of Karamchedu retained an active connection with the village by owning properties there and some migrant farmers' families continued to live there. In the case of the tobacco-growing migrant farmers, the product was brought back to the village for fine grading and sold in the major tobacco market of Guntur. It is easy to imagine, therefore, the wealth the Kammas accrued. According to the report of a Fact Finding Team which visited the Karamchedu village immediately after the carnage:

'Of these various sources the most important are tobacco cultivation and paddy crop, and only for these two sources, there is some information, which would help to make a rough estimate of the annual income of this community in the village. Of the total produce from the paddy crop on the 11,000 acres of the village at least half would be the net accrual to the community which amount to about 1,37,500 bags of paddy, the market value of which works out to be about Rs. 1.37 crore. Based on the 'barns' used for curing the tobacco brought to Karamchedu, it is estimated that the total area of tobacco cultivated... would be about 10,000 acres. Given the average net income from an acre of tobacco as Rs. 5,000, the total earnings from tobacco cultivation works out to about Rs.5 crore. Assuming, conservatively, that the income earned from the rest of the other sources would be at least as much as the net accruals from the paddy crop (Rs. 1.37), the total annual income of the Karamchedu Kamma community works out to a staggering sum of Rs. 7.74 crore. The estimated 1,200 households with a population of 6,000, the average household income of community is about Rs. 65,000 and per capita income about Rs. 12,500.'¹¹

This was seen as a sufficient provocation for the Kammas 'to teach a lesson' to the Madigas. An attack was meticulously planned and executed on the morning of 17 July. Hundreds of Kammas were gathered, armed with axes, spears and clubs, most of them in an inebriated condition, to launch a full-scale attack from all sides on the Madigapalle. The fact that it was meticulously planned and that nothing was left to chance was evident in the way the whole operation was conducted.¹² To catch the Madigas unawares, a team was sent with a proposal for compromise, which was approved by a section of the Madiga youth. Even before they could sense the impending disaster, they were attacked.

CHUNDURU:

Another two incidents which occurred in the last decade of this century, wherein the assertion of 'disable' has resulted in the elimination of the disabled by the 'abled'. The two incidents are Chundururu (Guntur district) massacre of Dalits and the Vempenta (Kurnool district) burnings of Dalits. These two incidents shows the limitations of the Fundamental Rights (Article 14) of the Constitution which ensure the equality, freedom and more important a right to life which includes the means of livelihood.¹³

Edureeta's editorial declared that the purpose of the journal is to, a) Critique the anti-democratic, authoritarian tendencies within the various revolutionary groups vis-à-vis the newly emerging caste and gender perspectives. b) Invite discussions on caste by both revolutionary groups and autonomous Dalit

organizations. It was supposed to be a platform for all progressive groups to negotiate their theoretical and ideological differences so as to make unity between them possible¹⁴

Edureeta was autonomous of both the Dalit movement led by the DMS and the various revolutionary groups. It strongly believed that critical intervention into the politics of both the Dalit and the Naxalite movement alone would make a meaningful dialogue between them possible and purposeful. As for the Dalit movement, (a) It was critical of DMS for appealing to the same upper caste State, which was perpetuating caste discrimination in the state; (b) It analyzed the shifts in the programme of DMS and cautioned it against its politics of mobilizing just SC's and ST's and not addressing issues concerning the Bahujans and other poorer communities; (c) It also criticized DMS for neglecting its original agenda to struggle for land and other economic issues and instead restricting to demanding compensation and reservations from the government. It argued that Dalit movement in course of time has restricted itself to the 'socio-cultural' domain and fought as if Dalits could be emancipated without addressing the issue of economic equality and redistribution.

Therefore had a narrow and constitutionally constrained notion of transformation. With the intervention of Edureeta in the ongoing dialogue between the Dalit groups and the ML organizations, the debate got concretized in terms of (a) distribution of land on the basis of caste, (b) making it mandatory to have Dalits (and women) as leaders in all the ML groups and (c) to theoretically accept the combined philosophy of Ambedkarism- Marxism as the only alternative for the Indian situation. These alternatives got further legitimized at the beginning of the decade of 90s with the Chundur massacre. It was again, on the lines of Karamchedu, retaliation by the upper caste communities, not against demands for higher wages or land, but about identity assertion by the Dalits for self-respect and dignity. This time in Chundur on 6th August 1991 more than 10 Dalits were brutally killed¹⁵ M Immediately after the incident, in spite of the fierce ideological differences, the ML and the Dalit groups formed 'Joint Action Committee', with the DMS, CPI, (ML) Vimochana, UCCRI (ML), Socialist Revolutionary Forum, and Ambedkar Youth Association.

One of the immediate reasons and gains that the Dalit movement perceived with its merger with the BSP was its success in drawing together the Dalits (SCs and STs) and the Bahujans (OBCs), which the autonomous Dalit movement had failed to do. It was observed that there was an upsurge in the backward caste whose youth especially in northern Telangana districts gravitated towards the BSP. Kanshi Ram in course of his campaign argued that it was due to BSP's efforts that the OBCs gained new consciousness and to counter it the Congress party was trying to vie them by constituting the 'OBC Commission'. The combination of being a social movement and a political party, BSP argued apparently created a larger space for Dalit politics than what an autonomous movement could.¹⁶

However, 'parliamentary path versus armed revolt' emerged as the most significant dichotomy and important ML groups like the PWG, now distanced themselves from the Dalit politics, as pursued by the BSP. Thus, the legal constitutional means, which were only a part of the autonomous Dalit movement, and unlike the initial reluctance parliamentary politics now became the key strategy for achieving power and social transformation. The careful balance it was attempting between agitation – militant means and legal – constitutional means could not be maintained anymore. Though BSP could not gain any seats in the assembly elections, it propelled a process of conversion of Dalit social movement in to a 'political movement' primarily centered on identity related 'populist' and 'symbolic' issues. In the post-BSP phase in AP, Dalit organizations made independent attempts to come together and form political fronts and continue to pursue electoral politics as the strategy for empowerment.¹⁷

One such experiment was the formation of Mahajan Front, with around 22 prominent Dalit organizations. It constituted important sub-caste Dalit mass organizations such as the Madiga Dandora, Mala Samarabheri, etc. Mahajan Front however attempted to appropriate, like the BSP, the revolutionary language and declared that they would be more radical than the BSP, as they understood the distinction between 'social justice' and 'socialist justice'. Their struggle was supposedly against both 'Brahmanism and Capitalism'¹⁸. However, this experiment did not last long and the Dalit movement increasingly distanced itself from its earlier caste-class approach and entered a period of lull.

Though it rightly stressed that complete resolution is possible only after the New Democratic Revolution, they nevertheless transformed Marx's famous dictum to discursively rearticulate it as "all hitherto history of India is the history of class and caste struggles". They acknowledged the contributions of 'reformers' such as Buddha, Basavanna, Narayan Guru, Jyoti Rao Phule, Ambedkar, whose writings and ideas were extensively propagated by the autonomous Dalit movement born after the Karamchedu massacre in 1985. Regarding autonomous Dalit organizations they observed "we must adopt the policy of forging a common front with the cadres of such organizations on specific issues related to caste discrimination while taking care to expose the bourgeois reformist nature and limitations of their leadership".

In the KNPS' manifesto, it raised the pertinent point regarding 'classes within caste groups'. While the autonomous Dalit movement perceived the new classes as an empowerment of Dalits, KNPS argued that this nascent bourgeois class among the Dalits was interested in the slogan 'political power to Dalits' as it had already acquired economic power. This class also had a nexus with the traditional feudal ruling classes.¹⁹

Thus, KNPS sought to link Dalit movement with the Naxalite movement in struggles against feudalism and imperialism. Similarly, it raised the issue of eradication of caste identities as against their consolidation being pursued by the autonomous Dalit movement and saw this as possible only through re-integrating a class agenda, which was being increasingly neglected. It is because of this caste-class approach that KNPS could address various issues related to conflicts between the BCs and Dalits and sub-caste conflicts more boldly than the Dalit movement, which had no means of negotiating them through the prism of identity politics.²⁰

The rather poignant historical opportunity for solidarity created by the Chundur massacre and the consequent decisive changes in the understanding of the radical left struggles, was lost with the decline of agitational-militant characteristic and foray into electoral politics by the Dalit movement and focusing more on identity related emotive issues and gradually withdrawing from economic demands such as implementation of land reforms and minimum wages and ideologically distancing itself from Marxism and the caste-class approach. As for the ML movement though it made important corrections to both its earlier theory and practice related to caste atrocities by forming separate mass organizations and ironically moved close to the caste-class approach, it failed to retain its leaders who belonged to the Dalit community and therefore the suspicion that these are merely 'tactical' changes continued to belie a meaningful dialogue.

VEMPENTA:

It took another major massacre against the Dalits for the earlier aborted debates to revive. However, the context this time around was much more complex, and was symptomatic of multiple levels of contradictions. The Dalit movement had to negotiate not only with the ML groups but also the 'internal' demand for autonomy from the sub-caste groups. The sub-caste movement raised issues similar to the demands made previously by the ML movement. It was in 1995 that the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) came into existence. Both the important leaders of this movement, Krishna Madi-

ga and Krupakar Madiga, were previously associated with the Naxalite organizations. MRPS raised the issue of 'classes within caste groups' that got consolidated due to the disproportionate appropriation of reservations by the Mala community and demanded that 15 per cent quota allotted to the SCs in the state be subdivided and fixed quotas allotted to properly identified sub-groups of the 59 Dalit communities.²¹

The MRPS also opened up the debate on those 90 per cent Madigas who resided in villages and needed land and not reservation, land reforms became an important issue brought to the centre stage by caste struggles. MRPS also debated on whether privatization would benefit or rob the Dalit communities of whatever opportunities they had. Sub-caste movement was pleading for a serious debate on ways of integrating caste and class and was increasingly critical of the Dalit movement that began to distance itself from such a perspective. These demands and the emerging perspective were very close to those raised by the ML movement and had the propensity of drawing Dalit movement closer to the ML movement. Similarly, various organizations pressed upon the MRPS to demand 50 per cent reservations for women to be implemented within the sub-division of SC reservations into A, B, C, and D groups. It was this compounded complexity that got exemplified in the Vempenta incident involving sub-caste violence.

In Vempenta a village in the Kurnool district of Rayalaseema region in Andhra Pradesh, factionalism was the dominant culture. The entire economic, political, and social life of the village was under the control of factions led by the landlords who had direct links (either as MLAs or through control over the representatives) with either the TDP or the Congress. Sometime around 1980, CPI (ML) Peoples War Group entered this village to build a struggle for land and increase in the wages. Around 1996, under the party's leadership the landless the landless labourers occupied temple lands. This land was redistributed among 80 Madiga, 56 Mala and 129 backward caste and lower class (which included some upper caste) families. Each family got half-an-acre land.²²

As there were more landless families among the Madiga community more land was distributed to them. These struggles and access to land gave an increasing sense of confidence and dignity to the Madiga families in the village. They were also now more openly part of the mass organisation of the Peoples War Group. This obviously earned the wrath of the upper caste Reddy landlord family, which dominated the village, along with the ex-sarpanch who belonged to the BC community. As a counter strategy to the PWG, both the landlord and the ex-sarpanch mobilised the OBCs and the Malas of the village under the pretext that injustice was done to them in the distribution of the land. They went to the extent of organizing a social boycott of the Madiga families in the village, in a context where the state was already under the grip of a strong sub-caste (Madiga) movement.

Madiga families were forced to organize their own market to sell their harvest as well as their own panchayats. This further sharpened the conflict between the landlord, Malas and the OBCs on the one hand, and PWG and Madigas on the other. Along with this, as part of organizational rivalry in the village, Pratigatana, another ML organisation ironically joined hands with the landlords to weaken the hold of PWG, which was by then very strong over the landless labourers (predominantly Madigas) of the village. Responding to this growing conflict, the PWG killed the ex-sarpanch who belonged to a backward caste. In reaction, the village that had already been polarized across caste-class lines now flared up in a brutal massacre by the landlords (with the active support of the Malas and OBCs) on 16th July 1998, of men and women of the Madiga community. After brutally killing them by chopping off their hands and heads, the landlords threw 9 Madiga men into a lit pyre.

Caste organizations such as the Dalit Bahujan Mahasabha have argued that one of the important dimensions of the incident was the 'caste blind politics' of the PWG. They could

not foresee the possibility of mobilisation on caste lines by the landlords. Not only could the landlords mobilise the Reddy families but also other OBC and Mala communities. Caste differences make collective mobilisation and hatred easy. Some Dalit writers have argued that Vempenta was always a 'communist village' but the reason behind the absence of such incidents was that the leadership of the communist organizations remained with the 'Reddy communists' who therefore enjoyed the close patronage of the Reddy landlords. The communist groups and the landlords entered into a conflicting situation because the leadership shifted into the hands of the Dalits. It is interesting to observe that these leaders of the PWG belong to the Madiga community and which could very well be a reason why they had more following among the Madigas.²³

Dalit writers have also recognised that there was a caste contradiction between the SCs and the OBCs. They have argued that it was because of this complex and graded situation that Ambedkar had believed violence had only a partial role in socio-cultural transformation. They also argued neither squad action nor individual annihilation could be a solution for any of the problems as they reflect an apolitical-militarist approach, which cannot handle caste contradictions. As a method of resolving caste conflicts Dalit organizations suggested distribution of land and wealth in accordance with the 'population percentage of different castes' and making Dalit Bahujan group's part of the 'State power' However, as ML parties were struggling to negotiate with their earlier 'caste blind' politics, the Dalit movement also failed to evolve a clear perspective and would appear, therefore, to have been largely a 'sub-caste' blind movement. The PWG in its reply to the accusations of leading a 'caste blind struggle' argued that there were not only Madiga men and women among those killed but also four men belonging to the BC community. It was also a fact that majority of those who took part in the massacre were men of the OBC community who were the followers of the ex-sarpanch, other than a few Mala men who were traditionally with the landlord's faction. Moreover, they argued, land could not be distributed on the basis of caste but on the basis of landlessness. For instance, there were powerful landed factional leaders from the BC community. How does one characterize these Bahujans? Replying to a phrase used by one of the Dalit writers, they described the Vempenta massacre as 'Manu's justice' but implemented by an ex-sarpanch who was of the BC caste. ML organizations argued that it was only by recognizing the 'classes within these caste groups'²⁴, a perspective very close to the sub-caste movement, could unity be achieved among the Dalit Bahujans. As the Dalit movement was experiencing 'internal' pressures vertically between the OBCs and the various constituents within the SCs that exposed the limitation of exclusive identity based struggles and the need for a more nuanced caste-class approach, Naxalite movement also began to experience similar 'internal' dissent owing to its inadequate conceptualization in integrating caste with class politics. Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, which worked for the rights of the ML activists and against state violence, began to gradually expand its scope and bring in violations at the civil societal level. This is in effect, in the course of time, meant taking a more critical view of both the violence indulged in by the ML groups and also the denial of rights by these groups to individuals of various vulnerable social groups.

It began by investigating lock-up deaths of common people, atrocities on women, such as dowry deaths and domestic violence. It investigated atrocities on Dalits, and brought out reports on Karamchedu and other massacres. It was also concerned with environmental issues such as the pollution of water tanks by industrial wastes as well as about famine conditions and hunger deaths in various districts. During this phase in the growth of civil liberties movement, it expanded by investigating various issues that were brought into relief by various autonomous social movements, outside the fold of the Naxalite movement. With the beginning of the decade of 1990s, however, the issues of various social movements began

to emerge in a more complex and inter-connected manner. The very essence and nature of the civil liberties movement now came under scrutiny. The cardinal point for the movement was not in lending support to caste, class and gender movements and their issues independent of each other, but in recognizing the mutual conflicts that these movements entered into and the multiple contradictions, which unfolded simultaneously.

Many of the activists in APCLC argued that human rights should be comprehended dialectically, and in an unequal society there could not be equal rights. 'The debate on the relationship between a distinct 'human rights perspective' and the 'revolutionary perspective' thus became more pronounced and significant. Anachronistically speaking, its against this background that that following comment of the then President assumes significance: "For human rights activists, Koyyuru raises issues regarding the concept of human rights itself; the advisability of expanding the concept and thereby enlarging the field of operation of human rights work."²⁵

Thus an independent human rights group was formed out of the demands for autonomy that were 'internal' to the Naxalite movement. The semblances of a unified Dalit movement are increasingly threatened by the rise of conflicts with the OBCs or Bahujans on the one hand and rise of an independent sub-caste movement on the other. These 'internal' protest movements are a result of gradual withdrawal of the Dalit movement from its initial caste-class perspective, and consequent neglect of economic demands for land and wages, undermining agitational-militant strategies against the State and reluctance in arriving at combinatory ideological postures around Ambedkarism and Marxism. As for the Naxalite movement, there is a rise of an 'internal' civil liberties movement, resulting in a split and increasing dissent from its Dalit and women cadre against 'internal' caste and gender violations and thus demanding further reflection on party's position on these issues. These 'internal' demands can be addressed only by adopting theory and practice 'external' to these movements. Drawing on the 'internal-external' dialectic can not only re-unify the various segments of each of these movements but also open up radically new possibilities of substantive solidarity between the Dalit and the Naxalite movements, across and material, discursive and strategic dimensions. The 'internal-external' dialectics would increasingly push the movements and its various segments to address issues in economic, political, social and cultural domains, focusing on their manifold inter-linkages rather than 'regionally separating' them.

However, these integrated social and material conditions are always mediated through various processes. They are not 'given' to translate naturally into solidarity between the movements in course of struggles; they need to be discursively articulated. As Althusser argues, discourses do not reflect an already existing social reality but constitutes social reality for us. Theory/discourse cannot be regarded as an intellectual domain, while practice is seen to be rooted in a concrete terrain. 'Internal-external' dynamics against create the necessity or in fact get articulated through a new political discourse. While the PWG rearticulated the famous Marxist dictum to read 'all hitherto history of India of class and caste struggles'; the civil liberties movement pleaded for 'democratic space' referring to not only to the space between the state and the civil society but also between the various movements within the civil society. Again the Dalit movement introduced novel combinatory language such as 'Dalit communists struggling against a 'Hindu feudal order' for a 'new Dalit democratic revolution'. These articulations are representative of the transformation of both traditional Dalit and Naxalite politics.

It is clear that the Dalit organizations are quite aware that the political parties are not helpful for the emancipation of the Dalits. But they have chosen to support them in the elections only to fulfil the interests of their community or the movement. Needless to say that there perceptions and support to the political parties is not constant and subject to change

since there is growing consciousness among the Dalits. It is thus, clear that the political parties are losing their support base among the deprived communities. This may be one of the reasons, of late, for the failure political parties getting majority seats in the legislatures, leading to coalition politics. Thanks to Dalit movements, the weaker sections are no longer weak in politics. They have learnt to bargain in politics for their advantage and act accordingly. The political parties can regain the confidence of the Dalits only when they come out of the narrow perceptions of electoral politics (Caste and Class character) and make a dedicated effort to solve the Dalit problems and work for their development.²⁶

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