

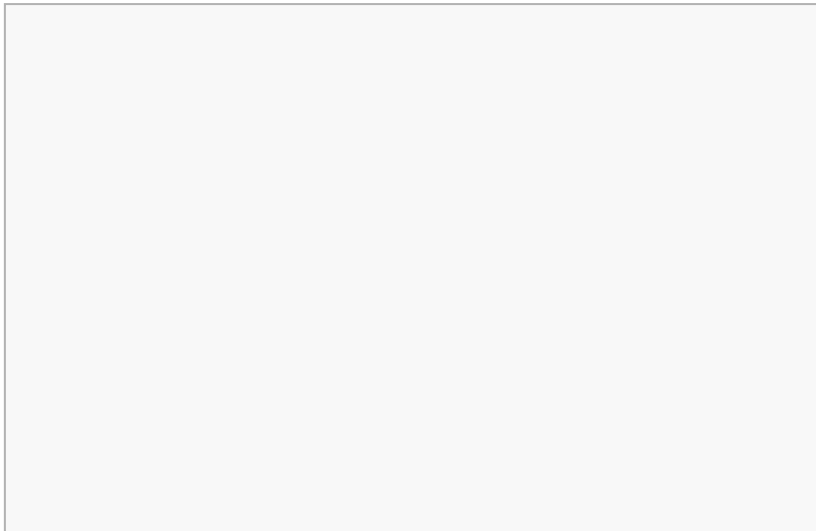
No. 13, December 2008

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Democratization in
Andhra Pradesh**

K.Y. Ratnam



East-West Center
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The Dalit Movement and Democratization in Andhra Pradesh

This study argues that the democratic state in India is an historical product of very specific circumstances; as such the broader idea of democracy is not consistent with the specific Caste system. Therefore, there is serious juxtaposition between the institutional promise of democracy and the real practice of democracy in relation to the victims of the caste system, the Dalits. However, the caste-based hierarchical relations of dominance and subordination have provided sufficient conditions for the rise of Dalit consciousness and these objective conditions have transformed into the sites of democratic struggles when the Dalits are affronted with the real operation of liberal democratic principles of, equality, freedom, fraternity, and social justice. Caste conflict, thus, lies at the structural dimensions of Indian society in the form of exclusion, discrimination, and economic inequality. Inequalities based on the caste divisions are intrinsically anti-democratic, and the caste system as an oppressive ideological system represents the

scheme of power, domination, privilege, and hierarchy. Its very foundation remains a central obstacle in the path of democratic redistribution of power.

The main focus of the study is to grasp the significance and the extent to which the Dalit movement shapes the meaning of democratization. While realizing the substance of democracy, it goes beyond the impasse of liberal strategies such as reservation policy/affirmative action and proposes a further kind of inclusive democracy with a proportional distribution of benefits. In this predicament, how well Indian democracy works for the historically disadvantaged Dalits is the central puzzle. In order to understand this puzzle, the study seeks to engage in a wide set of questions: To what extent is the contradiction between the Dalits' belief of inequality and reality of inequality being resolved in the postindependent democratic setup? How and why is the annihilation of caste more important than anything else in actualizing a

substantive democracy? How has caste violence on Dalits produced a movement that has to do something with the process of democratization in Andhra Pradesh society? Why have the Karamchedu and Chundur incidents become a swarming point for the emergence of the Dalit democratic movement in Andhra Pradesh? In light of these, the study explains the impressive connection between the Dalit movement and the process of democratization in Andhra Pradesh. The Dalit movement has been spurred on by new understandings and invigorated by new visions provided by its intellectuals and ideologues. Its concerns are serious and genuine. As a collective action, the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh, that began to articulate afresh concerning about the process of democratization, provides broad approaches not only for the academic pursuits but also institution builders and policymakers.

This study is divided into four sections: the first section deals with the nature of the early phase of Dalit mobilization in Telangana and Andhra regions that include the Rayalseema. The second section explains the political formation of Andhra Pradesh based on the languages and the socioeconomic location of the Dalits. The third section analyzes the specificity of historical and social context of contemporary, political culture of Andhra Pradesh. Lastly, the course of Dalit movement, and its efforts to democratize Andhra Pradesh and the issues before the Dalit movement are discussed.

The Early Phase of Dalit Movement in Telangana and Andhra Regions

The evolution of the Dalit movement in Telugu-speaking regions of Telangana and Andhra has a long history that parallels India's liberal parliamentary democratic transition from caste based to a feudal-colonial state. This history of democratic transition has the elongated allegory tied up with the configuration of power between the caste-based Indian feudalism and British imperial

colonialism. The nature of that concerted unison has been politically indicated in the configuration of unceasing hegemony of native upper caste feudalists over the wretched Dalits. Even the colonial modernization process, that included the restructuring of relations to accommodate the natives, reflected the political interest of dominant upper caste Hindu landlords. And the subaltern Dalits were further marginalized in this artful contract between their caste-centered feudal and the British colonial masters.

The colonial regime was able to impose its authority by co-opting native elites through the initiation of a series of accommodative measures. The introduction of the *Ryotwari* system, the construction of Krishna-Godavari irrigation projects, the establishment of more durable political and bureaucratic institutions has greatly contributed to significant economic and social structural changes. Thus the modernization process initiated during colonial rule not only empowered the native elites but reinforced their social dominance. The net effect of these changes on the hierarchical Indian society was seen "as setting in motion parallel horizontal mobilities both at the top and bottom of the social ladder, thus widening and deepening the already existing cleavages within society."¹ The rapidly growing educated urban middle class section of the dominant upper castes, along with the upper caste *Zamindars* and *Jagirdars* took the preeminent position in articulating the need for an effective struggle against colonialism and for *Swaraj* (self government) or independence.

The anticolonial consciousness was articulated and organized through the Indian National Congress on the assumption that all the people, irrespective of their specific interests, must engage in a nationalist movement to win independence so as to gain political power from the British colonial rule, in order to determine the future India's destiny. The universal democratic, libertarian principles of liberty and equality have become

endemic to them and posed as the champions of the anticolonial liberators defining their own public sphere and political community while circulating the idea of nationalism and nation yet rimming the lower caste Dalits and other artisan landless, illiterate mass. Every community was taught to know one singular enemy—the colonial power. The entire struggle was simplified and exemplified in certain slogans such as *Maa koddi Tella Doratanam* (We Don't Want This White Man Rule).

However, in this broad, popular attempt to dismantle the colonial state, the spurred impulsion towards the democratic transition was conspicuously influenced by the alternative articulations that had come from the anticaste and anti-Brahmin movements. Thus, along with the mass anticolonial assertion, there was an anticaste and anti-Brahmin movement carried forward by the socially alienated, economically oppressed, and politically discontented Dalits. A constructive and provocative attempt has been made to probe the complexity of their lives under the caste oppression along with the colonial exploitation. Dalit's inner emotions and thoughts, in the Telugu-speaking world, were bordered on the casteless, politically independent democratic India, and their articulations were epitomized as *Maa koddi Nalla Doratanam* (We Don't Want This Black Man [Native Upper Caste] rule).²

Added with significant ferment, many non-Hindu, alternative, semireligious sects were engineered by the lower castes to escape from the dehumanizing frame of caste and untouchability. Important among them were the Nasaraiah sect and Pothuluri Veerabramham whose teachings seemed to have tremendous attraction on the members of lower castes untouchables and Sudra artisans.³ Christian missionaries played an important role in bringing about a change in the status of the Dalits by opening numerous English schools, which became doorways to the proselytization process.⁴ Contributing to the changes in the plight of the Dalits was the

process of reform initiated by Hindu social reformers. Prominent among them were Kandukuri Veereshalingam Pantulu, Gurajada Appa Rao, Chilakamarthi Laxmi Narasimham, Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu, Narala Setti Devendrudu, Vemula Kurmayya, Guduru Ramachandra Rao, Vemuri Ramji Rao, Nallapati Hanumantha Rao, and Vellanki Krishna Murthi. Hindu reformist organizations like the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj also actively worked for the eradication of social evils like untouchability. The great philanthropist, the Maharaja of Pithapuram, established hostels and schools for the Dalits aiming to conduit the vehicle of democracy towards the annihilation of caste and class divisions.⁵

Inspiration has also come from Mahatma Jyotiba Phule's Satya Shodhak Samaj movement and Ambedkar's anticaste, antiuntouchability struggle in Maharashtra, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker's non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu, and Sri Narayana Guru's and Sri Ayyan Kali's social reform struggles in Kerala. Thus "the multi-directional lower caste struggles were in essence not only against the Brahminical and feudal social order but also against the colonial collusive power structure."⁶ They questioned the authority of the Vedas and other Hindu sacred texts, which endorsed the inhuman caste system. They spoke out against the colonial administration that was dominated by the upper castes, and their maintenance of deceptive land accounts, which prevented the Sudras and Dalits from owing land. Also traced logically the nexus between the British colonials and the native upper caste rulers, and asserted that both descended from the Aryan race, to exploit the non-Aryan, Dravidian Sudras, and Ati-Sudras.⁷

In Telangana region, under the *Jagirdari* system, agricultural land and wealth was concentrated in the control of a small number of *Jagirs* and *Deshmukhs*. The majority of poor Dalits, along with peasants and the artisan castes, provided the main means of earning

revenue. Caste-based extra economic coercive exploitation called the *Jajmani* system, was basically an economic system in which the lower castes have only obligations or duties to render the free services called *Vetti* or *Vettichakiri* (*Begar* to the upper caste landlords. Some of the Dalits who could escape from the *jajmani* system at the villages came to the cities, educated themselves, and diversified their economic activities especially in Hyderabad and Secundrabad. These educated Dalits from the cities later led the anticaste and antiuntouchability movements.

The Dalits in Telangana started the autonomous "Adi-Andhra" self-respect movement.⁸ The "Great Trinity" of the movement was Madari Bhagaiah, popularly known as Bhagya Reddy Verma, Arigay Ramaswamy, and B.S.Venkat Rao. These leaders endlessly engaged themselves in conscientizing the Dalits as to their identity and plight. Bhagya Reddy Verma formed a Jagan Mita Mandali in 1906, perhaps the first Dalit popular organization in Andhra Pradesh started by the Dalits.⁹ A politicocultural propaganda weapon to educate the Dalits through popular folklore, the Mandali injected a new awakening among the Dalits.¹⁰ In later years, Bhagya Reddy Verma became Ambedkarite and supported separate electorates for the Dalits. Attracted by the philosophy of Lord Buddha, he started celebrating Buddha Jayanti in 1913. He also started a weekly in Telugu called *Bhagyanagar*, later renamed *Adi-Hindu*.¹¹ In 1911, Bhagya Reddy Verma started a Manya Sangham, which was renamed as the Adi-Hindu Social Service League in 1921. The objective of the League was to eradicate the social customs that were imposed on the Dalits by Hinduism. Under the League's auspices another voluntary organization was also sounded, called Swastik Dala Yuvajana Sangham. The league published an English monthly, *Panchama*, with J.S. Mathaiah as the editor.

Bhagya Reddy Verma's concern throughout his life was with the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which made

him a natural champion of the Dalits. In his book entitled "Our Struggle for Emancipation," P.R. Venkatasamy narrated the history of the relentless struggle led by the underprivileged for their legitimate rights and social justice in the Nizam state of Hyderabad.¹² The "Adi-Hindus" of Hyderabad State were inducted into bonded labor called *vetti*, leather work, and scavenging. The pioneers of the "Adi-Hindu" social reform movement awakened social consciousness in the untouchables and several social and political organizations were formed to fight against social evils like child marriage and *devadasi* or *jogini* (dedication of young Dalit girls to the temple). In 1922, Arigay Ramaswamy started Adi-Hindu Jatiyonnati Sabha and Sabhari Sangham to articulate the local problems of Adi-Hindus generally hailed from Madigas and Malas. However, Ramaswamy started a separate organization called Arundatiya Yuvajana Sangham for the Madigas whose interests were marginalized and in a more disadvantageous position than the Malas.

One of the important developments in this context was the introduction of the word "Dalit" in Nizam State by formation of Hyderabad Dalit Jatiya Sangham. These organizations, despite their internal problems and dilemmas, pressed more for the introduction of distributive policies for the educational and political advantages of the Depressed Classes.¹³ The political structure in which the Dalits operated allowed for the incorporation of some of their leadership. B.S. Venkat Rao, popularly known as "Hyderabad Ambedkar," was the Minister of Education in Nizam's state of Hyderabad. Venkat Rao was responsible for getting some of the important lower level positions for the Dalits in the Nizam government, particularly in the public works, revenue, railways, defense, and education departments. He was also instrumental in getting a huge budget of Rs. 1 crore (10 million rupees) from the Nizam government for the establishment of schools and hostels for the Depressed Classes.¹⁴

Andhra, or the Coastal region, under the British Colonial regime's commercialization of agriculture through the construction of Godavari-Krishna anicuts or dams, "became the most prosperous part of the Telugu country and the rice-bowl of Andhra enjoying the benefits of a stable and enlightened administration and developing not only economically but socially and politically at a far faster rate than Nizam's Dominions."¹⁵ At the bottom of agrarian society, the outcaste Dalits, who were excluded from possessing land, became *Paleru* and the permanent farm servants were also called *Kamatagadu*, *Naukaru*, or *Jeetagadu*. The *Palerus* were asked to do a wide variety of arduous services both in the field and in the domestic sphere.

In this region, the Dalits were organized under the name of "Panchama" and in 1917 the First Provincial Panchama Mahajana Sabha conference was held at Vijayawada, with Bhagya Reddy Verma as president and Sundru Venkaiah as the chairman. In his presidential address Verma argued that the Dalits should be called Adi-Andhras instead of Panchamas, and the conference adopted the name of Adi-Andhra Mahajan Sabha.¹⁶ Many dedicated Dalit leaders emerged and worked for the formation of Ambedkar's ideology in Andhra region also. Prominent among them were Sundru Venkaiah, Kusuma Dharmanna, Gottipati Brahmayya (Machilipatnam), B.S. Murthy (East Godavari), Sardar Nagappa (Kurnool), Konada Surya Prakash Rao (Vijayawada), Nandanar Harichandra (West Godavari), M.L. Audiah (Secunderabad), Mudigonda Laxmaiah (Hyderabad), and J.H. Subbaiah (Secunderabad).¹⁷ The formation of an All-India Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942 under Ambedkar's leadership and its subsequent entry into Andhra Pradesh created an altogether different level of Dalit consciousness and identity.

The Political Formation of Andhra State and its Language

Andhra Pradesh, formed in 1956, brought

together three distinct ecological regions—Telangana, Rayaseema, and Coastal Andhra—after nine years of India's independence. The movement for a separate geographical administrative region for the Telugu-speaking people glossed over all sorts of differences and divisions and "became in its final stage a mass expression of the regional patriotism of all Telugus."¹⁸ This democratic process of consensus integration was done at two levels. Initially, the Telugu speaking people of Coastal Andhra (or the Northern Circar Districts) and Rayalaseema (or the Ceded Districts), in the Madras Presidency expressed mass discontent against the discriminatory attitudes of Tamils and led the movement for a separate administrative state. As a result, the Constituent Assembly appointed the Dhar Commission in 1949 which came out in favor of the creation of a separate Andhra state. Even the Committee headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel, and Pattabhi Seetharamaiah, famously called "JVP Committee" and appointed by the Indian National Congress, favored the creation of a separate Andhra state. The mobilization for a separate state has been intensified from all sides and meanwhile, Potti Sriramulu's self-immolation sparked off unprecedented violence in Andhra region. At last Nehru's government appointed the Wanchoo Commission that finalized the modalities for the formation of Andhra state along with Rayalaseema that was formed in 1953.

Secondly, around this time the Telugu-speaking Telangana people of Urdu dominated Nizam state had also led the potent agitation to merge the Nizam state with Andhra to form an affable *Vishalaandhra*, or the greater Andhra of Telugu speaking people. The political integration of Nizam's Hyderabad state with the Indian Union after that infamous "Police Action" of 1948 and the brutal suppression of Communist-led "Peasant Struggle" by Nehru's Congress government have all intensified for the formation of *Vishalandhra*.¹⁹ The States Reorganisation Commission of 1956 expressed

its strong opinion that the formation of *Vishalandhra* would benefit the entire Telugu-speaking people. Further the Commission opined that the "Advantages of a larger Andhra State including Telangana are that it will bring into existence a state of about 32 millions, with large water and power resources, adequate mineral wealth and valuable raw materials. This will also solve the difficult and vexing problem of finding a permanent capital for Andhra, for the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad are very well-suited to be capital of Vishalandhra."²⁰ Thus in 1956, finally Coastal Andhra,²¹ Rayalaseema,²² and Telangana²³ regions have politically integrated on linguistic basis as Andhra Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh is divided into 23 administrative Districts and there are 28,123 revenue villages in the state. In 1986, the earlier intermediary administrative units called Taluqs were abolished and the Mandals were introduced by Telugu Desam government. There are 1,109 Mandals, 21,943 Village Panchayats, and 22 District Councils (or *Zilla Parishads*). The Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Assembly has 294 Members of Legislative Assembly Constituencies, of which 39 belong to the Reserved Constituencies for the Scheduled Castes (Dalits). In the Parliament, out of 543 Lok Sabha (Lower House) Seats/Constituencies, Andhra Pradesh has 42 Constituencies, out of which six are reserved for the Dalits. In Rajya Sabha (Upper House), Andhra Pradesh has 18 seats, which are filled on the rotating basis.

The Dalits, or the Scheduled Castes, in Andhra Pradesh have been stratified into numerous castes/subcastes based essentially on the caste endemic related to status and occupations. There are as many as 59 subcastes within the Dalits and in 1990 one additional new Neo-Buddhist caste was added. These subcastes were direct or indirect offshoots of two major castes, namely the Madiga and Mala. Madigas and Malas together make up about 80 percent of the Dalit population. And there is a distinct Dalit

identity calling them Adi-Andhra. The Adi-Andhra strictly is not a caste/subcaste, but an identity that the Dalits adopted during the 1920s against the hegemonic Hindu-Andhra identity. According to the Census of India 2001, the total population of Dalits in Andhra Pradesh was 12.3 million (1.23 crore), or 16.5 percent of the total population.²⁴ The Dalits are predominantly agricultural labor and continue to pursue the traditional extreme forms of varna-caste based modes of occupations of scavenging, leatherwork, and the low-paid menial jobs. Nearly 7 percent of various Tribes in Andhra Pradesh are in a precarious position in society. The rest, a large proportion of the population of Andhra Pradesh, consists of artisans and other Sudra castes, otherwise known as the Backward Castes, along with Muslims, Christians, and other religious minorities.

However, Dalits are internally differentiated in terms of occupation, numerical strength, geographical distribution and ritual status. In the caste hierarchy, both Madigas and Malas are untouchables and equally face all the indignities from caste Hindus in terms of impurity. The caste assigned occupational difference of these communities is also responsible for the micro level hierarchy among themselves. Madigas' traditional occupation was tanning leather and working as village servants to make footwear, carry the dead cattle, attend to cremation activities, and make leather related implements for the agriculture use, activities deemed as "polluted." They were assigned to perform all sorts of official and unofficial announcements in the village by beating the *Dappu* (drum) which is an artistic leather instrument. This process of announcement is called popularly as the *Dandora* (Declaration/Publicize). Besides their traditional occupations, the Madigas are also involved in agricultural labor along with the Malas, who have no confirmed traditional occupation. These two major untouchable castes have separate residential hamlets and thus the caste hierarchy prevails within the Dalits.

Madigas and Malas are spread across the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. The geographical distribution of the two subcastes has significant implications for their socioeconomic progress. Madigas are concentrated in the Telangana region, while the Malas were concentrated in Coastal Andhra. The prosperity of the Coastal region has conferred certain natural advantages on the Malas with regard to education and employment. There is an important variation between the Malas and Madigas with regards to access to educational opportunities. In 1961, nearly 10.1 percent of Malas were literate, as opposed to 5.1 percent of Madigas. The literacy rate among the urban Malas is 26.8%, whereas that of the Madigas stood at 15.8%. Even in rural areas the literacy percentage of Malas was twice that of the Madigas. The Malas could corner 43% of the total scholarships allotted to the Dalits while Madigas could avail of only 22.8% in 1968.²⁵ Malas are also ahead at all levels of employment. Much the same disparity is to be found in the occupancy of political office as well. "An examination of Scheduled Caste legislators in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly from 1957 to 1982 shows that at any point in time there have been at least twice as many legislators from among the Malas as from the Madigas, if not more. The Malas have dominated Scheduled Caste representation in the legislature despite the fact that the Madigas are the numerically larger caste."²⁶

In 1960, the Andhra Pradesh Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings Bill was passed with the objective of reducing the concentration of land. But in its implementation there were many lacunae. The upper caste landowners never maintained land records properly aided by the state administrative machinery at the village level again headed by the Reddies and Kammas as the *Karnams* successfully defeated efforts at land redistribution and hundreds of acres of waste land are still under them in the form of fictitious title-deeds. When the landless Dalits craved to cultivate this

wasteland they would be forcibly evicted. At the end of 1960s, thousands of Dalits and poor peasants were arrested for wasteland cultivation. A number of agricultural laborers were arrested in Guntur, Krishna, Nellore, Warangal, Cuddaph, Adilabad, and Medak districts.²⁷ In Nalgonda district, Addagudem village, the Dalits occupied 450 acres of government land, but the police evicted them with a lathi charge (military-style charge with a blunt metal-tipped cane, or *lathi*).²⁸ In Ibrahimpatnam, Rachuluru village, nearly 20 Dalit families were evicted from the occupied wasteland and their crops were destroyed by the upper castes with the help of the police.²⁹ In another case, 300 acres of cultivable land were forcibly taken from the Dalits by the government in the name of rehabilitation.³⁰ According to 1985–86 agricultural statistics, 50 percent of cultivable land is in the hands of the dominant castes, while 50 percent of Dalits are landless agricultural laborers.³¹

The Andhra Pradesh Land Reforms Act of 1972 placed a benchmark saying that the maximum allowed land per family is 10 acres of cultivable land and 25 acres of uncultivable land. The state government itself has estimated that it would get nearly 10 lakh³² acres of surplus land for redistribution among the landless Dalits and other low castes. It was estimated in 1978 that as much as 15.62 lakh acres was in excess of the prescribed ceiling.³³ Only 5.94 lakh acres of land was actually distributed to the agricultural landless labors, the Dalits, Tribes and the Backward Classes. Where Dalits were concerned 2.1 lakh families secured 2.2 lakh acres of land, i.e. an average of one acre per family. The Agricultural Census of 1988 revealed that there were 2,000 upper caste farmers in Andhra Pradesh holding 100 acres and above. Most of the land surrendered by the upper caste landlords was unproductive and unfit for the cultivation. Even when the Dalits aspired for this wasteland they were forcibly thwarted and the land was taken back.³⁴ The stark reality is that wherever the land redistribution took place, the title deeds (*pattas*) were distributed

for namesake only, and were still controlled by the landlords.

During the early 1970s, Andhra Pradesh was severely affected by drought, which ravaged 19 of the 21 districts in the state. Dalits, who subsisted entirely on agricultural labor, were the worst affected. Many perished in rural areas and many of those who survived migrated *en masse* to nearby towns in search of employment as rickshaw-pullers and coolies. Some of them have taken to theft and other illegal means for bare survival. The Collector and Superintendent of the Police of Krishna district admitted that these offences seemed to have been committed by those who were affected by the drought conditions.³⁵ The Dalits are predominantly agricultural laborers and continue to pursue the traditional extreme forms of *Vetti* and *Paleru*. The crudest form of *Vettichakiri* or *Paleru* is imposed on the Dalits. As the *Vetti* and *Paleru* they would be given *Jeetam* (salary) in terms of kind at the end of harvest or some times on the occasion of important Hindu festivals. The two kinds of agricultural labor among the Dalits is predominantly the daily wage labor called *Cooli*, usually paid in cash, and secondly, attached labor, or *Jeetham*, that refers to an arrangement in which the labor is "bonded" to the employer until the loan is repaid. In Telangana different kinds of arrangements between employer and attached labor are found³⁶ and the *Jeetagadu* or the laborers' mostly paid little live half-naked and nothing for subsistence, with low calorie intake. "A Scheduled Caste (Dalit) family consisting of five members has to sustain with an average monthly income of Rs. 200 i.e. Rs. 40 per head."³⁷ Poverty, humiliation and caste oppression inflicted upon them by the rich landlords and money lenders through squeezing out inch by inch both land and labor from them and paying them in exchange just enough to keep them working on the land.³⁸

The most important factor that set the stage for the change that occurred in the Andhra Pradesh political economy in the mid-

1960s was the modernization of agriculture via "Green Revolution" technology. Massive investment in irrigation and rural development was undertaken by providing infrastructure. New rural institutions like rural banking, cooperative societies, and credit and loan facilities have inordinately transformed the agrarian structure that ultimately resulted in a change in the nature and character of the dominant castes and their political formulations. "The government has assured them for these rich farmers substantial price support for farm products (particularly since the mid-sixties) and liberal provision of subsidized inputs (water, power, fertilizers, diesel, tractors, etc.) and institutional credit."³⁹ While enriching the upper caste landowning classes, the Green Revolution has brought no benefits worthy of the name to the landless Dalits. In the worst cases, it has actually increased the landlessness and rural unemployment among the Dalits. The Green Revolution, that involved using tractors and chemical fertilizers, made the millions of Dalits who subsisted as sharecroppers, tenancy farmers, and day laborers economically obsolete.

According to Article 46 of the Indian Constitution, "the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." Following this, welfare measures for the educational, social and economic development of the Dalits were undertaken. The new strategies for the integrated development for the Dalit were evolved through the mechanism of the Special Component Plan (SCP), Special Central Assistance (SCA), and the Scheduled Caste Development Corporations, during the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plan periods (1974–84). The Special Component Plan was designed to channel plan outlays and benefits in all sectors to the Dalits in proportion to their population (15 percent) to secure their integrated

development. It is intended to be a plan for the development of the Dalits in relation to their resource endowments and their needs in all the areas of social and economic activity including agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries, education including scholarships, hostels and midday meals, provision for drinking water, electrification of Dalit localities, development of sericulture, minor irrigation including construction and electrification of irrigation wells, programs for specially vulnerable groups, housing and house sites, link roads, self-employment schemes, social forestry, allotment of land, as well as schemes for the development of land and allotment of shops and stalls in public places.

Thus the SCP and SCA were an important and integral part of the planning process intended to secure the rapid socioeconomic development of Dalits. In response to this, the government of Andhra Pradesh set up a high level coordinating committee with the Chief Secretary as Chairman and Secretaries for Planning, and Finance as members, and the Secretary for Social Welfare as convener to monitor implementation of the SCP.⁴⁰ Further, separate cells have been established at the district level for effective implementation and monitoring, and for proper coordination of the SCP.⁴¹ However, these democratic programs that are designed for the welfare of the Dalits have been quite contrary to the reality of Dalit life. The earmarked funds under the SCP and SCA programs were never spent adequately; funds were either underutilized or misused by the respective governments in the state headed by the upper castes.

The present state of the Dalits is a reflection on the unsuccessful story of the postindependence state to carry out its promised objectives of banishing the deep seated economic and social inequalities. Whenever Andhra Pradesh is affected by drought the Dalits, who subsisted entirely on agricultural labor, were the worst affected. Even with poverty alleviation programs

including the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), *Garibi Hatao Programme*, 20-point economic programs have hardly dealt with the poverty reduction among the Dalits. The new agencies, the Small Farmer Development Agency (SFDA), and the Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labor Program (MFAL), which were devised to modify those distortions brought about by the Green Revolution and to stabilize the contradictory relations between the upper caste landlords and the Dalits by generating additional income and employment to the rural poor, have not had a perceptible impact on landless Dalit agricultural laborers. In fact, the Green Revolution along with its sectional affluence produced regional variations and rural unrest in Andhra Pradesh.

Nearly 85 percent of Dalits live in rural areas, with most of them agricultural workers, share-croppers, and small peasants living in dirty, stinking, outskirts of rural villages. They were not allowed to use drinking water tanks and wells used by the upper caste Hindus. The Dalits were not allowed to enter the caste Hindus streets, and their children were not allowed to sit along with the dominant caste children. Dalits in urban areas were mostly engaged in unskilled jobs as porters, cycle-rickshaw pullers, sanitary workers, and rag pickers. A high incidence of indebtedness is found among the Dalits. The Elayaperumal Committee found that 62% and 47% of the rural and urban Dalit households, respectively, were found to be indebted. By the decade ending in 1974-75, the proportion of indebtedness in rural areas increased from 59% to 65.4% and the average debt per Dalit household rose from Rs. 251 to Rs. 560.⁴² Landlessness along with indebtedness led to mass bondage. Bondage tended to be concentrated heavily among the Dalits, especially in Telangana region. The frequency of occurrence in Mala and Madiga communities was nearly 70%. The bonded labor (Abolition) Act of 1976 was to identify and release all the bonded labors of whom the

Dalits constituted as much as 80%.

According to the Report of the Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes by 1986 some 24,788 bonded labors were identified and freed, while 18,418 of were rehabilitated. The Dalits are kept under constant subordination in several ways. For instance, they have to stand in a bending position in front of the upper caste landlord, they are not suppose to hold up their heads, wear neat dress, *chappals* (slippers), or umbrellas. They are denied entry into public places, temples, experience differential treatment at tea stalls and hotels, and have restrictions on riding horses during marriage ceremonies. All these servile gestures have been forcefully imposed on them and any resistance from the lower castes would invite physical coercion and heavy repression. There were a number of incidents in which the Dalits became victims of the upper caste landlords. For instance, a Dalit boy, Koetsu, who had been accused of stealing a few utensils was tortured and burnt alive in front of his mother at Kanchkacharla in Krishna district in 1968.

Employment through constitutionally guaranteed policy of reservation, in the public sector establishments, has always been an important to the material advancement of Dalits. But the fact remains that the nonimplementation of reservations in the public sector and the nonsharing of reservations by the upper caste dominated private sector have both increased the incidence of unemployment among the educated Dalits. One vain reason cited for not fulfilling the reservation jobs in the public sector was the lack of qualified candidates from the Dalits community and their low level of education. Thus, poverty is also reinforced within the Dalits by educational underdevelopment. The literacy rate among the Dalits remains low. And the dropout rate among the Dalits was 76.5 percent in 1988–89. The total Dalit literacy rate in the state according to the 1991 Census was 31.59 percent; it is below to the national average of 37.41 percent of Dalits. Poverty and the high

level of illiteracy have become the perennial stumbling blocks for the Dalits. A study conducted in 1981 reveals that out of 5.7 lakh government employees in Andhra Pradesh, the Dalits comprised only 83,000, and the bulk of them formed Class IV employees such as sweepers and sanitary workers. In higher-ranking gazetted posts the Dalits constituted just 1,500 out of 28,000 posts (Ram Reddy, G. 1988). According to the Andhra Pradesh Employment Exchange statistics, by the end of 1988 there were some 2.9 lakh educated qualified Dalits registered as unemployed in various departments. According to the All-India Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Rights Protection Society report, there were 4.1 lakh educated qualified Dalits (only Scheduled Castes) unemployed by January 1995. Further, some 4,888 Class I posts, 19,007 Class II, 1,586 III and 1,051 Class IV backlog posts were yet to be filled by the Andhra Pradesh government. In total there were some 26,536 backlog posts to be filled by the Dalits.⁴³

Multiplied with the wealth generated by green revolution, the dominant caste Kamma, Reddy, Raju, Kapu, Velama, and Brahmin have dominated all other economic structures of manufacturing, industry, trade, construction, commerce, communication and trade. Using all political and bureaucratic machinery that provided groundwork infrastructure, there upon large powerful well-coordinated family controlled private business empires have been established assiduously built on the caste and kingship loyalties. To illustrate their wealth “the twin symbols of coastal Andhra: cinema halls that look like rice-mills and rice-mills that look like cinema halls...all the surplus that is generated by the delta agriculture goes in exactly two directions: agro-based industry and trade and film production, distribution and exhibition.”⁴⁴ The economy has shifted from rural to urban owing to the advancement in commercialization of agriculture and has endured the rapid process of economic differentiation and entrepreneurship, and

confirms that the concentration of wealth and income has moved from agriculture to urban-based economic activities. As a result, powerful corporate sector of large enterprises has emerged as the typical of caste-capitalist economy where wealth and income is increasingly concentrated in a small number of Kamma, Reddy, Raju, and Velama castes.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Indian government introduced the New Economic Policies or Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in order to overcome the external debt crisis and internal fiscal crisis, thereby liberalizing or opening up the economy. With the entry of foreign capital the traditionally rich above-mentioned castes easily moved into the new manufacturing, software industry, services and other expanding global trade activities. There is a declining relative importance of agriculture that has so far concentrated on the essential food production for mass consumption and crop patterns changed rapidly for the export-oriented trade business. Further, the software industry, tourism, hotel, and film industries, services, real estate and other investment solutions, finance and banking, construction, and transportation, activities that are primarily urban based, have become the new commanding heights of the Andhra Pradesh economy. There is a shift in the economy from rural agrarian to entrepreneurial and urban-based economy especially the Hyderabad, Vijayawada, and Vishakhapatnam urban centers in the state. In this transition there emerged a powerful group of Kamma, Reddy, and Raju families who penetrated and dominated these new areas of Andhra Pradesh economy, whose economic base lies in the Green Revolution agrarian structure. With the growth of this new economy, distinct professional, managerial, technical, and technological groups have emerged.

The most important aspect of this expansion is that while the power of the private sector economy is ever expanding the public sector role has been slowly shrinking from its welfare nature. The Dalits, the

majority of them poor, illiterate, and unskilled laborers and mainly dependent on agriculture as the main source of income, have seen the liberalization and state withdrawal from its welfare social justice plank as the anti-Dalit strategy that deviated from its liberal democratic commitment. The new economic policy "marks a significant departure from the past. The much-cherished principles of growth with justice, social responsibility and accountability, equality and self-reliance have been rendered obsolete with the new slogans of "liberalization," "privatization," "efficiency," and "competitiveness," which imposed negative impact on Dalits.⁴⁵

The drastic changes in the economic policies, including those of foreign investment, and the entry of multinational corporations whose interests are intermixed with upper caste landowning classes forced the Dalits to resist the move. Liberalization of the economy means the increased demand for the private sector that is totally owned and controlled by the upper castes/classes and obvious incoming would be from the economically and educationally dominant caste professionals. A significant imbalance developed between the professional, careerist oriented educational courses and social sciences. One impact of considerable import for the Dalits has been the weakening of the state-administered public sector, where the reservations used to be given to the Dalits. These concessions in favor of the Dalits are slowly being withdrawn because of the impact of the newly introduced market economy.⁴⁶

The socioeconomic profile of Dalit women graphically illustrates the effects of patriarchy and caste exploitation of Dalit women. The super exploitation of Dalit women has been the permanent feature in caste-ridden society. Dalit women lead a life full of disadvantage because they are Dalit and women, and victims of the triple oppression of caste, class, and gender. Dalit women comprise a significant proportion of the Dalit population, and have experienced a higher rate of unemployment than their male

counterparts. Over ninety percent of Dalit women could be classified as poor or below the poverty line. Dalit women are estimated to contribute nearly eighty-five percent of the labor force in national economy. They work mainly as agricultural laborers, domestic servants, and as sweepers in all the municipalities. Apart from doing all kinds of menial jobs, they are also visible in most of the unorganized sectors like in the construction of buildings, dams, and roads and in many small and big industries such as cotton mills, cement factories, quarries, and beedi/cigar making industries. Invariably, they are engaged in low paying, unskilled jobs and are forced to work in atrocious conditions. The reason Dalit women are in the unorganized sector is that they have the lowest level of education, lack proper training in skills and minimum technical expertise, and experience traditional degradation as women in the lower caste.

About eighty percent of Dalit women in Andhra Pradesh work as casual or daily wage labor and earn very low wages but perform physically tiring work in shifts as long as sixteen hours or more in a day without complaint, breaking their backs just like their sons, husbands, and fathers. Even for equal jobs they are paid lower than men. “[I]f they work in the fields for a whole day they receive hardly five rupees wages, which is not even sufficient to procure broken rice. She is forced to eat gruel with a few pieces of chilly and they lack nutrition. As a mother she eats only of anything remains in the pot after she serves her children and husband, often left with only an empty pot with burnt rice sticking to the bottom of the vessel to be scraped and eaten.”⁴⁷ In urban areas, normally living in slums or hutment colonies, Dalit women carry out their activities for mere survival. They are the victims of low wages, irregular employment, a lack of social security benefits, and uncertainties in income and employment opportunities. Dalit women in Andhra Pradesh rarely own the land on which they work, and so they rarely benefited from the land improvement projects like mechan-

ization, fertilization, and modernization of irrigation through the Green Revolution.

The Indian Constitution emphasizes the importance in promoting the education and economic levels of Dalits, especially women. In the postindependence period the policy makers have agreed to bring about social equality through universal free education. Women’s education has assumed special significance in the light of county’s planned development and the Planning Commission has marked three major areas of education, health, and welfare for women’s development and expected to improve Dalit women’s condition. These efforts are, in actuality, far more complex and Dalit women still remain subordinate and increasingly disadvantaged. The literacy rate among rural Dalit women is low. “Most adult Dalit women, who work as agricultural labor or factory worker, are illiterates. The overall literacy rate of Dalit women is 6.44 percent as against the 22.25 percent of non Dalit women.”⁴⁸ Being forced to sell their bodies as commodities is the other sad dimension of Dalit women, whether living in the city slums or as agricultural laborers in rural villages. Historically, Dalit women were forced into legalized prostitution in the name of the Hindu religion as the maid servants of god as dancers, singers, and prostitutes, who they call *joginism*, *basivis*, and *devadasis*.⁴⁹ Any violence or atrocity on the Dalit community is ultimately borne by the Dalit woman as she is the final prey and center of the weak. Violence against Dalit women also takes place in the form of revenge/retaliation to suppress the Dalit consciousness. “Human Rights Watch has documented the use of sexual abuse and other forms of violence against Dalit women as tools by landlords and the police to inflict political “lessons” and crush dissent and labor movements within Dalit communities.”⁵⁰ Whenever Dalit men assert for self-respect and raise their heads against the dominance of the caste Hindus, victims of revenge would be the Dalit women. “When Dalit men are killed, it’s the Dalit women who bear the consequences. If the

houses are burnt, women again are the worst victims.”⁵¹

Contemporary Political Culture in Andhra Pradesh: 1970–85

The political culture in Andhra Pradesh from the 1970s onwards has undergone significant transformation and there has been a pronounced shift in the character of the political values, political culture, and people’s belief about the realities of power relations. The most significant change that occurred was the continuous decline of the Congress as the predominant political party that ruled Andhra Pradesh, aptly described as the citadel of the Congress⁵² from 1956 to 1982. Factionalism, leadership crisis, and the absence of real organizational democracy have created a situation in which Congress as a single party was crumbling. This has paved the way for the mutually hostile castes to redefine their political parameters and caste considerations have started mattering more than ever in setting the political agenda.⁵³

At the time of the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, Reddy took over the Congress party leadership while pushing the other land owning Kamma to the second line leadership, thus Reddy constituted the backbone of the Congress in Andhra Pradesh. The Reddy over representation of the Congress leadership in the state and their domination in state politics could be well summarized through the archetypical expression that the Congress as the Reddy Raj.⁵⁴ Neelam Sajeeva Reddy and Bejawada Gopal Reddy were the two Reddy leaders who built up the political strength of the Reddy community in Andhra Pradesh. Various factors account for the Reddy dominance in the power structure of Andhra Pradesh society. The important among them was democratic decentralization of power through the Panchyat Raj institutions that invariably enabled the rural landowning upper castes, especially the Reddy, to creep into the grassroots level power structures

through the Congress. This was accompanied by the impact of economic change through the introduction of the Green Revolution.

The Congress Party, as the single dominant party in the state, relied heavily on the politics of cooption and patronization as a means of political mobilization. However, the politics of cooption that was central to the Congress party was under great strain in later years due to a combination of factors. The Congress leadership in Andhra Pradesh suffered under the charismatic leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, thereby creating a vacuum at the top level leadership. “They gave her free hand in the state politics because their own electoral success mainly depended on her favor.”⁵⁵ In Gandhi’s style of functioning, the state level leaders with grassroots political support were either mercilessly thrown out of power or inducted at the Centre level. Four chief ministers were changed in four years, even before they settled down to their chief ministerial assignment in Hyderabad.⁵⁶

The Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh had a long history of intraparty factionalism and all the political activity in the state has been deliberately reduced to factional network. And “factionalism in the Andhra Pradesh Congress centered primarily on the exercise of power and patronage, enabling factional leaders to co-opt representatives from a broad spectrum of groups in society.”⁵⁷ The strongest factional leader would emerge as an undisputed leader and makes claim for the ministerial and chief minister positions. Factions within the party that are based on personalities rather than policies played an opposition role, thereby ruthlessly destroying the democratic value and role of opposition parties. Broadly speaking, the business of government and policy making is left to a coterie of political managers. Nepotism and corruption have been institutionalized; the chief ministers were changed frequently because of their corrupt and incompetent, callous administration, which made a mockery of democracy.

During the 1980s, the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh failed to sustain a support base among its traditional strongholds: the Dalits, Minorities, Tribes, and other intermediate OBC (other backward castes) castes. The Dalits were the impressive beneficiaries of the statutory reservations and the Congress Party-headed government used its state apparatus to consolidate its base through various welfare policies and programs. Their support was taken for granted as the “traditional vote bank.” Though the Congress Party preferred some populist measures like land reforms, rural job-oriented programs, and rural housing policy, by the 1980s the Congress Party could no longer claim to the “traditional vote bank.” In fact, there was a clash of interests with the rising new agriculture elite and the Dalits in the rural Andhra Pradesh. The Congress Party’s indifferent attitude toward the Dalits’ deteriorating social and economic plight further marginalized the Dalits.

Another important transformation that took place in Andhra Pradesh politics during the 1980s was the formation of a new regional political party headed by the Kamma caste, the traditional rival of Reddy. The Kamma-Reddy political rivalry is said to be over five hundred years old.⁵⁸ While explaining the rise of competitive regional party, Atul Kohli aptly notes that,

“The Kammas proved to be more enterprising than the Reddis. They utilized their land wealth to bankroll expansion into numerous commercial activities, such as rice milling, sugar production, tobacco processing, hotels, newspapers, and, of course, the film industry. That changing economic base strengthened the power potential of the Kammas. Although some of that new economic power found expression in the increased number of ministerial positions to which they were appointed, Kammas continued to resent the failure of Indira Gandhi to appoint a Kamma chief minister in Andhra. Of the nine Andhra Pradesh chief ministers before Mr. N.T. Rama Rao, six were from the Reddy community, and

none had been a Kamma.”⁵⁹

Thus the symbolic rise of Mr. N.T. Rama Rao as the Kamma leader, and the formation of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in 1983, was the long overdue assertion of this class. One has to locate this political shift against the backdrop of the fundamental changes brought about in agrarian relations through the Green Revolution. The Telugu Desam Party could, within no time, articulate the general frustrations of Telugu speaking people under the Congress party. It accused the Congress Party, saying that the Telugu people were subjected to humiliations and their self-esteem was trampled. Thus, the concept of pseudo-Telugu upper caste-dominated nationalism and Telugu pride was capitalized in the form of votes. The largest circulated Telugu daily *Enaadu* was started by a Kamma functioned as a political pamphlet for N.T. Rama Rao during the electoral campaign.⁶⁰ In contrast to the Congress which depended on the dominant castes, the Dalits and Tribes, Telugu Desam Party extended its support base among the dominant castes and backward castes. To this effect Telugu Desam decided to implement the Muralidhara Rao Commissions recommendations to raise the reservations from 24 percent to 44 percent, an increase that the High Court struck down because the increase was unconstitutional.

Telugu Desam formulated a fifteen-point program called *Pragathi Patham* (Progressive Path)—populist policies that mainly addressed the weaker sections saying that these sections would be given a special preference in order to bring them up to the level of other sections: that agricultural laborers would be given a minimum wage; that bonded labor would be abolished; and that rice would be sold at two rupees per kilogram to all families. A program has been worked out to construct houses for the poor, offer equal property rights, and establish a separate university for women. The more important decision was that the Telugu Desam government abolished the capitation

fee (a uniform per capita payment or fee).

However, the fact remains that the socioeconomic context in which Telugu Desam Party was formed and the political culture in which it operated its government functions, were predicated on the apparent reality of caste-class dynamics of Andhra society. Katti Padma Rao, Dalit intellectual and political activist, presents a devastating indictment of Kammas, arguing that the formation of Telugu Desam Party under N.T. Rama Rao strengthened the caste arrogance of the Kamma landlords, and almost every Kamma in the state virtually felt that a Kamma Raj had been established. He says that the Kammas, with the greatest economic wealth amassed from commercial crops such as tobacco, cotton, rice, and the movie industry, became more hegemonic in competition with the Reddys, and have been exhibiting their caste power—a combination of their money and muscle power.⁶¹ The important aspect that came to surface immediately after the Telugu Desam captured power in the state was the unleashing of enormous violence on the Dalits by the Kamma landlords. This was done on two pretexts saying that the Dalits are still adherent to the Congress party hence they have not voted for the Telugu Desam.

The political culture in Andhra Pradesh is also shaped by the long history of extraparliamentary ideological struggles that try to actualize the new democratic form of transformation. They believed that the political culture generated by populist leadership is authoritarian in nature and their sustained commitment to the democracy is enigmatic and indeterminate. Hence these movements are committed to the people's war against the dominant hegemonic political culture. Dalits in Andhra Pradesh were influenced by this ideological commitment and strategies which generated political energy by engaging in extra-parliamentary political battles with the upper caste landlords in the rural society. Thus the historical expansion and deep-rootedness of this belief

in Dalits, has to be appreciated in the overall understanding of political culture in Andhra Pradesh.

The emergence of the Naxalite movement in the early 1970s and 1980s as an ultra-radical force had its reverberations among the Dalits in Andhra Pradesh. Frustrated by the indifference of the ruling parties, the ineffectiveness of the traditional Left parties to have a more radical agenda and dejected by their own passive, unassertiveness organizations, the Dalits choose a new revolutionary ideology that offered fresh hope and solace from the multiple oppression, humiliation, and atrocities perpetrated on them by the upper caste landed gentry in the rural areas. This instilled an enormous degree of confidence among the Dalits by intensifying the armed struggle, and raising the two principal slogans: "All land to the real tillers" and "All power to the peasant committees." The Party took up the task of building up mass organizations to lead the intended struggles; many villages have been transformed into red areas and set up preliminary organs of people's political power called "Councils for the People's Uprising" for land distribution led by the poor and the landless peasants.

The Rytu Coolie Sangham (RCS, or Peasant and Agricultural Labor Union), the mass organ of the CPI (M-L) Party, entered into the villages and took up multiple struggles against the oppression structured around the rural agrarian society. *Vetti* or *Vettichakiri* in Telangana *Jeetam* in Andhra region, enhancement of daily wages, the distribution of land, the struggle against caste discrimination, the struggle against the exploitation of *beedi*/tendu leaves workers, gender issues, corruption, and drinking were fought. The Nimmappally land struggle in Nizamabad district of Telangana by the RCS became the prologue to the expansion and consolidation of the Naxalite movement in the state. In this struggle, the Dalits occupied 22 acres of fertile land of an upper caste landlord.⁶²

The Radical Students Union, the Radical Youth League, and Jana Natya Mandali, the youth and cultural wings of the party, have launched “Go to the Village” campaigns to bring the rural youth and the mass, especially the Dalits and other lower castes towards the revolutionary program. The overwhelming presence of Dalit mass and other oppressed castes/classes in these wings were appreciated. Thus at the organizational level the CPI (M-L) Party could mobilize and organized the Dalits to participate in the revolutionary political activity in order to evolve a broad-based working class movement. In the process it also produced a good number of dynamic Dalit leadership, singers, lyricists, and poets, who are sensitive and vocal to the caste-class problem. K.G. Satyamurthy, a top central level leader has been the ideologue, writer, and powerful revolutionary poet and close follower of Charu Mazumdar. Gummadi Vittal Rao, popularly known as Gaddar, is a ballad singer. His songs are loaded with anger, agony, pride, and hope of the toiling masses. Vangapandu Prasad and Gorati Venkanna are the other current legends in the state with a Dalit background.

However, up to 1985, these ideologues and writers did not show any sign of assertion on the question of the anticaste debate in the party. Although in their songs and writings they attacked the caste-based oppression perpetrated by the upper caste Hindu landlords, they could not make any breakthrough within the party. On a theoretical and ideological level, the Communist—both from the traditional and radical streams—understanding of Indian society from the caste angle and their characterization of the Indian state, had some fundamental problems from the Dalit point of view. It was the Karamchedu incident in 1985 that forced them to come out and to identify themselves with the broad Dalit question.

Thus, the political marginalization and discriminative attitude of the Congress Party and Telugu Desam Party which were mainly led by the dominant caste Reddy and Kamma,

the political indifference of the Left parties to the specific caste-based problems of Dalits, led them to build their own political autonomous identity. Dalits had an autonomous sporadic activity that continued with a low level of mobilization on different platforms. Thus the vibrant and observant civil society-based Dalit movements on different platforms questioned the state’s inaptitude behavior about its own democratic principles. Dalits civil society associations have worked for the creation of more space for democratic participation and social networks. They tried to modify the institutional arrangements in tune with democratic attitudes.

The Andhra Pradesh state unit of the Republican Party of India (RPI) tried to organize the peasants and landless Dalit agricultural workers. In the late 1960s, the RPI initiated a massive nationwide struggle for the implementation of land reforms and implementation of Minimum Wages for the landless agricultural workers. Besides mainstream activities, RPI leaders in the state have taken up some socialization activities through literary and cultural activities by starting their press. However, by the mid-1970s, RPI withdrew from its agitation politics and almost nonfunctional in the wake of persistent splits, electoral defeats. Thus the failure of RPI provided new political confidence among the Dalit youths to commence more assertive activities by forming youth organizations called *Ambedkar Yuwajana Sanghams* (Ambedkar Youth Associations).

The youth *Sanghams*, though, did not become a formidable political force, but managed to register a strong protest against the archaic caste order. They propagated Ambedkar ideas by celebrating his birth and death anniversaries, and by the installation of his statues. Bojja Tarakam became the moving force behind the founding of the first such *Sangham* in 1971 at Nizambad district of Telangana region.⁶³ Though there is a legislation governing small scale industries like the *beedi* or local cigar rolling industry that

provides many benefits and welfare facilities, government official indifference combined with the ignorance of these benefits by the Dalits led to their poor living conditions. However, the *Sangham* under the leadership of Tarakam led many demonstrations and strikes, and demanded rightful wages for the landless agricultural workers and *beedi* workers. One of such strike lasted twenty-five days under the *Sangham's* leadership for the successful implementation of Beedi and Cigar Workers Act. Soon in the process the *Sangham's* activities spread to several districts in the state. Dalit discontent against the undemocratic attitude of the ruling castes was emphatically expressed by observing Independence Day and Republic Day as black days. The *Sangham* along with all other democratic progressive forces observed Republic Day of 1982 as the black day and black flags were hoisted throughout the state because the Congress Dalit legislator in the state was denied temple entry and another Congress leader at the Center was denied the opportunity to become the Prime Minister.⁶⁴

Another important method adopted by the *Sangham* was the installation of Ambedkar's busts and statues in villages and towns at the centers of Dalit colonies and circles at the crossroads. Ambedkar's statues were intended to create a strong effect not only on Dalits but on every viewer, remaining them of Ambedkar's three mottos: Educate, Agitate, and Organize. Ambedkar's statues show Ambedkar, raising his right hand and pointing to the distant horizon, signifying the intended goal, while holding either the *Kulanirmoolana* book (Annihilation of Caste), or the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar's statues became a focal point for Dalit celebration and have been used as the devices not only for the expression of self-respect and self-realization, but also to communicate the social ideas. Further statues were used as a powerful means of political agitation and reflect the publication of the future hope of the present oppressed. In many instances the experience shows that any kind of dishonor

and defiling of the statues would result in the display of unrestraint, indignation, and protest by the Dalits.

The first-generation Dalit employees who have been recruited through the principle of reservation in the Central and state governments formed an association called Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Caste Employees Welfare Association. The main contention of the Association was to effectively pursue the strict implementation of the rule of reservation in all the Central and the state services and the relaxation in promotions. The Association firmly stands on the ground that the reservation is a Constitutional right and any kind of violation and non-implementation by the implementing agency, which is in any case the dominant upper caste, as unjust and unconstitutional. Thus, the Association mainly concentrated on the "fulfillment of reservation" and collective bargaining in securing a relaxation of rules and concessions for the periodic promotion of Dalit employees. More importantly the Association made sustained efforts to attend the Dalit students' problems of hostel facilities, stipends, relaxation in minimum qualifying marks, and admissions into various professional courses. Among the other issues the Association has taken up the issue of atrocities against the Dalits.⁶⁵

The Association made an attempt to modify the state institutions where the statutory reservations were inconsistent in true democratic spirit, thus it demanded the Dalits' participation in the decision-making process. Its impact on the enactment of social welfare policies relating to the Dalits was significant, if not substantial. However, despite having much base in the urban-industrial areas, the Association could not build up an effective trade union movement among the Dalit employees, but it played as the cream/base layer for the Dalits' movement. As an Association of employees, the problems of the Dalits were necessarily seen from legal point of view and it had to work within the rules and regulations of the government.

The Scheduled Castes Rights Protection Society is another important platform through which Dalits took an active part in exposing the dominant political culture. It was basically a social and civil rights organization for fostering a spirit of social unity and fellow feeling among the Dalits. This society tried to promote physical, social, economic, and cultural programs for the general welfare of the Dalits. It undertook a 52-day relay hunger strike in front of the Legislative Assembly, protesting against the atrocities on Dalits and asked for the establishment of mobile courts in the state to trail the culprits.

The above observations suggest that the contemporary political culture in Andhra Pradesh is perpetual blend of "traditional" caste hierarchy and the top-dressing "modern" secular democratic pluralism, liberalism, and communist ideology. The degree to which Dalits take an active political role, join parties, and the right to choose political leaders periodically through voting and through nonparliamentary methods above all, has been practically governed by the caste loyalties and manipulations. Economic power and along with social privilege continue to play dominant role in getting things done and secure the interests. The poor Dalits and other marginalized groups, due to the lack of economic resources combined with their deep sense of alienation in caste-class ridden society in which power is controlled by a few privileged castes, were trapped by the populist policies of dominant caste political parties.

Dalits' belief in democracy, their struggle for constitutional rights, and their understanding of realities of power relations is in sharp contrast to the "traditional" caste hierarchical nature of political culture. Bureaucratic authority has not achieved rationalization while implementing the statutory benefits to the Dalits. Caste has a significant influence on the policy formulations. The methods that the dominant castes used in pursuing their political interests, their governmental functioning style,

and the policies they proposed are determined by the mixing of the modified political attitudes of "tradition" and "modernity." However, the process of socialization and limited economic changes through the statutory reservations that occurred in Andhra Pradesh was greatly responsible for the shifts in Dalits' political attitudes and orientations towards the political system. These changes have provided a favorable climate in which the hegemony of the dominant castes came under challenge. Democracy thus becomes a battleground between traditional dominant caste power elites and the transformative democratic forces of social equality, justice and fraternity. This constitutes the central explanatory factor of Dalits democratic struggles and democratization in caste-ridden society Andhra Pradesh.

Thus, the increasing aspirations of Dalits to participate in modern democratic institutions coupled with various organizational settings. The mainstream political parties are riddled with cooption and patronage and Dalits have no active political involvement in them. Though, the Communists did organize the Dalits on many issues and policies, their indifference to the caste-specific questions, nonreorganization of Ambedkar's ideology as the symbol of annihilation of caste, and the growing violence on the Dalits which centered on the politico-religious doctrine of caste backed by the dominant castes, made the Dalits suspect the Communists political commitment. In this conjuncture, Dalit critical consciousness led to simmering tensions between the traditional dominant caste authority and democratic assertion of Dalits in Andhra Pradesh.

The series of events which took place in Andhra Pradesh demonstrates that the Dalits openly exhort for their democratic rights and actively sought to democratize the social relations. Unable to tolerate this assertion of the new generation of Dalits, the dominant castes with active support of the government and its executive and legislative administrative machinery resorted to physical

violence. Thus the great deal of political violence that occurs between the political parties' faithful supporters on the one side and the unleashing of political violence on the Dalits whenever they exercise their franchise against the will of the upper castes, is the regular phenomena of political culture in Andhra Pradesh.

There is always an emotionally internalized clumsy image designed by the upper caste leaders that their interparty, fanatic factional rivalries and their electoral defeats are always due to the Dalits' assertion. In a nutshell they all operate within the framework of Kautilyan political culture, which upholds the brutal repressive culture of the dominant caste rulers.⁶⁶ These violent acts directed towards the Dalits with caste vengeance acts include the burning of their houses, raping of their women, killing the men and women indiscriminately, terrorizing, sustained humiliation, continuous harassment, and social boycotting.⁶⁷ All the liberal beliefs and attitudes pretended by the dominant castes would get evaporated when it comes to the caste violence on Dalits. The stratagem for this inconceivable violence against Dalits was an antecedent of resistance to the caste ideology of dominance and hierarchy.

In the history of caste violence inflicted on Dalits by the dominant castes, the Karamchedu in 1985 and Chundur in 1991 have become ponderous landmarks in the contemporary social and political history of Andhra Pradesh. These two incidents have underlined the veracity of caste and its oppressive semblance within the social order that is defined and guided by an ideology in which the strong consumes the weak. The notorious incident of Karamchedu village in Prakasam districts on July 17, 1985, in which six Dalits were massacred any more seriously injured.⁶⁸ Fleeing from the attack, the Dalits of Karamchedu ran to nearby Chirala town and took shelter in the church. For the first time the victimized Dalits *en masse* left the village and took shelter in another village. The trickle

of victims turned into a veritable flood. Men and women with blood-spattered clothing came running like hunted rabbits into the sanctuary of the church.⁶⁹

The *Shibiram* (camp) where the victims stayed became the center of Dalit protest and it was filled with anguish and enthusiasm. They disowned the word Harijan, Madiga and Mala emphatically asserted as the Dalits. Customary visits by various party leaders and their promises of the "arrest of culprits," "compensations," "and restoration of normalcy." The inmates of *Shibiram* refused to entertain these promises. The victims did not allow any political party to come near lest they try to derive political mileage out of it. They also disowned the members of the Congress and Telugu Desam parties, who came with huge philanthropic donations. Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao, a Kamma by caste who declared himself at the time elections as the "Harijan among Harijan," faced the wrath of the *Shibiram* members. It is also important to note that many atrocities on Dalits were rarely reported in the vernacular press but the Karamchedu incident received wide reportage. Leading in this coverage was the *Udayam* (Morning), started by a filmmaker from a backward caste from coastal Andhra. *Udayam* headline captions like "deer's blood in the farm field" and "police collusion with murderous landlords," enthralled and roused the emotions of Dalits. This kind of intolerant, aggressive, and sometimes organized violence against the Dalits had a destabilizing impact on the Dalit movement and its democratization project and there was a "Dalits movement" in the state that was dissimilar to that of "Dalits mobilization."

The leaders at the *Shibiram* continued with spontaneous operations of struggle like demonstrations, protest rallies and *bandhs*. All these were done without any systematic thought out plan and further the same Dalit conformists' youth and employees associations mostly arranged all these. However the increasing response from the hapless, impoverished Dalit masses, and their

hopeful search for talented political organizers made it necessary for the leaders to give serious thought to an alternative organizational work. Questions were asked about their own conscious future political motives, their constituent abilities, and ebullient energies. These pertinent questions thus drove them towards the formation of new autonomous organizations for the further growth of Dalit movement. In the process the Dalits began to radicalize their ideological position and their demands, while abandoning the past bankrupt political leadership.

Dalit Movement and Democratization in Andhra Pradesh

The Karamchedu incident in Andhra Pradesh has changed the nature and character of the Dalit movement, which tried to weaken and alter the caste authority that imparted and upheld by the dominant castes.⁷⁰ Many previous atrocities inflicted on the Dalits by the dominant castes created stereotype sympathy from political parties and normal indifference from the state institutions.⁷¹ In its wake the Dalits' illusion about the established order disappeared and they completely repudiated past experiences of passivity that confine themselves only to sporadic movement. Dalits in Andhra Pradesh realized that the caste and its ideology-centered obstacle for the realization of substantive democracy and the democratic state in India that was supposed to dispense immunity to its entire people prepossessed in favor of the upper caste Hindus. It eventually dragged every single political institution into the folds of its polemics, forcing each in turn to take a position on the caste, gender and class issues, but also calling for important political alliances to secure short term as well as long term political and social change. Conjointly the nature and character of the Dalit movement has also altered about its own conscious future political motives, constituent abilities and energies to transform the present

face of democracy and democratization process in Andhra Pradesh, which is currently experiencing dramatic political and social change.

The members in *Shibiram* came from different organizational backgrounds and had no well-informed political ideology. Discontent developed over this deficiency, a search for a relevant ideology was launched, and a program of political self-education began. Two Dalit leaders, Bojja Tarakam and Katti Padma Rao, hastened to meet the sufferers. Their arrival instilled immense confidence and enthusiasm. Bojj Tarakam was a radical Ambedkarite who led the Ambedkar Yuvajana Sanghams in the 1970s. He is a Marxist-Leninist movement sympathizer, and civil rights activist and lawyer by profession. He resigned his government law practice in the Andhra Pradesh High Court in protest against the Karamchedu atrocity. Katti Padma Rao was associated with the *Hetuvada Sangham* or Rationalist Movement, an erudite Sanskrit scholar, orator, and Marxist-Leninist movement sympathizer. Both were angered by the position of Dalits in society and wished to do something to change this. They realized that effective action must be based upon correct knowledge and analysis—re-reading Ambedkar and Marx, along with Mao Tse-tung perhaps, to synthesize their ideas on caste-class analysis with a critical orientation has been the main activity. They did not believe that any existing ideology could be accepted in rigid dogmatic form if it were to be used in analyzing the situation of Dalits and felt that the Dalit experience in India is unique and that any existing system of thought required reshaping to make it applicable.

This new intellectual leadership sought to develop, examine, and reformulate various theoretical orientations until they arrived at a position that enabled them to describe themselves as the true anticaste ideologues. Holding mass protest rallies, *dharnas* (sit-ins) blockades, and issuing of pamphlets, all of which reflected their inner spontaneous unity

and concrete aspirations for justice, held initially. The All-India Dalits Coordination Committee on Karamchedu was formed by the Dalit organizations along with the radical and progressive organizations. Under this Coordination Committee a massive "*Chalo Assembly protest rally*" (Let's march to Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Assembly) was organized with about 500,000 people from all over the state, that was addressed by almost all the prominent Dalit leaders and other human rights activists. The issue was discussed and debated thoroughly in the state Legislative Assembly on the incident and the state government headed by N.T. Rama Rao's Telugu Desam Party admitted to the crime inflicted on Dalits by the dominant castes and constituted a judicial Enquiry to probe the incident.

On September 1, 1985, the historic huge "*Chalo Chirala*" public meeting was organized. Dalits from all over the state poured into Chirala town in Prakasham district to attend the mammoth rally, in which more than 300,000 Dalits marched with ferocious slogans and their emotions were so high. The strength of the Dalits demonstrated in this rally caused some consternation among the dominant castes. In this historic meeting the stage was prioritized exclusively for the Dalits, no members of the dominant castes, howsoever sympathetic to the Dalits, were allowed to share the dais. Dalits at that moment did not want anyone to speak on their behalf; they expressed the confidence that they could manage on their own. The most considerable important facet of this meeting was that it was inaugurated by Gaddar, the new democratic cultural revolutionary singer from the Communist Party India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War Party. He composed a song for the occasion: *Dalitapululamma, karamchedu bhooswamuloto Kalabadi nilabadi porusesina Dalia pululamma (Dalit Tigers, who boldly stood up and fought with Karamchedu landlords).*⁷²

After Gaddar's cultural presentation, which further provoked anger among the

participants against their plight, the most prominent Dalit organizers, Bojja Tarakam and Katti Padma Rao, addressed the meeting. The meeting ended with the decision to form a new state level autonomous Dalit organization called Andhra Pradesh Dalit Maha Sabha (DMS) with the prime objective of consolidating the strength of the Dalits, Tribals, backward castes, and the minorities. Bojja Tarakam was elected as the founding president and Katti Padma Rao as the general secretary of the new organization promising to bring about revolutionary solidarity among the oppressed which would lead to the Dalit Democratic movement. This new leadership has come from the movement, they are the movement intellectuals, and it is the history that created them not these leaders who created history. The Dalit Maha Sabha would confine its activities to constructive work for the benefit of the downtrodden with class instead of caste as its character and organize the people to fight for their rights. Sabha will launch a struggle against the scourge of untouchability which remains alive in many villages, the abolition of bonded labor, creation of more facilities for washer men and weavers, and for an end to the ill-treatment of backward castes and Dalits. The ultimate aim of the DMS was to see that when the Dalits come to power, the DMS would be an integral part of the process of building Dalit culture as an alternative.⁷³

With the formation of the Dalit Maha Sabha, the word "Dalit" became popularized in Andhra Pradesh in a radical way. The word Dalit means economically and socially oppressed people. By this encompassing definition it includes all those earlier passive identities of Harijan, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled tribes, Backward Castes/classes, women, minorities, and all other people who come under caste discrimination and exploitation in Indian society. An important development was that every organization that was formed there after added the term "Dalit." It has been realized that the common united struggle led by the Dalits and the

oppressed sections along with the democratic forces would only emancipate the caste-class oppression and bring about substantive democracy.

Dalits demanded that the Karamchedu victims should be rehabilitated at Chirala town, but the state government instead resorted to repressive methods. To protest government indifference, the DMS called for a statewide *Rail Rokho* and *Rasta Rokho* (protests) on September 8, 1985. The agitation was a total success in disrupting the communication system and the state administrative functions. In turn, the government deployed heavy police forces and in a midnight attack on the *Shibiram*, the police destroyed the tents, conducted indiscriminate lathi charge on the *Shibiram* members and arrested nearly 300 inmates. It was rumored that Padma Rao was killed in an encounter with the police. In the midst of this chaotic situation, DMS president, Tarakam, sent Padma Rao to conduct underground activities. Padma Rao toured all over the state, holding secret meetings about the objectives of the DMS. Meanwhile, on October 6, 1985, a huge public meeting was arranged at the Vijayawada municipal grounds, with an estimated crowd of 100,000. As Padma Rao was about to address the meeting, he was arrested on the dais and taken to the Vishakapatnam central jail, the enraged crowd was assaulted by the police using *lathi*.⁷⁴

The democratically elected government's style and substance was condemned by the civil rights and democratic forces. While the dominant castes who perpetrated the massacre on the Dalits were moving about freely, the newly emerged Dalit leader and organizer was arrested and put him behind bars. Thus, Padma Rao's public arrest led to a further escalation of the Dalits' agitation. The DMS, along with the CPI (M-L) PWG, resorted to road blocks, massive rallies, silent marches, and statewide demonstrations. This time the leadership used at the *Shibiram* used the women's militancy as a check against the state repression. Hundreds of thousands of women

went to the state capital, Hyderabad, and staged a *dharna* protest in front of the Chief Minister's house, demanding the immediate release of Padma Rao. After ten hours, the Chief Minister promised to release Padma Rao and later he was released.

Apart from the agitation struggle, the DMS also took up a legal battle against the upper caste culprits. As part of a pacification exercise, the state government then filed a case on behalf of the victims, but ironically, none of the culprits whom the victims identified appeared in the list of accused. Against this gross travesty of justice, the DMS filed a separate private case citing 165 people as the accused, along with Karamchedu landlord, Daggupati Chenchu Ramaiah, who was the Chief Minister's relative and the real strategist behind the massacre. *Salaha*, a voluntary legal organization played a crucial role. To answer the charges filed by the DMS, the prime accused Chenchu Ramaiah was summoned by the district court. In the court, the Dalit woman Alisamma, the prime witness in the case was deposed. Because of her graphic narration of the horrifying scene of how her son was axed to death in front of her eyes, it seemed almost certain that the prime accused would be punished according to the law. However, Alisamma was killed by the upper castes after her deposition and became the martyr to the cause of Dalit democratic struggle. While the court case dragged on, and after a prolonged judicial inquiry Commission headed by Justice Desai, the Commission's decision was inconclusive, as it could not find any clear-cut reason behind the massacre. On April 6, 1989, a CPI (M-L) PWG guerrilla squad killed the Chenchu Ramaiah.⁷⁵

In the second week of February 1986, the DMS held its first state level conference at Tenali town of Guntur district. At this conference, the DMS manifesto explaining the mode of Dalits struggle, strategy and principles was released. Though the manifesto did not draw the kind of attention that the manifesto of the Dalit Panthers did in Maharashtra, the DMS manifesto certainly

was an outstanding political text and its politically polemical formulations created contentious debate. The formulations of the DMS manifesto had a clear influence on the ongoing democratic struggles like the peasant, women, human rights, and all the more the revolutionary armed struggle led by the CPI (M-L) Peoples War. The manifesto says that the "Dalit Maha Sabha" is a movement to unite the hitherto oppressed people and traced the historical emergence of oppressed caste/class struggles and stressed the "Caste annihilation thesis," implying that the Ambedkar's philosophy was central to caste-class annihilation.

The DMS manifesto was more emphatic that the caste perspective to Dalit movement does more harm than good to the society, and instead of bringing social democratic revolution it encourages caste hierarchy with more vigor. In order to resolve the question of social disparities, according to the manifesto it is necessary to formulate annihilation of caste-class perspective. Those who seek to destroy the caste system should not cling unto the same. To annihilate it, it must be enough to recognize its existence. The manifesto opened by giving an outline of the distinctness of DMS and portrayed itself as the real united front of the desperate social elements for the united action against the ruling upper castes. As a united front it promised to create counterhegemony of the oppressed against the dominant castes landlords. This is evident in its extended definition of Dalits and its character of "special class" that necessarily had the potential to overthrow the present exploitative class-caste Indian society and to democratize society and polity.

The Dalit Maha Sabha manifesto explained historically how the Dalits were systematically exploited and divided during centuries in the Hindu social order. It also emphasized how the previous political struggles, including the Communist movement of the early 1940s and 1950s, lacked the political effectiveness and revolutionary purpose to annihilate the caste. In addition,

the manifesto stressed the crucial importance of the Dalit organic political party. Lastly, it said that the primary aim of the DMS to conscientize the Dalits about the historical role of working-class struggles at the global level, and their emancipator zeal. To bring into the fold of solidarity and infuse revolutionary consciousness, it is necessary to be familiar with the histories of struggles worldwide. To know about oppression, one must acquaint and apply the theories of revolutionaries who have tirelessly strove for social transformation. Importantly, the principles and struggles of Ambedkar and Phule should prove to be the breathing spirit of the Dalits' struggle. At the same time, the principles of class struggle, which have enabled the emancipation of oppressed, must be reconciled with the spirit of the Dalit movement. As attempt to recruit the cultural army for the Dalit movement, the first all-India Dalit writers' conference, held in 1987 at Hyderabad, was an attempt to bring together all the writers who were born in Dalit families and write for the Dalits on one platform and to chalk out a unified and united course of action for the Dalit liberation.⁷⁶

The new coalition, formed as the National Front and led by the Janata Dal government, came to power at the Center in 1989 and adopted the slogan of "social justice." As a part of its "social justice," the National Front government took an emphatic decision to implement the recommendations of Mandal Commission which proposed 27 percent reservations for the other backward classes (OBCs) in central government services and in public sector undertakings. The acceptance of the Mandal Commission's recommendations not only served to underline the OBCs presence in the political arena but also help create a better environment in terms of educations and job opportunities for the OBCs. These new opportunities for the OBCs were countered by the anti-Mandal lobby in the name of merit projecting the impression that the beneficiaries of reservations were inferiors to the non-

reserved category job holders. Ironically, some sections within the OBCs were not happy with the move and sided with the dominant castes and tried to express their oneness with the upper castes in the sociocultural spheres.

In ideological terms, the Dalit movement made an emphasis that the positive discrimination policy would create better opportunities for the hitherto oppressed sections of the society. In this context, the Dalit movement strived to have broad alliance with other backward classes/castes. In fact the acceptance of the Mandal Commission recommendations came at the time of state withdrawal from the welfare programs in the context of privatization, liberalization, and globalization. The decline of public sector investment involved in restructuring of public sector resulted in antilabor policies which directly hit the reservation policy provided to the Dalits and OBCs. This shift was countered by the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh and “globalization” was equated with “Brahminism.”

The unprecedented politicization and mobilization of Dalits after the Karamchedu incident and the increasing level of self-creative activity through their own autonomous organizations like DMS, the entry of BSP, the formation of the Poor People’s Party, and the highly motivated communicative role of Dalit periodicals like *Dalita Shakti*, *Nalupu*, *Edureetha* which expanded the Dalits consciousness and identity. This ever-growing consciousness and assertion of Dalits was subjected to brutal suppression. This time it was the Reddy landlords who assaulted Dalits in Chundur mandal Guntur district, killing more than ten Dalits. Their bodies were cut up, stuffed into gunny bags, and thrown into the nearby Tunghabadra drainage canal.⁷⁷ The determination of Dalits and their combative retaliatory nature reflected the changing nature of Dalit consciousness. At Karamchedu the Dalits had *en masse* left the village and led their movement from Chirala town.

Once again all the Dalit organizations

and revolutionary Marxist-Leninist groups together formed a solidarity committee. The CPI (M-L) Liberation, CPI (ML) Praja Pantha, UCCRI (M-L) Jana Shakti, Marxist-Leninist Center, Indian People’s Front, and the Dalit Maha Sabha, Organization for the Rural Poor formed a committee called Andhra Pradesh Chundur Porata Samithi. This time, K.G. Satyamurthy, a Dalit revolutionary thinker who was underground for more than two decades, joined along with Tarakam and Padma Rao. Satyamurthy coined a new slogans “self-respect, self-defense is Dalits birth right” and formed Marxist-Leninist Center at Ongole in Prakasham district. The aim of the Center was to prepare the sociopolitical and theoretical ground to build a new revolutionary working caste-class party in the Indian subcontinent.⁷⁸ The center also decided to swim against the predominant tides of pedantic economic determinism, and Brahminic and patriarchal male authority. It explicitly opposed the mechanical application of armed struggle and unorganized violence and argued that unless Marxism and Ambedkarite anti-caste theories were interwoven the democratic revolution could not be achieved.⁷⁹

The massacres at Karamchedu, Padirikuppam, and Neerukonda had taken place under the Telugu Desam headed and led by the Kammas; now the Chundur was perpetrated under the Congress, dominated by the Reddys. For the Dalits, both the Congress and Telugu Desam became one and the same manifestation of Brahminical ideology. The Dalits had long ago stopped banking on the CPI and CPI (M). They resorted to an unprecedented show of brutal force. Kommerla Anil Kumar, the main witness in the Chundur carnage, was shot and killed by the police. In the case of Karamchedu, the main witness, Alisamma, was killed by the upper castes whereas in Chundur it was the police who performed the job on behalf of the upper castes. The biasness towards the ruling class and undemocratic siding with dominant castes exposes the

nature and character of the Indian state in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular.

The Dalit movement that started with Karamchedu brought the caste-class debate to the forefront and understanding that debate in the context of present movement requires a specific treatment due to the fact that the caste and class were dominated in their actual political mobilization for the democratic movement. The Communists' understanding of Indian society and their characterization of the Indian state, however, had some fundamental limitations from the Dalits point of view. Communists' broad, non-specific, obscure theoretical construction of the "classes," "national bourgeoisie," "semi-feudal," "working class," and "peasants" categories underestimated the specific instance of the caste reality in Indian society. In India, the caste relations are the most determining features in social formation. Ambedkar's rediscovery of the existence of specific caste-class divisions and the direct antagonistic relationship between the ownership of the means of production by the upper castes and the producer Dalits was not recognized by the Communists. Thus the Communists did not try to construct an ideological alternative against the hegemony of Hinduism in which caste operates successfully.

Thus recognizing the historical limitation, the Dalits who came out from the Marxist-Leninist (Mao) Party formed a new political party called the Communist Party of the United States of India (Dalita Bahujana Stramika Vimukti) in December 25, 1999.⁸⁰ According to their thesis, no class struggle or revolution can succeed without unity among the working class people engaged in agricultural activities. And more than 80 percent of them are in Andhra Pradesh from Madiga and Mala communities though there are other castes from gauda, yadava, kapu, kamma, reddy, and other artisan castes of backward castes. How to bring the unity among these workers without setting aside caste differences, living, dining and working

together and rubbing shoulders with each other. The evil of untouchability is prevailing among the untouchables themselves—the Madigas and Malas, but this is a trick played by the upper castes to keep them divided so as to exercise absolute control over their lives.

The highly motivated communicative role of Dalit periodicals like *Dalita Shakti*, *Nalupu*, *Edureetha*, *Eenati Ekalavya*, and *Kula Nirmoolana* have started various debates on the Indian history and society and politics. *Dalit Shakti* monthly journal was started and later renamed as *Dalita Rajyam*. This journal was continued for quite some time under the editorship of Padma Rao. The *Edureetha* had four political objectives: to create a sweeping consciousness about the contemporary day—today political incidents among the Dalit masses, secondly, to create democratic, socialist theoretical revolutionary consciousness about caste, class, religion, and nationality, to overcome the past mistakes of the revolutionary struggles and to build a strong consciousness among the Dalits, and lastly, to start a protracted theoretical debate on Marxism and Ambedkarism.⁸¹ Therefore, the Caste-class and the importance of caste specificity in Indian context for the new democratic revolution have been the contents of the debates. Brahmanism, caste, caste hegemony, Gandhi, Nehru, Indian national movement, Indian Communist movement, worldwide working class movements especially the Chinese Cultural Revolution and lessons for Indian new democratic revolution, apart from the awareness the about the legal rights, civil rights, employment related rule and regulations, local, national and international issues.

They started publishing the translated version of Mahatma Phule, Periyar, Narayana Guru, Iyothee Thass, Ambedkar's works into Telugu asking the seriously interested readers and writers to respond to those ideas of the Dalit intellectuals. In these debates, they tried to reconstruct Indian history and society from the Dalits caste-class point of view. The *Edureetha* published in series Ambedkar's

"What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchable" which created debate and counter debate. A noted Marxist intellectual and writer in Andhra Pradesh wrote an essay in *Edureetha* projecting how Ambedkar and his movement were detrimental to not only the Communist movement but also to the Indian society, and how his caste analysis would not work for the Indian reality. While replying to this in the same journal Ravi Chandar made clear many obsessions of Communists on Ambedkar. He replied that the Communists positive opinion on Gandhi and negative impression on Ambedkar about the Caste and unsociability reflects the caste prejudice of Communists. He says that it was Ambedkar who had revolutionary thinking against the caste and its oppression whereas Gandhi had a reformist view, and that in fact Gandhi upheld the Varna based caste. While characterizing the Dalit movement, *Edureetha* says that the movement passed the phases of self-respect, self-dignity to self-protection, now the movement is to analyze the socio-political reality in the context of Marxist-Ambedkarite philosophy. The debates in these periodicals reiterated that the present objective of the Dalit movement is to understand the Indian society in the light of anti-caste philosophy and to bring the all the oppressed castes together to lead the new democratic movement.

K.G. Satyamurthy has initiated another united forum called *Samajika Viplava Veedika* (Social Revolutionary Forum) basically to unite the Dalit revolutionary forces along with Marxist-Leninist radicals. As part of this he also took the initiative to form a voluntary force called the *Samata Sena or Samata Voluntary Force*. Dalit squads were formed and cycle *Yatra* (Journey) was conducted covering about hundred villages and mobilized thousands of people to participate in a huge meeting that was organized in West Godavari District at Tanuku town. In the midst of nearly 10,000 people, Satyamurthy inaugurated *Samata Sena or Samata Voluntary Force* and he exhorted that every Dalit should become a

member of *Samata Sena* for self-protection and self-respect. He enumerated three responsibilities for the *Sena's* volunteers: to build the movement for annihilation caste; to organize all the oppressed castes at the village level; and lastly, to organize the Dalits for self-protection against the violence committed by the upper castes.⁸²

The new Dalit leadership engaged with new theoretical debates and Ambedkar's anticaste philosophical contributions were thoroughly discussed. Before Karamchedu, the Dalit movement was condemned as a caste-based movement and did not have the necessary potential to liberate the working class and bring about democratic revolution. The argument that caste remained an obstacle stalling people's entry into class struggle and peoples' movement and that democratic revolution could not be built without the eradication of caste are historically considered to be false by the Communists. However this kind of revisionist argument was totally refuted by the new Dalit leadership. Now it is the turn of the Dalit movement that placed the Communist movement under scrutiny.

After Karamchedu, the Dalit literature was thoroughly radicalized. A number of Dalit movement intellectuals emerged from the Karamchedu movement. The formations of Dalita Kala Mandali, Dalit Writers, and Artists and Intellectuals United Forum in 1991 have brought perceptible change in their outlook. Katti Padma Rao, the leader of the movement, has written many poems, literary criticisms, and books. His *Social Revolutionary Writers: A Dalitist Literary Critique* (1995) has been the best literary critique and is part of the syllabus for postgraduate students of Telugu literature in the state. His book *Caste and Alternative Culture* (1995) has been the trenchant critique of the hegemonic upper caste culture and ideology. Kancha Ilaiah's essays on reservations particularly *Paranna Bukkulu Pratibha Gurinchi matladuthunai* (Parasites are talking about the merit) published in *Nalupu* series. His highly intellectually mature work, *Why I am not a*

Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy (1996), Bojja Tarakam's essay, *Caste Class* (1996) have become the critical texts which came out of the present ongoing Dalit movement.

The new political alliance between the Dalits and the backward classes of Uttar Pradesh created a new trend in the Andhra political process as well. Bojja Tarakam proposed to have political alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), whereas the Dalit Maha Sabha remained only a cultural mobilizing organization under the leadership of Katti Padma Rao. The ballot box has become the main instrument for securing political change. The BSP's entry into Andhra Pradesh and its electoral experiment was well received by the Dalit-bahujan forces. As a part of political mobilization for the 1994 assembly elections, the BSP organized its first public meeting at the Nizam College grounds in Hyderabad on January 23 "which evoked the spontaneous gathering of over one lakh people."⁸³ This meeting was presided over by Bojja Tarakam who had brought the BSP into Andhra. At this meeting many leaders from different political parties and organizations joined the BSP. The more notable among them were K.G. Satyamurthy from the Marxist-Leninist Centre, Katti Padma Rao from his own Poor People's Party, B. Vijay Kumar from the Janata Dal, and P.L. Srinivas and Balachari from the Congress.⁸⁴ The BSP's public rallies were held in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, and Nalgonda in order to gauge the public mood.⁸⁵

The success of these public meetings and apparent merging of Dalit bahujan forces created some alarm among the ranks of established political parties, mainly the Congress and Telugu Desam.⁸⁶ The Telugu Desam started organizing "meals," "Sadassulu," and "Gharjanas." Three "meals" were organized at Rajahmundry, Nalgonda, and Kurnool of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions, besides one Karshaka Sadassu (Farmers convention).⁸⁷ As part of its populist strategy the Telugu Desam also

promised at the "Praha Gharjana" (People's roar) meeting of three lakhs, that if it came to power, the Chief Ministership would be given to the Dalits and more representation to the backward classes. The Congress, though a little belated in its response, also promised to give the Chief Ministership to the Dalits.⁸⁸ Against the BSP's homogenizing strategy of Dalit bahujans, the Congress adopted the strategy of "sub-castewise" conferences such as Madiga Sabha, Arudatiya Sabha, Yadava Sabha, Weavers Sabha, Fishermen Sabha, Dhobi Sabha, Barbers Sabha, Blacksmiths Sabha, etc.

The entry of the BSP into Andhra also created a significant impact on the CPI (M-L) groups, particularly the PWG. The PWG's understanding of the BSP is of a party "led by the comprador dalit bureaucrats and urbanized petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and backed by a section of the comprador big bourgeoisie—a party in service of the Indian ruling class."⁸⁹ With this basic nature, the BSP had "faith in the Constitution, parliamentary democracy, absence of any land reform programme." With its "anti-imperialist programme" it was "reluctant to take up any grass-roots level movement of the masses," which made it "an acceptable party for the ruling classes too." In the PWG's view, therefore, "the BSP, like any other bourgeois parliamentary party, can in no way solve the basic problem facing the Indian people."⁹⁰

Despite this reading of the BSP's bonafides, in the 1994 elections the BSP was allowed to enter the PWG-dominated base areas, a privilege not allowed to any other political party. In a public meeting at Manda Marri (Karimnagar district), the BSP state president Dr. Sundaraiah promised that if the BSP came to power, it would lift the ban on People's War Group and all the paramilitary forces would be sent back and encounter deaths would be stopped.⁹¹ Kanshi Ram also appealed to the PWG to take up the caste issue apart from the land issue. On June 5, 1994, the BSP organized a huge "Pradarshana" (parade) at Gymkhana grounds, in Secunderabad,

where nearly two lakh people attended. While speaking to the Dalit masses, Kanshi Ram appealed to them to unite and fight against the caste system. He said that in order for the Dalits to capture political power the number of votes were important.⁹² The BSP's last election meeting culminated with the "Shakti Pradarshna" in which four lakh people gathered, the first ever Dalit political meeting on such a massive scale. In the battle of electoral reckoning, however, the BSP lost its deposit in all but one constituency. At Bapatla in Guntur district, Katti Padma Rao did quite well, though he did not win the election battle.⁹³ The BSP's electoral failure in 1994 may be ascribed to the following factors: (a) The party suffered in its organizational structure and leadership projection; (b) its caste- and region-specific identity could not garner the popular vote; (c) the BSP lacked proper communication channels between the party leaders; (d) it also suffered considerably from financial problems. (e) the Telugu press gave very limited coverage to the BSP; and, (f) in the media, the party was projected as a Scheduled Castes party.

However, in 1995 the Republican Party of India (RPI) has been revived and got a new lease of life under the leadership of Bojja Tarakam. Because of political differences with the BSP leadership, Tarakam left the BSP and started gathering all like minded activists to revive the RPI as a viable political alternative. The realization and achievement of a republican form of government based on universal suffrage, and the democratic institutions were seen as the crucial prerequisites for achieving equality. The RPI raised questions regarding the great need in the areas of housing and social welfare, and staged protests all over the state. Along with a political program the focus was on concrete economic issues like redistribution of agriculture land and budget allocation for the Dalits.⁹⁴ An enormous amount of SCP and SCA funds were diverted during the Telugu Dasam government. "Till the year 1990, there were 107 development schemes for Scheduled

Castes being implemented. The government headed by the Telugu Desam party has systematically reduced them to 27."⁹⁵ The RPI demanded an inquiry into the large-scale diversion of funds in the social welfare department; the RPI alleged that about Rs. 6,000 crores⁹⁶ were diverted for the last six years (1996–2002). About Rs 50 crores were siphoned off the scholarship amount, FOR the last five years.⁹⁷ Another important political issue taken up by the RPI was that when the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government headed by the right wing BJP proposed to review the Indian Constitution, because the present contents in it inadequate to fulfill the aspirations of the Indians. In response to this the RPI led the "Save Indian Constitution" movement in Andhra Pradesh.⁹⁸

The Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh took up caste discrimination and exclusion to the international level by equating them with other similar forms of discriminations at the global level, especially racial discrimination, and stressed the importance of the external actors in the democratization process. In this connection, a resolution was passed by 1,200 delegates at the first World Dalit Convention, which took place at the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur on October 10–11, 1998, demanding that "the government of India should file a suit in the Supreme Court of India against the culprits of Karamchedu village, Andhra Pradesh, who have been acquitted by the Andhra Pradesh High Court, and start immediate trail through special courts of the accused in the Chundur massacre in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh."⁹⁹ The Convention therefore appealed to the United Nations to investigate these violations and adopt appropriate measures to end them and for the implementation of the Fundamental Human Rights Instrument for Dalits. This Convention also urged the United Nations to appoint a Special Rapporteur to probe and study atrocities committed on Dalits. The leaders of Karamchedu movement, Bojja Tarakam and Katti Padma Rao was invited to the Convention, and Padma Rao presented a

paper on Karamchedu incident thereby globalizing the Dalit Human Rights issue and for strategic reasons they see opportunities for democratization and allowed the international influence especially the international institutions like United Nations.¹⁰⁰ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes that all persons are entitled to the equal protection of the law "without any discrimination."

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR) was convened by the United Nations held at Durban, South Africa in 2001. A few hundred Dalit activists from Andhra Pradesh have been participating in this world conference—perhaps no other states in India had this kind of massive response.¹⁰¹ The issues of human rights violations associated with caste and untouchability based discrimination was taken to the higher international level and made the plea that the Caste discrimination in India has been the major stumbling block for the democratic relations.

The working paper submitted by Rajendra Kalidas Wimala Goonesekere to Commission on Human Rights Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on the topic of discrimination based on work and descent, argued that "The most widespread discrimination on the basis of work and descent occurs in societies in which at least a portion of the population is influenced by the tradition of caste."¹⁰² Thus the global level discussion on the caste and its impact on the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh is another dimension of democratization efforts of Dalits. The Durban conference as the new global space facilitated to globalize the problem of country-specific caste discrimination and Dalits found an opportunity to mobilize global opinion on the undemocratic caste relations that are prevailed in Indian society. The

violation of Dalit human rights and the international legal liability of the Indian state have acquired greater coherence and deeper significance in light of the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh. Further, the Asia Social Forum held in 2001 at Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, was also used as a forum to enforce effective legal and programmatic measures to abolish the caste and untouchability in India.¹⁰³

With the rise of global communication networks, transnational advocacy coalitions have inevitably become important actors in the process of democratization. The United Nations bodies, specifically the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), brought together all the civil society organizations, government bodies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are working on the issues of human rights violations and other specific forms of discriminations like caste and untouchability.¹⁰⁴ The question remains whether the discourse on caste and its discrimination against the Dalits should have an international forum or should it be discussed only as an internal problem of the Indian society. The Indian government official position is that the caste is not a race; it should be treated as an internal matter and it reiterated that India, as the largest democracy, has developed enough number of internal mechanisms to solve the problem of caste and untouchability. However, the relentless efforts taken up by the Dalit organizations from India and other Asian countries especially, the Buraku of Japan and Dalits in Nepal, at the Durban conference expanded the meaning and scope of the descent-based discrimination that includes the caste and untouchability. However, the Dalit movement, to a certain extent, was successful in internationalizing the concept of caste-based inequality and injustice. An attempt has been made to promulgate an international charter against caste discrimination.

Issues before the Dalit Movement in Andhra Pradesh

There are two important issues before the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh for bringing substantial meaning to internal democratization and unity of the community. One is the issue of Dalit women and the other is the categorization of reservations. Dalit women are on the Dalit periphery and are still hampered by a democratic deficit in terms of social, economic and political power. In spite of significant women's movements in Andhra Pradesh, Dalit women were inhibited, in fact the untouchable women in Indian women's movement was a meek weapon, while denying equal status for Dalit women on par with the other higher caste women.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, the literature on women's movements is mostly confined to the participation of higher caste women. As argued by a Dalit women activist, in spite of their common reality as women, they are only given secondary rolls. She poses the question of how many Dalit women are there in leadership positions in the Indian women's movement at the local, regional, national and international levels. How many Dalit women have participated in the Fourth World Women's Conference, held in Beijing in 1995?¹⁰⁶ Higher caste women engage in gender struggles to reclaim and expand space, while Dalit women's struggle is not only against patriarchy but also against caste and class. However, unlike the previous mobilization which did little to overturn the gender bias within the Dalit life, the Karamchedu incident in 1985 is symbolized as the critical event for Dalit women around which the Dalit movement mobilized, and there emerged a proliferation of critical mobilization of Dalit women on the question of caste and patriarchy within and without. The age of Dalit women is surely to dawn. It was the Dalit woman, Suvarta, whose simple refusal to obey the dominant caste brought a storm of retaliation on the Dalits by the dominant caste. When the state officials

including the then Chief Minister came and offered help, it was the majority of Dalit women who refused outright to accept the government largesse. Dalit women's response and their participation were remarkable. Thousands of Dalit women went to Hyderabad and staged a protest in front of the Chief Ministers house, demanding immediate rehabilitation for the victims, the immediate release of the arrested movement leaders, and punishment of the accused. Alisamma, the prime witness of the Karamchedu massacre and because of her graphic narration of the entire incident, was killed by the upper caste landlords.

Dalit women who participated in the Karamchedu movement mustered her participation in successive Dalit struggles and played an important role by carrying out a number of struggles over the land, livelihood, patriarchy, and caste oppression and atrocities. The famous anti-liquor movement of 1992 in Andhra Pradesh, which has been otherwise championed by the dominant caste educated women, was actually initiated by the starved, cursed, and desolated rural Dalit women.

"It was the untouchable women of rural Andhra Pradesh who formed the backbone of this mass movement and it all began with one Dalit women, learning alphabets in a non-formal education program launched by the government of Andhra Pradesh enlightened the Dalit women to the evils of liquor that consumed by their men. She realized her sufferings of physical, economic and psychological, insults and humiliation, beatings, and lack of nutritious food, self-respect and inability bear the burden of the family. Having understood the root cause of her oppression and suffering, the Dalit women revolted and she fought head-on with the police and other government officials, leading the movement in all parts of rural and urban Andhra Pradesh. And Dalit women fought, struggled, demanding the ban of *Arrack* or liquor by the government. They were on the roads braving the hot sun, destroying the liquor shops and burning in

anger the government vehicles and bravely bore all the sufferings, arrests and beatings by the police, often at the cost of their own life and blood.”

Dalit women organized a movement for land and land rights. A huge mass rally in 2003 called *Dalit stree bhooporata mahayatra* was organized for the land under the banner of Andhra Pradesh Dalita Mahila Sangham, started by Katti Padma Rao. It was reported that more than thirty thousand women gathered at Hyderabad and demanded that every Dalit woman should get one acre of land, proper housing, a share in small scale industry, a ban on *arrack* (liquor), a monthly pension, and free bus and rail passes for all Dalit women labors.¹⁰⁷ Dalit Women Literary Parishat was started in 1989 under the leadership of B.M. Leela Kumari, a lawyer by profession and activist, to bring about awareness to the naked realities of Dalit women. She was one of the most progressive Dalit women activists during the Karamchedu and Chundur movements. Dalit Stree Shakti was started by G. Jhansi, a Dalit woman activist. Dalit women’s literary creativity remained unknown to the mainstream literary world, but some of the Dalit women writers took the initiative to express their literary creativity. Gogu Shyamala brought out an outstanding creative collection of anthology of Dalit women writers and activists in the name of *Nallapoddu*. Some of the Dalit women writers like B. Vijaya Bharathi, Shrat Jyostna Rani, Jupaka Subadra, and Chandra Stree, established themselves as the most popular Dalit women writers and activists.

The issues of Dalit women are of a crucial importance in the context of Dalit movement due to their narrowing space in democracy. In spite of strong women’s movements since the 1970s, the voice of Dalit women was invisible. Dalit women are on the Dalit periphery, Dalit among Dalit, worst among the worst. Remarkably, movement leaders such as K.G. Satyamurthy, Bojja Tarakam, Katti Padma Rao, and Gaddar, *Masterji* have elevated the

question of Dalit women to the level of primacy within their practical political activities and their intellectual work. They emphasized that the struggle for Dalit emancipation must include the issues of Dalit women’s equality and commitment to their rights and freedom. They enthusiastically supported the moves of Dalit women from the kitchens into the factory modern mainstream world. The enthusiastic participation of Dalit women in the Dalit movement was on a mass scale, and occupied front positions in agitation rallies and processions.

Secondly, all the Dalits were considered a homogeneous group and put together to take advantage of the reservation benefits as all of them were untouchables and discriminated against based on the caste hence the reservations were provided as a combined package for all the castes/sub-castes among the Dalits according to their total population in a particular state. However, the increasing aspiration for availing the newly created opportunity by the hitherto excluded Dalits there has emerged a new sections, thus the reservations have produced differential development and the benefits were siphoned off by the relatively advantaged groups among them—“the very success of the policy has brought in its wake a new set of problems. While on the one hand, professionalism attempts to moderate the inequality between the Scheduled Castes and the rest, on the other hand it has engendered inequality among the Scheduled Castes themselves. The exploitation of benefits by some sections of these castes has pushed to the fore the differences, rather than the uniformities, among them.”¹⁰⁸ Reservations have thus created a different class of people among Dalits themselves. Such differences inevitably created imbalances and sub-caste animosities among them and the less benefited sections raised their voice for equal share of opportunities. The conflict between the Madigas and Malas, the two major castes who together constitutes more than 80% of the total Dalit population in Andhra Pradesh, is an important case for the division of

reservations.

Madigas have become assertive to the inequality that they experienced in relation to the Malas while sharing the reservation benefits. Madigas raised the most important demand that the 15 percent quota allotted to the Scheduled Castes in the state has to be subdivided to create equal opportunities and fixed quotas allotted to properly identified subgroups of the 59 Dalit communities. The demand itself is not new as far as Madigas are concerned. They made number of representations and resorted to fight to eliminate the imbalance that existed in reservation policy that prevented Madigas and other disadvantaged sections from attaining the equality of opportunity. Madigas argue that the reservation benefits have resulted in Mala domination and the controlling of public institutions, which is the focus of power and authority. These institutions include universities, colleges, government corporations, and other employment avenues. "According to the Andhra Pradesh Madiga Congress (APMC) which came into existence in 1982 to protect against this inequality, six of the eight Scheduled Caste Secretaries to the government, eighteen of the twenty officers of the Indian Administrative Service, eleven of the thirteen officers of the Indian Police Service, seven of the eight advocates of the High Court, sixteen of the nineteen officials of Commercial Taxes, twenty of the twenty-four officials of the Andhra Pradesh Road Transport Corporation, thirty-two of the fifty revenue officers, 422 of the 475 doctors, 402 of the 487 engineers and the only Scheduled Caste judge of the High Court are Mala."¹⁰⁹ The same disparity has been found in the occupancy of political offices as well. "The APMC claims that five of the eight Scheduled Caste Members of Parliament from the state, 33 of the 40 members of the state legislature, three of the four ministers in the state cabinet, the three Chairmen of the Zilla Parishads and the chief of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee are Mala."¹¹⁰ According to the 1991

Census, the total Scheduled Caste population was 105.95 lakh, of which Madigas constitute 58 lakh, whereas Malas constitute 47.45 lakh. However, of the total 15 percent of reservation, Madigas were not able to secure even 2 percent of benefits in education and employment opportunities provided by the government and the rest of the benefits are cornered by the Malas. According to the sources, nearly 85 percent of elite jobs are occupied by the Malas whereas only 15 percent secured by the Madigas despite their large proportionate of numerical strength. The 80 percent and 20 percent of the elite courses like medicine, engineering are taken up by the Malas and Madigas respectively.¹¹¹

There is growing sense of discontent among the Madigas, especially urban and educated youth. Though the Madigas had unequal access to reservations, there was a passive, mild response and they could not aggregate their interests for various reasons for long time. However, in the early 1990s, it was for the first time being expressed as a mass upsurge through "Dandora." On July 7, 1994, in Eadumudi village of Prakasham district, in a highly charged political environment, the Madiga youth who led the political movement of "Madiga Dandora" formed an association called *Madiga Reseration Porata Samithi* (MRPS). "It was a mass expression of a genuine public grievance that attracted the most innocent and purest following."¹¹² The Dandora movement was led by the new, young, dynamic, and enthusiastic leadership of Manda Krishna and Ponugoti Krupakar. The term "Madiga," was considered an abusive utterance by the caste Hindus. The Dondora movement has made it more dignified and has publicized the historical importance of the term. Madigas now started expressing their political identity by suffixing the Madiga to their names.

The primary observation of Dandora movement was that there is an imbalance in the equality of opportunity in receiving the benefits of reservation and demanded just share in the present reservation policy. The

Madigas, because of their social position, were not able to avail the benefits of reservations in proportion to their population among the Dalits and "it was necessary therefore to divide up the reservation quota and give to each properly constituted subgroup its due."¹¹³ However, while asking for the rational division of reservations, the way the Madigas portrayed the Malas as "the image of the oppressive, cunning and selfish Mala who by craft and deceit took away all the benefits given by the state to the Scheduled Castes" and "it also been characterized that the Malas as the principle enemies of Madigas. It was even said by the Madigas leaders that the neo-Brahmin is more dangerous than the Brahmin and that is why the Mala is a bigger enemy."¹¹⁴ In reaction to this, taking strong objection the Malas formed an organization in the name of Mala Mahanadu under the leadership P.V. Rao, the former leader of Ambedkar Yuvajana Sangham. Mala Mahanadu argued that instead of fighting among Madigas and Malas for division of reservations, Dalits should jointly fight for increasing the percentage of reservations proportionate to the increase in the Dalit population. It also called for a proper implementation of reservations, including the backlog of unfulfilled vacancies in the government departments.

The movement has penetrated into rural and urban areas of all the regions of Andhra Pradesh and held political rallies, meetings, and demonstrations urging the people to join the movement for the division of reservations. The leaders articulated that the reservation policy was meant for the social justice, parity, and equality, but it ended up in creating inequalities among the Dalits, especially the Madigas whose actual socioeconomic base could not be improved. After its formation the Madiga Reservation Poorata Samithi (MRPS) organized a huge public rally cum public meeting at Ongole town with 70,000 people on May 31, 1995. There were huge mass demonstrations and public gatherings all over the state. Thus the Dandora movement has

evoked a tremendous response and went from strength to strength galvanizing support from all sections of society especially from political parties and civil society organizations. On March 2, 1996, there was a huge gathering of 3 lakh people from all over the state, demanding the state government's immediate response for the division of reservations.¹¹⁵ As a result of the MRPS organizational strength and dynamism the Andhra Pradesh government appointed a one-man commission with retired judge, Justice Ramachandra Raju, on September 10, 1996¹¹⁶ to study all the aspects of reservations and its impact on the Dalits development in the spheres of education and employment.

The commission has found that the Scheduled Castes are a very heterogeneous group with wide disparities in social, economic, cultural, occupational, and educational levels. In such a situation constitutional provisions and several Supreme Court judgments support the need for rational categorization to ensure equity and to rectify injustice. The commission inferred that the Mala and Adi-Andhra communities, both individually and the group of communities belonging to the Mala and Adi-Andhra group, have so far been enjoying to a large extent a greater share in public employment than their percentage share of Scheduled Caste population.¹¹⁷ According to the commission "there is disproportionate distribution of reservation benefits in favour of the 'Mala' group and 'Adi-Andhra' group of scheduled caste communities compared to their respective populations. Both the 'Madiga' group and 'Relli' group of communities are not adequately represented either in public appointments or in educational institutions compared to their respective populations."¹¹⁸ The Commission suggested "categorization based on most backward to least backward among Scheduled Castes."¹¹⁹ Accordingly, the "Relli" group of communities is the most backward among the Scheduled Caste communities. Thus they were categorized as "A" with percentage entitlement of 1% both in

public appointments and admission to educational institutions. The "Madiga" group of communities is the next most backward among the Scheduled Caste communities. They are categorized as "B" with percentage entitlement of 7% both in public appointments and admission to educational institutions. The commission recommended that the "Mala" group of communities is receiving the benefits of reservation wholly disproportionate to its population. They are categorized as "C" with percentage entitlement of 6% both in public appointments and admissions to educational institutions. The "Adi-Andhra" group of communities is receiving the benefits of reservations wholly disproportionate to their population. They are categorized as "D" with percentage entitlement of 1% both in public appointments and admission to educational institutions. The commission also made clear that the categorization made into "A," "B," "C," and "D" groups does not apply to posts or admissions to educational institutions in the central government or in central government corporations or central government public sector undertakings.

Meanwhile the MRPS intensified its struggle throughout the Andhra Pradesh. The commission at last submitted its recommendations to the Andhra Pradesh government on May 28, 1997 for its executive action. The then Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government immediately responded to the commission's recommendations and issued government orders Number 68 and 69 classifying the Scheduled Caste reservations as "A," "B," "C," and "D" groups as recommended by the Justice Ramchandra Raju commission. However, the Mala Mahanadu resumed an anti-categorization movement vehemently opposing the division and demanded that the government should withdraw the orders issued classifying the Dalits in to four groups. It argued that the division of reservations is the divide and rule politics of dominant castes and Dalits should fight united against the caste annihilation.¹²⁰ Unconvincingly, Mala Mahanadu raised two

issues: one is that the cornering of reservation benefits by Malas attributed to their individual "merit" and argues that although the Madigas have been oppressed by the upper castes but they are unforthcoming because of their marked occupancy, and the Madigas were expected to repeat the cycle of skill acquisition, improvement in competitive spirit and "merit" for any modern occupational ladder. Any failure to do so on part of the Madigas is not the result of Mala betrayal. In fact, the Madigas are simply not willing to do the hard work that Malas did a generation ago in order to get the first leg up the ladder. Secondly, the division of reservations have been artificially induced by the upper castes in order to stimulate hostility and conflict and to prevent all exploited groups from joining together to end their mutual exploitation led by the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh.

With this understanding the Mala Mahanadu challenged the government orders in the Andhra Pradesh High Court and the honorable Court suspended the government orders on technical reasons saying that the state legislature has no competence to make any law in regard to bifurcation of the Presidential List of Scheduled Castes prepared under Article 341(1) of the Constitution. The legislation was bad because the Report of the National Commission on Scheduled Castes was not placed before the Legislature as required under Article 338(9) of the Constitution of India.¹²¹ However, considering the importance of the "Dandora" movement, the Andhra Pradesh government enacted "Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes" (Rationalization of Reservations) Act 20 of 2000 based on the Justice Ramachandra Raju commission's recommendations. Again Mala Mahanadu went to the Supreme Court challenging the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalization of Reservations) Act 20 of 2000. The Supreme Court in its verdict said that the mini-classification based on micro-distinctions is false to the very egalitarian spirit of Indian Constitution and violates

Articles 14, 15, and 16 which constitute the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.¹²² Though there is a temporary impasse on the division of reservations as demanded by the Dandora movement, the movement has brought out yet other important questions before the Dalit movement as the democratization in Andhra Pradesh.

Conclusion

The caste system and its institutionalized discrimination has distorted and affected the very working of democratic system. In its very foundation the caste remains central obstacle in the path of democratic redistribution of power in Andhra Pradesh. The Dalit movement, as the movement against this distortion, invoked the democratization process. It is not only an error correction mechanism but also brought about fundamental changes in the political culture that includes the way the Dalits think of their rightful position in relation to the democratic state institutions, the way in which public policies are made and implemented in Andhra Pradesh. The Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh as a social movement made an important contribution in shaping democratic values and social relationships. The fundamental importance of the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh for understanding these changes have been gathered through the fact that Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh has been the primary bearer of the hopes, and aspirations of the Dalits.

The Dalits' political mobilization and their legitimate demand for equal opportunities influenced the welfare state to respond the Dalits' fair demands for material uplift in some measure. The Dalits' relationship with the welfare state thus had elements of contradiction and has raised many questions about the nature of democratic processes in caste-class ridden Indian society. This contradiction itself became an instrument for quickening Dalit consciousness. The agents of these contradictions were, primarily, the

ruling upper castes in Andhra Pradesh, namely, the Kammas, Reddys, Velamas, and Brahmins. Wielding power in the state for decades, their perennial endeavor came to stabilize and to consolidate their position. This endeavor took two forms: the great majority of Dalits were forced to remain confined to the occupations traditionally enforced on them, like scavenging, leather work, and bonded labor. Even a mild protest from the alienated Dalits met with indescribable violence from members of the upper castes. Secondly, the educated Dalits who had been incorporated and absorbed into the state institutions through reservations, and who could have led their Dalit brethren to autonomy, were marginalized and discriminated against, in keeping with the Hindu social order which has an inherent caste-class bias. The result was that both the Dalits working inside the state apparatus and those who were merely members of the civil society developed an antagonistic relationship with the welfare state. This perspective of the Dalits towards a state that was unsympathetic to their plight and aspirations, and which in fact endeavored to suppress their struggle for emancipation, brought about the Dalits' collective resistance. The result was the mobilization of a new form of struggle by the Dalits that challenged the traditional order.

The Dalit movement in the socio-political context of Andhra Pradesh was also molded by the political culture in which Dalits tried to weaken the traditional rational authority, whereas the dominant castes upheld the tradition. The Congress Party and Telugu Desam Party with their control over the state apparatus, tried to defuse the Dalit movement with a political strategy of mass integration through populist policies. The Communists, both traditional and radical, also played a notable role in the enhancement of Dalit consciousness. In particular, the radical Marxist-Leninists' created a significant impact on the Dalits in endowing them with self-respect and self-confidence in Andhra Pradesh. Thus, the Dalit movement has

affected the agenda setting of various political parties. The increased mobilization of Dalit activism and proliferation of Dalit organizations, the “class” dominated analysis of civil society has been supplemented by the “caste” analysis suggesting the growing evidence of democratic consolidation and solidarity among the oppressed. And it played an active role in formulating public policy and instrumental in how it should be implemented. Even more important than these external political processes in bringing about Dalit consciousness was the Dalits’ study and absorption of Ambedkar’s thought.

The unleashing of political violence on the Dalits whenever they assert and exercise their democratic right of franchise against the will of the dominant castes exposes the tension between the traditional power elite and those who are aspiring for the access to the democratic state institutions. Thus, the democracy becomes the battle ground in which Dalits are standing to weaken the traditions of caste and its hierarchical power structure in order to create equality and social justice.

The Dalits have always been ostracized and opportunities to cultivate their human faculties were restricted an account of caste hierarchy. To uproot that institutionalized caste prejudice and social discrimination for the realization of democracy Dalits led multifarious struggles. The Dandora movement initiated debate that the policy of reservations has ended up by creating not only a class division among the Dalits but also the deep-rooted caste cleavages among the Dalits. Malas’ elitist kind of commitment to democracy might impede the deepening of the democratization process. Mala Mahanadu recognizes the existence of exploitation but tends to give it a minor role and fail to provide an explanation of democratization in historical perspective. The broader perspective inevitably recognizes the primary role of agents of democratization included subaltern forces whose location in civil society is the least of the least.

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- ¹⁹ K.V. Narayana Rao, *Emergence of Andhra Pradesh* (Bombay: popular Prakashan, 1973); see Report of the States Reorganization Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, 1956.
- ²⁰ K.S.Singh *People of India: Andhra Pradesh*, Government of India, New Delhi, Vol. xiii, Part-I, 2003, pp. 11–12.
- ²¹ Coastal Andhra: East Godavari, Guntur, Krishna, Nellore, Prakasham, Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Vishakhapatnam, and West Godavari.
- ²² Rayalaseema: Anantapur, Chittoor, Kadapa, Kurnool.
- ²³ Telangana: Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Medak, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Nizambad, Ranga Reddy, Warangal.
- ²⁴ According to Census of India 2001, Andhra Pradesh total population is 7.62 crores.
- ²⁵ The Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, New Delhi, 1968, p. 158.
- ²⁶ Uma Ramaswamy, *Economic and Political Weekly*, March, 1986.
- ²⁷ Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Debates, March 4 1970. Vemayya, MLA, raised this matter in the Assembly. According to him the number of arrested as follows: Adilabad 174; Krishana 502; Guntur 1044; Waranga 1818.
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- ³⁰ Ibid.
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- ³³ S.P.Ranga Rao, Paper presented at the National Seminar on Land Reforms and the Scheduled Castes held at Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, December 16 1996 (unpublished).
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- ⁴⁰ Government of Andhra Pradesh G.O. Ms.170 dated 03-11-1981. Actually quoted in Memorandum submitted to His Excellence Dr. C.Rangarajan, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh by the Republican Party of India, Andhra Pradesh, Dated January 29, 2002.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Rural Labor Enquiry Report, Government of India, 1974–75.
- ⁴³ *Enaadu* (Telugu Daily) Hyderabad, December 26, 1995.
- ⁴⁴ Balagopal, K. *Probing in the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts*, Perspectives, Hyderabad, 1988: 156.
- ⁴⁵ See G.Nancharaiah, *New Economic Policy and its Effects on Dalits* in P.G. Jogdand, ed. *New Economic Policy and Dalits*, Jaipur: Rawal Publications. 2000.
- ⁴⁶ Globalization and its both positive and negative impact on Dalits has been widely debated and discussed among the Dalits organizations through their periodicals. Importantly, the globalization process has been juxtaposed with international Brahmanism. For more debates, see issues of *Edureetha*, *Nalupu*, *Dalita Bahujana Parivarthana*, *Kulanirmulana*, *Bahujana Keratalu*.
- ⁴⁷ Katti Padma Rao, *Journey Towards Dalit Dignity*, Lokayat Publications, Ponnur, p. 117.
- ⁴⁸ Leela Kumari, *Dalit Women: The black untouchable apartheid women of India*, Dalit Women Literary Parishat, Vijayawada, 1995, p. 22.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, p.20.
- ⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables"*, New York, 1999, p.166.
- ⁵¹ Ibid, p.10.
- ⁵² V. Linga Murty, "Political Parties", in A. Prasanna Kumar, ed. *Andhra Pradesh Government and Politics*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 48–99.
- ⁵³ The role of caste in Andhra Pradesh politics has been an important subject. See Harrison, Selig. S. (1960) *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Harrison, Selig. S (1956) 'Caste and the Andhra Communists', *American Political Science Review* 50(2): 378-404. Carolyn Elliot M, 'Caste and Faction among the Dominant Caste: The Reddis and Kammas of Andhra', in Hugh Gray; Rajni Kothari (ed), *Caste and Politics in India*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1970, Walch, James, *Faction and Front: Party System in South India*, Young Asia Publications, New Delhi, 1976.
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- ⁵⁵ V. Hanumangtha Rao, *Party Politics in Andhra Pradesh*, ABA publications, Hyderabad, 1993, pp.290.
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- ⁵⁸ Prasanna Kumar, pp. 151.
- ⁵⁹ Kohli, A., *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*, Cambridge university Press, Cambridge, 1991, pg. 67.
- ⁶⁰ Balagopal, K., 1988, pg. 157.
- ⁶¹ Padma Rao, K., 'Karamchedu O Charitraka Malupu' (Telugu), reprinted in *Dalita Ranainnadhama: Dadula reports, vishlanalu, Sameeskhalu, debatelu* (Telugu), Edureetha Publications, Hyderabad, 2005, 2-9
- ⁶² Balagopal, K., 1988, pp.37.
- ⁶³ Interview with Bojja Tarakam, May 7, 2006. Hyderabad.
- ⁶⁴ In Hyderabad nearly 30 to 40 thousand Dalits from all over the state gathered at the Ambedkar statue had peaceful procession carrying black glags. *Enaadu* (Telugu Daily), Hyderabad, January 27, 1982.
- ⁶⁵ Interview with Mr. J.B. Raju, August, 20, 2006, Hyderabad.
- ⁶⁶ see Kancha Ilaiah's *The State and Repressive Culture: The Andhra Experience*, Hyderabad: Swecha Prachuranalu, 1989. Chapter-12, pp 129–41.
- ⁶⁷ The violence on Dalits by the dominant castes was neatly chronicled by various Dalit magazines, especially; see the reports of *Nalupu*, *Edureeta* and *Dalita Bahujana Parivarthana*.

- ⁶⁸ For full details of the incident, see the fact-finding report brought out by Salaha, *Karamchedu*, published by Hyderabad Book Trust, Hyderabad, 1985.
- ⁶⁹ Salaha, FactFinding Report, Hyderabad, 1985.
- ⁷⁰ The speech delivered by Katti Padma Rao, see *Dalita Rajyam*, July-August 1994. And also see *Edureeta*, July 1992, pp 21–22.
- ⁷¹ All this happened in the presence of the state police. See, *Human Rights in India: Police Killings and Rural Violence in Andhra Pradesh*. Asia Watch Report, September 20, 1992, New York.
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- ⁷³ Padma Rao, Katti, *Caste and Alternative Culture*, the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, Madras, 1995, Chapter 12.
- ⁷⁴ Narrated by Ganumala Gneswar, Dalit Activist based in Hyderabad, May, 10, 2006, Hyderabad.
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- ⁸¹ *Edureetha*, 1993.
- ⁸² U. Sambhasiva Rao (2005). Pp.94-96. In this compiled volume the author chronalised the self-respect movements of Dalits and the atrocities committed against them and various debates and discussions from 1985 to 2005.
- ⁸³ “Andhra Politics: BSP and Caste Politics”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 1, 1994.
- ⁸⁴ Interview with Gneswar, May 10, 2006, Hyderabad.
- ⁸⁵ “Andhra Politics: BSP and Caste Politics.”
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- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ Interview with Gneswar, May 10, 2006, Hyderabad.
- ⁸⁹ CPI (ML), PWG, Party Documents (undated) on The Caste Question and the BSP, p. 14.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ⁹¹ *Edureeta*, July 1994.
- ⁹² Interview with Gneswar, May 10, 2006, Hyderabad.
- ⁹³ Ibid.
- ⁹⁴ Many pamphlets were issued by RPI (Telugu).
- ⁹⁵ Memorandum submitted to His Excellence Dr. C.Rangarajan, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh by the Republican Party of India, Andhra Pradesh, Dated January 29, 2002.
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- ¹⁰² United Nations Commission on Human Rights: Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of HumanRights, Fifty-third Session, and Item 5. 2001.
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- ¹⁰⁴ See the WCAR NGO Forum Declaration, World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances, Durban, South Africa, August 28 to September 1, 2001.
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¹²¹ See the Supreme Court of India, judgment delivered on Scheduled Castes Classification on 5-11-2004, Civil appeal No.6934/2000 M/S Mala Mahanadu versus State of Andhra Pradesh and others.

¹²² Ibid.

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