Appendix

The Manifesto of the Andhra Pradesh Dalit Mahasabha

(Translated from Telugu)

What is Dalit Mahasabha?

The "Dalit Mahasabha" is a movement to unite the hitherto oppressed people who have been subjected to an age-old socio-economic inequalities, and called by the upper castes as Harijans, Girijans and backward classes. The primary objective of the movement is to annihilate the untouchability and caste system which are impeding their solidarity and along with preparing them to annihilate socio-economic inequalities.

Who are Dalits?

All those who have been subjected to the socio-economic and political oppression for generations are all Dalits. The Dalits do not belong to a caste or a religion. Since they are subjected to oppression, we call them as 'the oppressed'. Slaves exploited by their master in slavery system, peasants and agricultural labourers exploited by feudal lords and proletariat exploited by capitalist bourgeoisie- all those exploited masses are Dalits. Apart from the above economic oppression, those who have been
exclusively subjected to social oppression comes under untouchables. Not only these, the rest of the castes who have been subjected to social oppression under the caste system are all Dalits. All the upper castes are part of the feudal, and capitalist system, whereas, the lower and backward castes are constitute the working class, peasants and poor.

**Oppression of Dalits in the History**

When we analyse the case of the exploited in India, it is imperative that, one should consider the social and economic inequalities. Historically, the classification of touchables and untouchables, has alienated one fifth of Indians from the society and imposed ruthless regulations. These untouchables have been alienated from the property, culture, civilization and production system. For thousands of years they remained outside being not allowed to become an integral part of the society. They have been distantiated from the land which is principal means for the human development. Their untouchability has been perpetuated by the creation of politico-legal statutes.

Manusmriti declared untouchables as misshapen, and unheeded. Parashrasmriti has kept untouchables voice and sight away from others. Those who saw them or heard their voice were penalized. The Naradasmriti and Apasthandsa principles treated them severely. In the evolutionary sequence of society untouchables were not allowed to enjoy the faits of human progress. Even the untouchables were divided into thousands of castes. The scriptures declare that the fourth class of the caste system
consist of Sudras ad Slaves. And among Sudras, but for those who have occupied land, rest of the castes were treated as slaves. Washermen weavers, potterers, barbars, carpenters. not only these, but those who were deprived of land sweated and worked for landlords. Their majority numbers notwithstanding, they could not get united owing to caste differences. Those who owned the land naturally held control over the socio-economic structure. Consequently, those engaged in tillage could not owned the land. Neither could they secure their bargaining power. It is not enough, if we consider these as a economic problems, but we must view oppression as social phenomenon.

Even those who thrived on land were not equals. They can be divided into landlords, affluent farmers, peasants, and agricultural labourers. And a large section of agricultural labourers were untouchables. Whatever, caste status they claimed the small peasant remained always Dalit. They could not get united with the working class owing to their caste differences. It is not possible to eradicate economic disparities ignoring inequalities and malaises, caste system has fostered. For generations, caste system and untouchability are central to economic inequalities. They have hindered the solidarity of the exploited. That's the inextricable relationship between economic exploitation and social oppression.

Apart from, these, the tribals were also exploited for generations. Tilling the forest land and enjoying the fruits of the forest, they have developed a culture and tradition distinctly of their own. These tribals were yet untouched by the caste system. But the civilized people have started by
encroaching upon the forest lands. They were looted as they were ignorant. The civilized have snatched a way tribals life-sustaining means. Their lands and produce were burgled. They were deprived of education and basic amenities. Having confiscated their lands, the civilized have reduced tribals to wage labourers. The tribals, like Dalits were subjected to socio-economic exploitation.

Social Movements and the Dalits and Social Movements:

The Buddhists as part of social reform movement revolted against vedicism. While the Lokayatas fought on the intellectual plane, Buddhists fought is social realm. In the Medieval South, Veerasaivas under the leadership of Basava revolted against the untouchability. Prophets and poets from time to time advocated against the practice of untouchability, but could not lead a conserted social movement to eradicate it. Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj have attempted to weed out this evil practice. Few Maharajas and Samsthanadhisas have established schools for untouchables and offered employment too.

They undertook the measures to better the economic conditions of the untouchables. The constructive work of Mahatma Phule to resolved the problem of untouchability before the independence has proved to be become light for the future course of action. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during the freedom movement has for first time stressed the importance of social movements for Dalits emancipation. He delved deep into the past to recover the, neglected history of untouchables and formulated social history
of Dalits. His research has bequeathed a scientific course to today's incipient Dalit movement. His struggle for human rights and for the emancipation of oppressed will proved to be an animating spirit to the Dalit movement. With this broad perspective and deep commitment Dalit movement fears to fought for their rights.

The Dalits and Colonialism:

Many colonialists ruled India. But none of them were bothered about untouchability. They darent meddle with Indian culture and caste system. Significantly, the Britisher's left Hindu system and caste system untouched. For proseletyzation they had entered the villages. The British market policy had adversely hit the traditional craftsmen and artisans. With the advent of capitalist system, products of artisans were devalued. Land lords in collusion with rulers confiscated lands, suck blood out of tenants and started harassing agricultural labourers. Both landlords, and capitalists have played a crucial role in mortgaging India to a foreign nation. For untouchables and weaker sections, but for few religious reforms, they were hardly any reforms on religious and social fronts. On the whole, during colonialism landlords regained a new strengths. Colonialism did little to change socio-economic backwardness of Dalits.

The Dalits and Congress Party:

Just as Congress party was to assume political power, Dr. Ambedkar entered the political scene and asked "What about the untouchables, what
do you plan to bring about a change in their socio-economic situation". Only then did they begin giving serious thought to the question of Harijans. All of a sudden there was a 'Harijan'. They boasted to have undertaken many programmes for his emancipation. These measures were taken by the upper castes just to woo the Harijan voters. But never did it give rise to an active movement. This precluded the possibility of the riser of an Independent Dalit Movement. Now, the socially oppressed were politically exploited. This impeded the chances of emergence of powerful Dalit leadership. After assuming power, each and every programme was undertaken with an eye on vote bank. It's not possible to take cognizance of smaller developments as the land issue, which is central to their emancipation remains unresolved. Land reform, minimum wage acts, acts for abolition of bonded labour, and for eradication of untouchability are ineffective in practice. Even if they are implemented the fruits never percolated down to the deprived and the desiring.

The Dalits and Communists:

Communists with the conviction that economy is the foundation of society, economic change shall lead to the transformation of social system - have neglected the social inequality of Dalits. In India social and economic struggle are mutually interrelated.

Movements which sprang up for the poor impressive as they are did not help eradicate social inequalities. They saw no way out from the socio-economic slavery perpetuated for generations. Gradually the poor lost
interest in the communist movement. The moment communist movement sided with the ruling party, Dalits began drifting away from the communists. Dalits were astonished to witness stigma of casteism in supposedly progressive communist movements too. Communists failed to keep the oppressed and exploited united under their flag. Dalits began running from pillar to post in search of an emancipatory movement.

The Dalits and Feudal Parties:

The parties which come into existence after the Congress are all led by the landlords. Hence, they did not work against their class interest. They helped protecting the feudal culture. Though they claimed to have been borne for the poor, little did they do to further the interests of the poor people. None of the parties have come forward to emancipate the poor from socio-economic exploitation. Even the break-away factions of the Congress Party were no better. For the leaders would hail further upper classes and naturally protected the interests of their class. These conditions were not conducive to generate required revolutionary consciousness among Dalits. Having not undertaken any programme for amelioration of poverty, of agricultural labourers, the Congress, having captured power reduced Dalits to slaves. Hence, it is imperative that, Dalits emerge as an independent power.
Dalit Movement - Theoretical Background

Caste perspective to Dalit movement does more harm to the society than good. Instead of bringing social revolution, it encourages casteism. In order to resolve the question of social disparities, it is necessary to formulate 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.

To bring Dalits into fold of solidarity and infuse revolutionary consciousness, it is necessary to be familiarized 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 proved to be the breathing spirit of the Dalit struggle. At the same time, the principles of class struggle which have enabled the emancipation of oppressed must be reconciled with the spirit of Dalit Movement.

Objectives of Dalit Movement:

1. Annihilation Casteism.

2. Eradication of Untouchability.

3. Removal of caste differences among the oppressed classes.
4. To prepare the oppressed for social revolution.

5. To enable the success of cultural revolution.

6. To continue with caste struggle, until the land and property are nationalized.

7. To infuse revolutionary consciousness by exposing the policies of the ruling classes.

8. To enable the success of social revolution.

9. To enable the Dalits to avail of civil and human rights.

Nature of the Movement:

1. Andhra Pradesh Dalit Movement organises its Mahasabha every year.

2. Elections are conducted once in every two years.

3. Creating units at Mandal and District level.

4. Creating the unions of adults women, students and working classes.
5. Creating wings of working class.

6. Enrollment of members at the District and Mandal level.

7. Membership fee is Rs. 2 of which local district union gets Rs. 1 and the rest goes to the state union.

8. Both District and Mandal associations should assemble every month, discuss local issues and send the respective reports to the state office.

9. Since the movement seeks to stay away from political manipulations, the members at the state, District and Mandal levels should not be members of any political party.

The Movement and its Programme of Action:

1. Uniting the exploited in order to annihilate the caste contradictions.

2. To impart revolutionary inspiration to the exploited.

3. Leading struggle with land as the central focus.

4. District and Mandal organisations should be present whenever atrocities on the Dalits are committed in any form namely, massacres, molestation, rape, murders etc. They should send the
factual report of the events to the state boards. They must support the oppressed and should relentlessly struggle to find the criminals and see of that they receive severe legal actions.

5. Constructive movements for land acquisitions by inquiring into the records the surplus and uncultivated lands. Uniting the poor towards this struggle bring the caste differences.

6. Consolidating the number of unemployed youth of every Mandal in view of sustainable development.

7. Uniting the women of every Mandal in view of providing means of livelihood.

8. Assisting projects for the betterment of education to achieve cent percent literacy in every Mandal.

9. To work for basic amenities for every women in every village.

10. To work towards solving water problem in every village.

11. To work towards providing libraries for Dalits.

12. Starting a weekly to assist the movement.
13. A press needs to be established in order to bringing to light immediately atrocities unleashed against the Dalits.

14. Starting offices at Mandal, District and State level.

**Dalit Cultural Wing:**

There is the necessity of cultural wing, to inflame the oppressed class consciousness and to augment it into revolutionary movement. The formulation of burrakathas, Jamukulakathas, song troops and drama troops should be heartbeat of every social consciousness programme.

**Dalit Writer's Wing:**

On the one side there are writers, who are stooges of the ruling class. On the other, there are writers who revolutionize the consciousness of the oppressed. However, the Dalit writers wing should be formed to revolutionize social and cultural consciousness of Dalits, with social revolution as its basis. Andhra Pradesh writers of the oppressed classes should forge friendly relationship with other Dalit writers across India. It is necessary to choose the appropriate language and apt themes to take literature nearer to the hearts of the oppressed.
Civil Rights Wing:

A civil rights wing is necessary to take proper action against the perpetrators of perpetual atrocities against Dalits and to help Dalits out.

[This manifesto was unanimously ratified at the first Andhra Pradesh Dalit Mahasabha held at Tenali]

(Translated by the author)