Conclusion

From the present study of the Dalit movement in post-independence Andhra Pradesh, it emerges that the movement, seething with the suppressed anger of ages, has come of age, posing a formidable challenge to the dominance of the upper caste rulers by creating a new political identity as a potential mass movement. This unfolding of Dalit consciousness was shaped and influenced by a multiplicity of factors.

The prime factor is that the post-independence welfare state has become an essential component of social reproduction. The State-initiated modernization process and welfarism brought about the conditions for the emergence of Dalit subjectivity in a hitherto historically alienated mass of people. These changes in the hidebound socio-economic and political power structure enabled the Dalits to detach themselves from the traditional caste-based social relations and move along the newly opened channels of education and other opportunities.

The Dalits' political mobilization and their legitimate demand for equal opportunities forced the welfare state to respond to the Dalits' fair demands for material uplift in some measure. But not in full measure, for the welfare state began to trim its welfare expenditure on Dalits, playing down its importance. The Dalits' relationship with the welfare state thus had elements of contradiction. 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 endeavour became to stabilize and to consolidate their position.

This endeavour took two forms. First, the great majority of Dalits were forced to remain confined to the occupations traditionally enforced on them by the casteist Hindu society, like scavenging, leather work and bonded labour. Even a mild protest from the alienated Dalits met with indescribable violence from members of the upper castes. Second, 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 endeavoured 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, which challenged the traditional order.

Dalit consciousness in the socio-political context of Andhra Pradesh was also moulded by the Dalits’ interaction with various political organizations and movements. The Congress Party, with its quasi-state apparatus, tried to defuse the Dalit movement with its political strategy of mass integration through populist policies. The Congress Party may not have foreseen that such populist policies
themselves would produce political implications for the growth of Dalit consciousness. The Communists, both traditional and radical, also played a notable role in the enhancement of Dalit consciousness. In particular, the Marxist-Leninist groups created a significant impact on the Dalit movement. Their radical mode of mobilization became instrumental in endowing the Dalits with self-respect and self-confidence.

Perhaps even more important than these external political processes in bringing about Dalit consciousness was the Dalits' study and absorption of Ambedkar's thought. Post-independence Dalit activity was highlighted by the Republican Party of India (RPI) and the massive growth of youth organizations calling themselves Ambedkar Yuvajan Sanghams, along with the Dalit workers' associations in the state. The RPI commenced the process of organizing the Dalits and other oppressed masses of peasants and landless labourers, creating a new consciousness among the Dalit bahujan forces. The RPI could not, however, make a permanent mark on the political scene of Andhra Pradesh, both on account of its internal divisions and external manipulations. In course of time, the party became noted for its political slumber and withdrawal from the hurly burly of political struggle.

The Dalits' despair at the RPI's withdrawal from the Andhra political scene did not last long. Hope emerged once again with the emergence of statewide Ambedkar Yuvajana Sanghams, with political agitation as their mode of political activity. These activities included: the propagation of Ambedkar's ideas, the celebration of his birth and death anniversaries, ubiquitous installation of his statues, translation of his works into Telugu language, conducting seminars and issuing of
pamphlets. The Sanghams also played a crucial role in educating the Dalits, conducting rallies, demonstrations and submitting memorandums expressing their grievances. The Sanghams and the Dalit workers’ organizations, though they could not pose a formidable challenge to the established political order, certainly became instruments of registering Dalit resistance. The Dalits’ discontent against the State was, for example, emphatically expressed by observing Independence Day and Republic Day as black days.

The resentment of upper caste rulers at this growing Dalit consciousness resulted in increased violence on Dalits. Innumerable atrocities on the Dalits took place in various regions of Andhra Pradesh. The welfare state, which was supposed to provide security of life and limb to all its citizens, manifested its bias in favour of the upper caste rulers by legitimizing the atrocities as “encounter killings” and deaths in police custody.

In this history of atrocities on the Dalits, Karamchedu and Chundur became two landmarks in the evolution of Dalit assertiveness. With these incidents which were a blot on any society that calls itself civil, the Dalits finally gave up their illusion about the welfare state having been constituted for their welfare. These incidents impelled the Dalit leadership to completely repudiate their past experiences of passive acceptance and question the very basis of the Indian State and its functioning. Looking for alternatives to ameliorate their plight, they came up with an alternative autonomous organization called the Dalit Maha Sabha, which, at the same time that it reflected the socio-political, cultural and ideological reality of the Dalits, sought to alter it.
The formation of the Dalit Maha Sabha was a radical departure from the past, a definitive shift in Dalit consciousness. The Maha Sabha accrued within itself the potential of being a self-activating historical agency of social change. It entered into a process of forming a collective identity and from a formative sporadic spontaneous movement transformed itself into an organization.

Certain conclusions may be drawn from the emergence and formation of the Dalit Maha Sabha:

First, the formation of the Dalit Maha Sabha marked a historical departure in the course of the Dalit movement, when there was a vivid aggravation of fundamental caste-class contradictions in Andhra society. The collective Dalit expression and their political potency posed a major challenge to existing caste-ridden social relations, threatening their collapse.

Second, the concept of Dalit acquired an altogether new, holistic definition in Andhra political discourse. Parochial allegiances of division that fractured the movement were overcome, and the Dalits came to recognize themselves as a single entity. This change resulted in more spirited political campaigning by the Dalits in the defence and advancement of their common interests.

Third, the formation of the Dalit Maha Sabha also changed the language of Andhra politics, which had almost become traditional, with its penchant for dominance-suppression. In the light of this change, all the established political parties, including the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist groups, effectively changed their major political propositions and statements, resulting in a change of their political strategy. At this
conjuncture, the Dalit movement opened a new conceptual space in which a creative interaction took place between Marxist-Leninist groups and the Dalits. In concrete terms, this was manifested in the creation, articulation and synthesis of Marxism-Ambedkarism.

**Fourth**, the emergence of the autonomous Dalit movement became the fountainhead for the emergence of a movement of intellectuals or organic intellectuals. Through their multiple activity, these movement intellectuals contributed to the formation of collective Dalit identity by articulating Dalit bahujan knowledge, interests and cognitive identity. They created an enormous body of Dalit literature as an instrument of counter-hegemonic ideology, imbuing the Dalits with the ability of organizing themselves as agents of new democratic revolution. In addition to their literary contribution, these organic intellectuals became even more visible as organizers, leaders and spokespersons of Dalit consciousness.

**Fifth**, joining the mainstream of Dalit consciousness, all the hitherto oppressed castes/classes of the Dalits, tribals, minorities and other backward castes disconnected themselves from their earlier political affiliations and ideologies. Extremely significantly, they came together to form a new homogeneous identity called bahujan. This process was the culmination of the collective expression of discontent, challenging the dominant meaning systems and symbols.

**Sixth**, as a consequence of this ‘bahujanization’ of Indian politics, the entry of the Bahujan Samaj Party on the Indian political scene created political tremors in the traditional political party systems of Andhra Pradesh. With this development the traditional vote bank of the
Congress Party, which had ruled the state for nearly four decades, was weaned away. No less important was the impact on the Telugu Desam party and the traditional Communist base, which were joined at their base and became insecure, leading to political uncertainty.

*Seventh*, the rapid radicalization of Dalit consciousness and their consolidation along with other oppressed forces witnessed the counter-polarization and consolidation of the upper castes. To give an instance, in the wake of the Karamchedu atrocity which they had unleashed on the Dalits, the upper castes formed their own Karamchedu Sanghibhava Samithi (Karamchedu Solidarity Assembly). These militia of the upper castes, organized with the main purpose of committing atrocities on the Dalits, tribals, other backward castes and minorities, made it their mandate to start counter-ideological propagation against the Dalits and create psychological terror among their intended victims.

*Eighth*, the counter mobilization of the upper castes, launched on the basis of politico-religious nationalism and other ideological factors, was reflected in the revival of Hindu fundamentalism, with a strong nexus in the State apparatus. As a result, whenever an atrocity was committed on the Dalits, the State apparatus was weighted towards the upper caste rulers, thus enabling them to perpetuate the hegemony of the traditional forces.

*Finally*, the response of the state apparatus to the growing consolidation of Dalit consciousness through the interaction of various organizations, was the ruthless use of the repressive State machinery. The State adopted the political strategy of banning ultra-left or extra-parliamentary organizations and even physically eliminating the activists.
in the name of "encounter deaths". These tendencies manifested not only the legitimate use of force, but also a determination to liquidate the advancement of Dalit consciousness and activity by every available means.

In sum, the Dalits' intended struggle has taken different forms to forcefully advance in keeping with the requirements of the times and the opportunities provided by history. Its course was not decided by any preconceived revolutionary blueprint. It was not even fundamental to Ambedkar's thought. On the contrary, Ambedkar's thought itself has been reconstructed and determined by the course of the Dalit movement. The relationship between Ambedkarism—a theoretical system of Ambedkar's ideas—and Dalit consciousness was neither direct nor immediate. They regularly crossed back and forth in the interests of keeping the complex process of keeping the consciousness alive.

The present phase of the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh has entered a new historical situation which demands the transcendence of the Dalits' spontaneous consciousness to the higher level of true dynamic, cognitive revolutionary praxis. In consonance with Lenin's famous assertion that without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement, the intended form of revolutionary praxis in Dalit consciousness requires a new theoretical understanding about the new synthesized proposition, advanced strategies and ideals which unequivocally aim at revolutionary transformation of the fundamental double-edged caste-class contradictions of the Indian social reality. The Dalit movement promises the potential of replacing the existing caste-class social order with a just, equitable order devoid of such anomalous divisions. To retain this potential, however, the movement needs to
rebuild its strength and unity for the future course. To this end, the Dalit movement has to take note of certain essential tasks.

**Unity between the Organic Intellectuals and the Dalit Praxis**

Constructing an alternative Dalit historiography, Ambedkar clearly differentiated between upper caste traditional intellectuals and Dalit organic intellectuals, locating the role of the former as an agency for dissimulating, disfiguring and mystifying the cultural history of Dalits and their actual social relations. The historical role of the organic Dalit intellectuals, in his view, was to exhume the real soul of India from the debris which had been deliberately heaped upon it. The great task for today's organic Dalit intellectuals, therefore, is not only to reinterpret initially the established intellectual tradition but also to spread some of the truths discovered by Phule, Ambedkar, Periyar and other Dalit Bahujan intellectuals. The Dalits' consciousness of being Dalits has been given by these intellectuals. The organic intellectuals can play a positive role by taking on their unfinished task of providing a counter-hegemonic ideological diversion and collective identity that genuinely represents Dalit aspirations.

Along with conquering political power and economic power, the organic Dalit intellectuals must also strive for the conquest of intellectual power in totality, in social, economic, political, cultural and technological fields. For this enormous intellectual activity to become a reality, attention needs to be focused on the education system for the Dalits. Poverty and high level of illiteracy remain the stumbling-blocks to the emergence of an adequate level of Dalit organic intelligentsia.
The Nature and Character of the Indian State

The most important task before the Dalit movement is to redefine the precise nature and role of the State in post-independence India, its character and its possible transformation into Ambedkar’s state democracy, and how to bring it about. The welfare state, created after India’s independence, has ceased to be a provider of social justice. It continues to act in the interests of the dominant upper caste landlords and capitalists, who are themselves divided, each struggling to control and consolidate State power. These contradictions within the ruling classes/castes have sharpened as a result of the imperialist contradictions, leading to severe political instability.

There is a need to examine anew the nature of the State or the political economy, caste/class structure of the Indian society and the dynamics of capital accumulation within the global economic situation. The drastic changes in the internal economic policies, including those of foreign investment, and the entry of multinational corporations whose interests are intermixed with ruling class, all call for a systematic multidimensional resistance by the Dalits. One impact of considerable import for the Dalits has been the weakening of the State-administered public sector, where reservations used to be given to the Dalits. These concessions in favour of the Dalits are slowly being withdrawn because of the impact of the newly introduced market economy.

The people’s upsurge against the anti-people State policies, and the rapidly growing awakening among the hitherto oppressed masses, needs to profoundly change the whole paraphernalia of the State apparatus, judiciary, means of communication, education, legislature and the armed
forces. The State today is highly centralized and is acquiring all kinds of destructive weapons by spending a huge amount on non-productive defence, while cutting down on welfare expenditure. The protection of repression by the State, therefore, becomes an important task for the ongoing Dalit movement.

Towards Revolutionary Alliances

The new democratic revolution in India cannot be the movement of Dalits alone, but demands the hegemony of the Dalits among the revolutionary forces. This requires a systematic great alliance between the Dalits, tribals, other backwards, and minorities who constitute more than 90 per cent of the working class and the peasants and the landless labourers. The new democratic revolution would be the execution of their mass will and collective power. The Dalit movement should also expand its base among the industrial wage workers, artisans, peasants, self-employed labour, and small property owners in villages and in the towns.

In order to bring about a new democratic revolution, the Dalits should ally with more new social movements and all those who struggle against State oppression and imperialism, including the radical Marxist-Leninist groups, feminist movements, various oppressed nationalities struggling for their autonomous statehood, and the movements which are fighting to defend minority rights, civil rights, human rights and ecological movements.
Vanquishing Internal Caste Divisions

The next important task to which the Dalit movement has to apply its mind are the internal caste and sub-caste divisions of *jati* and *varna*. These antediluvian divisions, on the basis of purity and pollution, have only served to split the Dalits into innumerable antagonistic divisions. Overcoming these internal divisions and differences, therefore, becomes an inevitable task in the programme of building a new India. The homogenization process of the Dalits, it may be noted, should go hand in hand with the level of development of the capitalist economy itself.

The emergence of the 'Madiga Dandora' or Madiga Rights Protection movement, which displayed tremendous resistance, while it demonstrated the scope of sub-caste movements for expanding Dalit consciousness, also showed how sub-caste antagonisms have been artificially kept alive and intensified by the ruling classes in order to maintain their dominance. Internal divisions still remain the weakness of the Dalit movement. The effect of these sub-caste conflicts was to split the Dalits and corrupt the Dalit movement. The homogenization process of the Dalits is not a detached process but is itself a part of the struggle.

Rebuilding of a New United Revolutionary Party

The immediate task confronting the Indian new democratic revolution is of building a single, unified mass revolutionary vanguard of genuine revolutionary groups and parties belonging to the working classes and Dalits. The absence of such a party continues to impede revolutionary unification, and the consequent joint struggle against the caste-class inequalities. This united revolutionary party should be based
on a synthesized revolutionary theory and come about through the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority. In order to wage a protracted political and ideological struggle, therefore, there need to unite the various mass organizations and to initiate political and ideological debate among various organizations for a synthesized theory.