CHAPTER V

CLASS STRUGGLE IN ANDHRA PRADESH: SOLIDARITY OR HEGEMONY
Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh since over the last two decades has been one of the most wide scale social movements, mobilizing various sections of the society. It has made several experiments since its origin in the late sixties and has expanded in its organizational strength. We shall attempt to trace the history of this movement, its expansion and impact on the politics of solidarity.

In 1967, those who got separated and expelled from the CPI (M) got together to form the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCR). AICCR got converted, through further merger of various smaller revolutionary groups, into the CPI (ML), however this party left out many more revolutionary groups. It was primarily due to the ideological differences over the strategies to be followed to consummate a successful agrarian revolution in India.

Meanwhile in Andhra Pradesh, a group of Communist teachers, associated with the CPI (M) mobilized the Girijans, in the Srikakulam region against the atrocities of the landlords, for better wages. These struggles, in course of time assumed very militant character. From this they gradually realized that to both face the landlords and to realize the dormant potential of the Girijans it is imperative to convert this movement into an armed movement. The Andhra Communists came out openly at the All India Plenum of the CPI (M) at Burdwan in April 1968. They argued that maintaining the legality of the party is to restrict its growth into a mass struggle. However, Andhra dissident’s alternative proposals were defeated and soon the CPI (M) expelled their leaders – Nagi Reddy, Pulla Reddy and others. Andhra Communists themselves again developed two separate Centers of armed struggle – one in Srikakulam and the other in the Telangana region. Differences developed between the two groups, mainly over the tactics to be assumed for an agrarian revolution. A brief narration of differences between these groups helps us to comprehend the strategies adopted, agenda set forth and the overall nature of the movement. “The differences were mainly regarding the tactics to be

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followed. While Nagi Reddy and his followers were in favour of a combination of legal and extra-legal struggles, and believed in a prolonged preparation, mainly through economic struggles, before launching a full-scale armed movement, the Communist revolutionaries of Srikakulam, inspired by the armed struggle of Naxalbari and their experience in their own district, were in favour of immediate resort to arms. The immediate controversy was the relation between legal and the armed means, which continues to plague the various Communist groups in Andhra to this day and as we shall see below ambiguity on this got extended to their understanding of various other forms of struggle in general and mass organizations in particular.

Notwithstanding the difference on tactics, both the revolutionary groups agreed on the final goal, which was to mobilize the worker, peasants and adivasis/girijans around economic struggles to finally capture the State power. The revolutionary movement in Srikakulam organized Girijan Guerillas to take away hoarded food grains; refuse to repay old debts and loans; redistribute land among landless peasants; clear the village of feudal landlords and moneylenders. All these struggles were primarily economic in nature and to a large extent either neglected or assumed to subsume other forms of (socio-cultural) struggles. These economic struggles were to consummate in, as aforesaid capture of State Power, and Charu Majumdar to this end suggested the most controversial programme of “annihilation of class enemies” or the ‘Khatam’ programme. It is here again, Nagi Reddy’s group in the Telangana region differed with Charu Majumdar. “Charu Majumdar stressed the need for offensive against the class enemy, seizure of political power being the main objective. In his strategy, land redistribution followed annihilation of landlords. Nagi Reddy’s immediate programme on the other hand, emphasized the importance of agrarian reform or land redistribution first, and resistance to the landlords and police later”. The difference got stultified around ‘tactics’ and leaving away experiments and struggles around various other sites and forms of struggles.

2 Ibid, p.135.
3 Ibid, p.150.
The nature of the Communist movement - early emphasis on the capture of State power - in a sense, restricted or hindered a fuller and a more creative growth. The limitations could be traced to three cardinal points, which would also enable us to comprehend the later changes in the movement. Firstly, excessive emphasis on armed tactics, inhibited the growth of the Communist movement into a mass movement with people’s participation, as Sumanta Banerjee notes that, “they should have annihilated class enemies or confiscated their property only when there was people’s participation and not by depending on squad actions”\(^4\). Secondly, Centralisation of party, concomitant of which was a culture of branding. “At one stage, an atmosphere was created in which no one dared to oppose what had already proved to be exaggerative along pseudo-revolutionary lines for fear of being accused of a lack of revolutionary fervour...”\(^5\). In fact, efforts to organize mass movements, at a stage, was termed ‘revisionist’. Thirdly, Party’s characterization of all non-landless sections of the society, sympathetic to revolution as petty-bourgeois in a derogatory sense, affected mostly its growth in building mass organizations and the movement in towns and cities.

Around some of these issues, we need to trace the further growth and expansion of the Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh. The new issues they took up; novel organizational and struggle forms they adopted; and movements with which they aligned. It is around this expansion that the issue of Solidarity and Communist movement’s approach towards it can be enumerated.

In the post-emergency period, the Naxalite movement developed in three different and distinct directions. Amongst them, in Andhra Pradesh, the C.P. group or later designated as the CPI (ML) Janashakti and the CPI (ML) Liberation, under Vinod Mishra’s leadership, favoured a combination of armed struggle with participation in Parliamentary elections and other open democratic forms of protest. Second, and perhaps

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\(^4\) Ibid, Pp 208-09.
\(^5\) Ibid, p.213.
the most effective group over a period of time, was the formation of CPI (ML) PWG, in 1980, along with CPI (ML) Party Unity, and later Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar. They continued to follow the path of Charu Majumdar. Finally, on a much smaller scale were groups such as the Communist league of India (CLI), which believed in developing alternative forms of struggle that could bring all the revolutionary groups together.

In late 1970s and early 80s, the single most important issue on which the growth and expansion of the Communist movement depended was that of establishing mass organizations. Whether a revolutionary party could have open legal political activity? If so, what could be its agenda, limits and most significantly its relation to the party (i.e. armed Central Organization Committee) and its programme of carrying out a 'New Democratic Revolution'? Establishing mass organizations definitely ushered the recognition of new forms of struggle. However, the pertinent point is, was it just a mere extension due to 'tactical' necessities or based on the recognition of the 'structural diversity' of the Indian society i.e. to articulate the varying levels of consciousness, forms of struggle, etc. The idea and debate on 'autonomy' also germinated around the issue of mass organizations, within the Communist movement.

The Marxist-Leninist groups did change their views against mass organizations over a period of time, as People's War's Central Committee wrote in early eighties that, "today almost no revolutionary group in our country clearly holds it as in the 70s that either building 'mass organizations itself is revisionism' 'carrying out partial struggles itself in revisionism'". However, the nature of building mass organizations became a point of debate. They were critical of all experiments in building mass organizations or United Fronts that had nothing to do with 'revolutionary politics'. For instance, they were critical of the call given by Vinod Mishra for a 'patriotic-democratic' front as a national alternative. PWG's Central Committee also reacted against certain demands for

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alternative forms of mobilization and organization by their Student Wing - Radical Students Union (RSU), in early 1980s. In the RSU draft manifesto, they proposed certain concrete changes, for a wider expansion of their organization, as a rigid adherence to 'revolutionary politics and language' was a hindrance in mobilizing students from diverse backgrounds. RSU's central demands in its alternative draft manifesto were –

(a) RSU should mobilize all the general students. It should therefore raise only such slogans so as to be capable of mobilizing all the students.

(b) It is unadvisable for RSU to give the slogan directly for the success of the 'People's Democratic Revolution'. By giving such slogans, RSU fails to fill the gap between Party's consciousness and the ordinary students consciousness, which it wants to bridge.

(c) In Vietnam, Student Organisations could mobilize students from various sections around the anti-Imperialist slogan. In the same manner RSU can also organize all sections of the students around struggles against ideas and practices in 'everyday life' born out of feudal and imperialist structures.

(d) RSU could use ingenious means by redefining the content and purpose of scientific education and thereby penetrating the students. For instance, scientific education could be interpreted to mean dignity of labour. Students would go to the villages (as part of 'Go to Villages' Campaign) to learn to respect dignity of labour and get integrated with the culture of the workers and peasants, rather than for propagating the 'People's Democratic Revolution'.

The purport of most of these cardinal points made by the student body was to use novel methods of mobilization, building organization, connecting popular consciousness with that of revolutionary consciousness and expanding mass organizations through their own independent methods. In other words, RSU was attempting to experiment with the idea of 'autonomy' (though they never used this term) i.e. to develop its own means independent from that of an armed revolutionary party. It sought to propagate revolutionary/socialist consciousness through more popular means that could convince students coming from diverse (non-working class) background.
However, the State Committee rejected most of these demands. They equated these demands to the trends of 'Economism' in Trade Unions in Russia and argued that, “in Russia, Economism emerged as a strong trend in the form that mass organizations such as Trade Unions should only strive to solve the economic problems. Confronting the workers, and not involve in politics. Only by completely eradicating such trends, the revolutionary movement there advanced further under the leadership of Lenin”7. According to the State Committee, Economism in the working class and peasantry and 'academic deviation' in the student front are in essence the same. In essence, very little 'autonomy' in terms of mobilisational methods and organizational means was accepted. “These comrades are describing the RSU as a link which bridges the gap between the consciousness of the party and consciousness of the ordinary student. This is not a correct definition. RSU is the front formed only to unite the 'highly conscious' students and the ordinary student in the socialist revolution carried out with the aim of establishing people’s democratic society”8 (emphasis added).

The State Committee also believed that RSU would be more of a body to propagate socialist revolutionary ideas, and the struggles waged by the party. They argued that the purpose of students going to the villages is to teach the peasantry the necessity of participation of the oppressed majority in the People’s democratic revolution; to collect statistics on the existing land distribution patterns and teach the peasantry about the inevitable necessity of redistribution of land according to the principle 'land to the tiller'; to mobilize youth and children and teach them the revolutionary songs.

The underlying assumption was a belief in a monolithic structure around an armed party, with a single point emphasis on armed means alone being revolutionary. It was assumed that propaganda of the armed struggle alone was the programme of mass

7 A.P. State Committee, CPI (ML) People’s War, 'In the Name of Building United Mass Organisations', People’s War, October 1981, p.12.
organizations, including that of civil liberties organizations. The point that transformative consciousness born out of the 'subjective position' of various social groups is mediated through various socio-political processes was completely undermined. Thus 'everyday problems were undermined and juxtaposed against more distant and macro agenda of that of 'State Power for the oppressed'. These demands (which definitely have a continuity) were bifurcated. The mass organizations therefore could not develop concrete and alternative programmes for the various sections of the society they sought to mobilize. For instance, the Marxist-Leninist parties had limited mass organizations of students, youth, teachers, employees, workers and peasants. However, they did not develop concrete programmes on an alternative education system, teaching methods, forms of employment, co-operative forms of cultivation, environmental protection, etc. These programmes are in no sense in opposition (for that matter secondary) to the struggles carried out by the armed party for 'State Power'.

As with the agenda of mass organizations, their internal aspects were also neglected. Issues such as collective work culture, internal democracy, representation to various backward sections, etc. (Perhaps, owing to this, there were unwanted splits within the employee’s mass organizations in the later period). Such experiments were primarily neglected because of the status attributed to them either as 'Propaganda agencies' or 'recruitment centres'. Thus, how to integrate various diversified sections of the society with varying levels of consciousness, conflicting demands, everyday problems, etc, with the politics for a Socialist Revolution, remains to a large extent underproblematised.

Mass organizations were divided into three broad types, on the nature of work they carry out. Firstly, 'Secret mass organisations', that propagates revolutionary (read armed) politics and recruits members for the party. Secondly, 'Open mass organisations', which use the available legal-democratic and constitutional means to build 'pressure,
expose the state and contribute to further revolutionary politics. Thirdly, 'Cover organisations', which align with non-party organizations and carry the agenda of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggles into these organizations. Such tactics are necessary in conditions of extreme repression.11 Most of these categories of mass organizations, as aforesaid, reflect the necessity of propagating the agenda of 'new democratic revolution' into various sections of the society rather than trying to develop independent methods of integrating diversified sections and their demands into the overall goal of forging a Socialist revolution. However, the discussion on 'autonomy' and building radically different forms of organization began in 80s, within the Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh.

This method of expanding the revolutionary politics, by integrating the diversified demands and struggles through granting them the necessary autonomy, got exemplified, to a limited extent, in the Communist movement’s approach towards the Nationality struggles. CPI (ML) People’s War, rejected the argument that nationality struggles are ‘politically reactionary’ in the article titled 'On the Question of Tamil Nationality', which appeared in the December, 1979 issue of Liberation, the official journal of CPI (ML) led by Vinod Mishra. CPI (ML) Liberation argued that, “when we are fighting against powerful imperialist powers and strong Indian bourgeoisie and when the principal contradiction in an country is that between feudalism and the broad masses, then it is only the united struggles of various nationalities, the peasants in particular under proletarian leadership for the new democratic revolution, which can ensure the victory of the masses”12(emphasis added). Against this argument, the People’s War group argued that the “Liberation fails to see that after the transition from colonial to semi-colonial India, the big Comprador bourgeois of North, which wants to concentrate more and more powers at the Centre in order to bring the entire Indian market under its control, utilizes the public sector industries for its own interests...therefore nationalities like Tamils are

12 'Counterposing Nationality Question Against Agrarian Revolution Defeats Both' People’s War, June 1982, p.55.
suffering under “double yoke”. Hence, along with the task of liberating the country from imperialists, the task of fighting for the right for self-determination of Tamilnadu also comes to the forefront.

Thus, they rejected an approach of counter posing and ‘bifurcating’ the agrarian revolution and the nationality struggle, in the name of principal contradiction. Instead they argue that ‘parallel’ struggles should be integrated, recognizing the diversity and primacy of both the struggles. They believe that, “out of all the principal characteristics of our revolutionary war in India, the agrarian revolution and the struggle for the right of nations to self-determination are the two main characteristics. Agrarian revolution and the struggle for the right of nations to self-determination are component parts of our democratic revolution in India. Counter posing one against the other is wrong and it will defeat both”.

Not only were the two recognized as parallel struggles but also it was argued that these independent struggles would further the cause of agrarian revolution, in their own terms. Nationality oppression was recognized as a distinct struggle that required its own methods of mobilization and organization. It is however necessary that “concrete programmes have to be formulated to build proper 'integration' and solid unity between the peoples of various nationalities and their struggles on one hand and the Democratic revolution on the other” (emphasis added). The Communist movement did not propose the idea of either merger of these struggles or working under its own leadership. In this sense, certain autonomy was granted to nationality struggles and signaled the expansion of Communist politics, beyond their monolithic organizational structure and agenda found hitherto.

Closely linked to their approach to the nationality struggle is the concept of 'United Front' within the Communist movement. It refers to the unity of various sections of society, under the leadership of the working class. United Front 'tactics' attempts to assimilate various identities, and their specific problems. Under the United Front the Communists attempt to unite the agricultural labour, poor peasants, middle and rich

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid, p.60.
15 'Nationalities Movements of North East Region, are part of the Indian Democratic Revolution', People’s War, July 1980, p.35.

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peasants, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. Unlike what we argued in the context of the mass organizations, “in order to rally all of them, united activities must be arranged on their respective issues at the local level even without the banner of the revolutionary mass organizations”. This is an attempt to include everyday problems that various sections face and evolve manifold strategies; action plans from those concrete conditions itself ‘without exhibiting anxiety to propagate our politics from those forums’. ‘United Front’ tactics that emerged towards the end of 1950s also encapsulate unity with other revolutionary groups and non-class social groups such as caste and religious minorities. “While giving importance to united struggles at local level jointly with revolutionary groups, we should get ready to conduct united struggles both at the State and district levels. Similarly, united actions should be taken up jointly with minorities’ organizations and anti-caste organizations also”.

However, two inter-related issues require to be addressed. Firstly, United Front as mere ‘tactics’ as against a substantive notion of autonomy for various social groups, whose problems were to be solved through separate struggles and cannot be solved by subsuming them under the ‘class struggle’. In other words, economic redistribution of resources, transforming production relations alone will not transform the problem of caste, gender, religion, minorities, nationalities, etc, but need manifold parallel struggles addressing the political, economic and socio-cultural issues. Secondly, United Front as a genuine means of mobilizing various sections of the society, recognizing the varied ‘structural locations’ of these sections, and thereby different means necessary for these specific struggles, as against subsuming United Front ‘tactics’ to create conducive conditions to further armed struggle. Though United Front tactics is a creative expansion of the Communist politics, over that of their approach to mass organizations, there is no substantive notion of autonomy. Solidarity between various social groups is a tactical

16 COC, CPI (ML) People’s War, ‘For a Broad People’s United Front’, People’s War, July-December, 1993, p.79.
17 Ibid, p.80.
alliance, to serve the purpose of a pre-given goal to achieve State power for the Communist party, through an armed insurrection.

It was only with the beginning of the decade of nineties that there have been certain ‘substantive’ as against formal or tactical changes in the approach of the Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh. New and different forms of struggles have been taken up in the Dandakaranya. It was for the first time that development and welfare programmes were taken up. Co-operatives were established. It was argued that though these programmes might appear as ‘Economism’ and ‘Reformism’ but they are a form of class struggle in themselves. These novel terms of mobilization and forging transformation bring into relief many pertinent issues, as we shall elaborate below.

Dandakaranya consists of 8 districts spread across three States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. It is a vast forest region with almost 60lac population, mostly with Gond tribes or adivasis. CPI (ML) Peoples’ War entered this region with three dalams (guerilla squads) in 1980 and gradually spread to over 2500 villages. Hundreds of guerillas are now working in the larger armed guerilla units all over Dandakaranya. Revolutionary mass organizations such as Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangh (DAKMS), Krantikari Adivasi Bal Sangh (KABS) have spread throughout the region; People’s militia in the form of Gram Raksha Dal (GRD) and Area Raksha Dal (ARD) units, as well as organs of People’s Democratic State Power are multiplying.”

It was in this region that in 1994, COC (Central Organising Committee) issued a circular to all its village level committees to establish co-operatives among the villagers. By May 1995, they began with the programme of mobilizing the local resources and extend the community life on the one hand and protect them from the moneylenders, banks and landlords on the other. Co-operatives are established by the willing

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contributions of the villagers, which are used for giving monetary help such as loans (at nominal interest rate) for the villagers. In the distribution of the benefits, poor and the landless labourers are given special concessions. The AKMS also established 'Rice Cooperatives', to distribute grains in conditions of famine, in many of the villages. Apart from forced, land redistribution of the landlord and attacks on hoarded rice granaries through collective mobilization of community resources, co-operatives attempted to extend the community life among the villagers.

Apart from the co-operatives, Village Development Committees have been formed to look into the various welfare programmes, left unattended by the government. "Depending on their own resources and mutual co-operation, the masses have embarked on this new experiment of organizing their own development".20 Apart from the villager's own resources, in some of the villages, the resources with the Panchayat under the Sarpanch were transferred to the Village Development Committee. They took up various welfare activities related to agriculture, education, health, and environment. During February 1997 and May 1998 alone, people of over 237 villages participated in the construction of tanks. Tank Construction Committees had been elected by the people to oversee the construction work. These volunteers were given rice, collected from the local rich peasants and traders, for participating in the construction work. Later, these tanks were used for collective fishing. Primary schools were started in many villages and the villagers constructed school buildings. Similarly, health centres were set up, training the local adivasi youth. In various villages 'Environmental Protection Committees' and 'Forest Protection Committees' have been formed. These committees, through mass mobilization, are resisting massive felling of the forests, hunting by non-adivasis, smuggling of animal skins, conversion of forest land into agricultural land by rich peasants and landlords, indiscriminate cultivation of cash crops and mining of iron-ore, etc.

These programmes, as part of the Communist movement, at least seem to have made a beginning in augmenting new forms of struggle and could substantially extend the notion of 'autonomy' to other forms of struggle as well, which the mass organizations failed to achieve. These programmes addressed 'everyday problems' of the people and creatively integrated with the transformative politics; identified different struggle forms from that of 'armed' methods; attempted to create concrete 'alternative programmes' in various sectors. As Party itself rightly summed up, these struggles established collective spirit and confidence among the people without being dependent on the Government; building prototype of an alternative form of political power and an alternative approach to development; ushered new production relations; enhanced the image of the party among the people to counter propaganda by the State that it is anti-development.

The welfare and development activities ushered new forms of struggle as against exclusive emphasis on armed struggle and new agenda of addressing 'everyday problems' of people as against mobilization for State Power. Similarly, party's mobilization of women also manifests a more comprehensive approach to transformation, as against their exclusive emphasis on land redistribution and economic struggles.

Though CPI (ML) People's War was active in Dandakaranya by 1980, as aforesaid, there was no district-wide organization for the women. Even up to 1986, there were only two range Committees formed in Dandakaranya area with the help of DAKMS. It was only in 1991 that an independent organization, Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghatana (KAMS) was built with a separate manifesto and flag. Gradually the movement to mobilize women on issues concerning them began and village level committees were constituted in over 500 villages. Much later in 1994, on August 5-12, the first special meeting of women comrades was organized and a perspective paper for

party members was finalized by April 1995. The running theme was to combine class struggle with women's issues without counter posing them.\(^{22}\)

KAMS began its activities to struggle for issues of specific concern to women. It began to mobilize women against various 'socio-cultural' traditions and conventions and attempted to ingenuously link them to political and economic issues and struggles. These struggles were more comprehensive as they began first with cultural traditions that affected women and unlike hitherto when it was assumed that economic struggles - right over land - would settle women's issues also. It was strongly believed that economic independence would liberate women. However, with the functioning of separate women's organization, it raised a different set of questions. "An Adivasi women is in no way inferior to a man in agriculture and in some areas their performance is better than that of men. However, women alone have to cook the food both in the morning and evening, collect eatables by going around the forest and attend to housekeeping. Inspite of this back breaking labour women are not allowed into the 'kallam' (grainstock) and they reap the fruits of our labour in the name of conventions and traditions".\(^{23}\) It is with this understanding of how culture penetrates economic relations and conditions the production relations that KAMS began to struggle against all forms of domination and discrimination against women. For instance, "pre-marital relations, among the adivasis between convenient cousins is not a crime nor a taboo. Marriage can take place with the same boy or any other boy. This is our tradition".\(^{24}\) However those men who come to the forest areas in search of livelihood distort these practices and exploit the adivasi women. These women are subjected to ill treatment, sexual abuse, cheating and forced into abortions. These issues were settled in various ways by the KAMS, they organized 'People's Panchayats' to discuss the issue collectively and reach a conclusion. The culprits are publicly punished or pardoned. Apart from these traditions being prone to distortions by the outsiders, marriage being an important component of adivasi social life,

\(^{24}\) Ibid
various conventions surrounding it condition women. The practice of 'kedde' where the father (often under the influence of liquor or otherwise) promises his daughter to somebody and the daughter unwilling to live with that person returns home to lead a lonely life. "Marriage, divorce, marriage between cousins, dowry for the girl and similar other problems were solved by DAKMS and KAMS organized collectively with the active support of armed squads".25 KAMS also fought against the tradition of 'removing the blouse' after marriage. In a few liberal families, women are allowed to remove the blouse after the birth of the first child and no later than that. Such conventions often condition the entire social – political, economic and cultural life of the adivasis. "In deep forest areas which are cut off from the market places where transport facilities are not there, where agriculture has not changed, the influence of tradition is strong."26 Apart from these socio-cultural issues taken up as the starting point to mobilize adivasi women, KAMS addressed various 'everyday problems', such as, malnutrition, infant mortality, delivery deaths, protracted illness, illiteracy, superstitions, human sacrifice, black magic, hunting women as sorcerers, etc. These struggles encouraged more women to be actively part of the KAMS, after which they could struggle for political and economic issues as well. With popular support, KAMS led struggles for equal pay for equal work. 'We use to demand equal wages for men and women at every work spot and in every memorandum. The contractors and employers had to bow before our struggle'. The other important economic struggle taken up by KAMS was for property rights for the adivasi women. "Here women do not have any property right whatsoever. After the death of husband, a woman is entitled to husband’s property only when she remains in her in-laws’ house along with the children."27 Right to property leads to lot of concomitant changes in the social life of the adivasis. KAMS is taking up struggles on all fronts to comprehensively transform the living conditions of women in various revolutionary areas.

25 Ibid, p.11.
Apart from these separate and comprehensive women’s struggles, women cadre within the CPI (ML) People’s War raised pertinent questions regarding various forms of patriarchy prevailing within the party. By 1995, in Praja Guerilla Army (PGA) women constituted not less than 25% and in the entire party membership, they constitute about 12%, which is considered by the party as relatively high compared to any other revolutionary party. Women cadre raised questions regarding the inappropriate work methods, ambiguity regarding the man-woman relations in the party, inconsistent policy on marriage, inadequate recruitment for military activity, etc. The Central Committee of CPI (ML) People’s War released a document for internal circulation pointing out various forms in which patriarchy is prevailing in the party. It pointed to looking down on women cadre, patriarchy in marriage and married life of the cadre, indifference, etc. Interestingly, most of these points raised were those pointed out by the autonomous women’s movement: There is no doubt that autonomous women’s movement of the feminists, sensitized the party to various unidentified forms of domination and also politicized these issues, at par with the classical political and economic issues. Communist movement failed to acknowledge the new political context created by the autonomous women’s movement, while it is true that autonomous women’s struggles are prone to partial and at times fragmented struggles, failing to link and mobilize women around political and economic issues affecting various sections of the society. However, the Communist movement failed to integrate these partial and independent struggles into a more unified struggles, due to various theoretical and practical reasons.

Both in the previous document, released by the Central Organizing committee of People’s War - ‘Building Revolutionary Women’s Movement: our party’s approach’, in July 1995, and in a later reply to the criticism raised by feminists - ‘Condemn Opportunistic Attack on Revolutionary Movement in the Garb of Feminist Critique’, in August 1999 – the party took a partial view of the autonomous feminist movement in

Andhra Pradesh. They argued that feminist movement in India and A.P, is being led by women from Petty Bourgeoisie sections of the society and therefore their understanding and the nature of the movement led by them is for superficial reforms. They encourage women entrepreneurs, reservations for women in jobs, reservations to contest in elections, etc. These demands do not reflect the aspirations of the majority working class women. Revolutionary movement therefore believes that in terms of class contradiction, it has to oppose the bourgeoisie feminist movement. Moreover, some of the autonomous women’s groups work as the agents of the imperialist countries. Revolutionary movement therefore takes a different view of building a women’s movement. It believes that as 50 per cent of our population still resides in villages, taking up women’s issues is to address the problem of the women in the working class; it is this section, which can achieve the aspirations of all women; as these women are part of the production process, they possess class consciousness; due to their position in the production process, it is easy to mobilize them; they are struggling against a weakened patriarchy, as they have economic independence. These points raise important issues. However, what about a programme for the suffering middle class women? What about the various cultural forms of oppression common to all women? Does Revolutionary Movement rigidly hierarchise class contradictions over women’s issues or attempt for a more creative integration? Most of these issues remained unanswered by the Revolutionary movement.

It was towards the mid of the decade of nineties that they built separate women’s mass organizations. These organizations’ attitude towards autonomous women’s movement remained the same as the party, and focused on the rights of the working class women. In 1994, January 26–26, National Conference on women, with various mass organizations was held. Out of the interaction between various women’s groups, excepting those accepting foreign funding, 10 mass organizations came together in September 1995 to form the Andhra Pradesh Chaitanya Mahila Samakhya (APCMS). This women’s federation mobilized women mostly in the various towns and cities of

30 Kendra Organizing Committee, CPI (ML) People’s War, ‘Viplava Mahila Udyama Nirmanam’ (Telugu), July 1, 1995, p.21.
Andhra Pradesh. It held its third State level conference, on March 19 & 20, 2000, in Guntur. Among the many resolutions they passed the cardinal points were that of propagating and working for 'New Democratic Revolution'. It resolved to mobilize women around class issues i.e. it emphasized that both women and men are suffering for instance, in adivasi areas in the hands of forest officers, contractors; and poor landless labourers at the hands of feudal landlords, revenue officials, police etc. This oppression they believe is also the root cause of women's oppression and needs to be therefore fought together before women's emancipation can be achieved. Thus women's role is perceived in terms of their participation in nationality struggles, adivasi struggle, peasant struggle, etc. APCMS would strive to increase women's participation in various people's struggles. Even in their manifesto released in 1996, they stressed the point that women have to be mobilized against feudalism and imperialism. The point however is even these structures discriminate in the way they exploit men and women. While the point that women have to participate in 'larger' struggles against state oppression, economic exploitation is pertinent and imperative, the 'specificity' of their exploitation as 'women' by 'men' is completely undermined. Separate organizations while mobilizing women on various social issues, it is around points where they suffer more as members of a certain, 'class' and sometimes caste groups, in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society and not around those that are specific to women across caste and class. The practice therefore of autonomous women's movement and Revolutionary Women's movement remains bifurcated. While the former organize only partial–socio-cultural struggles neglecting class and caste categories (as elaborated in the previous chapter on autonomous women's movement). The later undermine specificity of women's issues, as far as their mass organizations are concerned. While women's problems cannot be solved in separation with other political and economic struggles, other struggles by themselves cannot guarantee an emancipated society for women.

32 Ibid, p.16.
This balance, perhaps, could be achieved more effectively as far as the anti-caste mass organizations of the Marxist-Leninist groups are concerned, due to various 'structural' reasons. It was around the same period that CPI (ML) People's War established its anti-caste mass organization, rebuking their earlier stand on building separate organizations for caste. It should be pointed out that, mass organizations of caste were also a result of various issues raised by the dalit cadre within the CPI (ML) People's War party, partly under the influence of a strong and autonomous dalit movement. Many of the important leaders of PWG left to join the dalit movement. They questioned the reasons behind the absence of dalits in the leadership, inspite of a relentless struggle for over three decades.

In an International Seminar organized by CPI (ML) Janashakti on 'Marxism-Leninism, Mao-Tse Tung Thought and Revolutionary Movements' from 9-12 March 1995, in Hyderabad, CPI (ML) People's War presented a paper entitled 'Special Features of Indian Revolution and Marxist Approach Towards Resolution of those Problems'. In many ways, their presentation was considered to reflect a change in the approach of the party towards the caste question. Amidst various other specificities enumerated, such as absence of a unified revolutionary party, existence of highly centralized State machinery, nationality struggles, communal problem, existence of Parliament and other legislative bodies, caste was identified as a significant problem peculiar to the Indian situation. It accepted that "general tendency among the Communists has been to treat the question of caste mechanically as a superstructural category that could be eliminated once the existing social system is changed through a social revolution or to treat it as a question to be taken up only after the resolution of class struggle ...... it did not formulate a concrete programme and plan of action to tackle the caste question". Though it rightly stressed that complete resolution is possible only after the New Democratic Revolution, they nevertheless transformed Marx's famous dictum to read "all hitherto history of India is

the history of class and caste struggles". They acknowledged the contributions of "reformers" such as Buddha, Basavanna, Narayan Guru, Jyoti Rao Phule, Ambedkar, whose writings and ideas were extensively propagated by the autonomous dalit movement, born after the Karamchedu massacre in 1985. Regarding autonomous dalit organizations they observed "we must adopt the policy of forging a common front with the cadres of such organizations on specific issues related to caste discrimination while taking care to expose the bourgeois reformist nature and limitations of their leadership".

It is with this understanding that they formed their anti-caste mass organization. It is imperative to observe that it was the first organization which named itself as an organization for 'eradication of caste', distinct from various autonomous dalit organizations. Kula Nirmulana Porata Samithi (KNPS) was formed in Vijayawada in 1998. It held its second state level conference on February 18 & 19, 2001 in Ongole. Various other mass organizations took part in these proceedings, which included, APCMS, VIRASAM, APCLC, Rational Society and BC Rights Protection Committee. These were mostly organizations close to the People's War Group. The resolutions adopted in these proceedings reflected the approach to integrate dalit problems and movement with various other political and economic struggles, which also affected dalits. The resolutions included struggles against privatization; declared handloom workers suicides as government murders; no cut in welfare budget; demand to punish culprits of dalit atrocities. It was argued that dalit movement has to struggle against all those issues that affected not dalits alone but also other impoverished sections of the society as well. This approach was definitely broader than the identity politics of the autonomous dalit movement. This approach of KNPS was more effective, unlike APCMS, because of a stronger overlap between caste and class issues. Caste struggles could therefore be more legitimately conducted as class struggles, without either dividing or diverting it. However, for women's movement patriarchy was within the class struggle they wished to lead. Undermining it as 'secondary' in light of the imperatives of class unity was less

34 Ibid
effective as a political strategy and ideology. (Unlike KAMS’ approach to begin with cultural issues affecting women as women and then leading struggles for land and against State power).

In the KNPS’ manifesto, it raised the pertinent point regarding ‘classes within caste groups’ - While the autonomous dalit movement perceived the new classes as empowerment of dalits, KNPS argued that this nascent bourgeois class among the dalits is interested in the slogan ‘political power to dalits’ as it has already acquired the economic power. This class also has nexus with the traditional feudal ruling classes. Thus it sought to link dalit movement with the Communist struggle against feudalism and imperialism. Similarly, it raised the issue of eradication of caste identities as against their consolidation by the autonomous dalit movement and it is possible only through a class agenda. It is because of this class approach KNPS could address various issues related to conflicts between BCs and dalits and sub-caste conflicts more boldly than the dalit movement, which had no means of negotiating them through the prism of identity politics. KNPS also approached the issue of privatization through its caste –class approach, while it demanded reservations in the private sector for dalits, it also mobilized them in struggles against privatization. However, inspite of its affiliation to the People’s War Group, KNPS took no open stand on either armed struggle or elections. Maintaining the issue of autonomy more as a ‘tactic’ could well be the reason behind this ambiguity. However, KNPS with its caste-class approach seems to be effective in mobilizing dalits and aligning them to revolutionary politics, outside the fold of its armed wing.

However, caste based mass organizations of other revolutionary groups, formed more directly under the influence of the dalit movement could not prove to be effective. CPI (ML) Janashakti made one such experiment. It formed its mass front DAFODAM-a United Front of dalits and minorities. DAFODAM, however took the approach of identity based politics and adopted Ambedkarism as its ideological perspective, without a

38 Pamphlet on Attack by BCs on SCs, November 1999.
corresponding linkage to its class approach. The idea of autonomy got articulated as segregated parallel struggles by the same party. While the armed wing (guerilla squads) carried out class politics, the mass organization attempted to carry parallel identity based politics. Autonomy as segregated politics led to many splits within the CPI (ML) Janashakti. Many of its cadre raised pertinent points, about Ambedkar not addressing the issue of land reforms and Communism, Buddhism being part of ruling class ideology, etc. How could these ideological systems be the basis of a mass front of a Communist party? They raised similar points in their contribution to the official journal 'Red Star' under the title, 'Ambedkarism: Ideology for a New Ruling Class Alternative'. These arguments over a period of time resulted in CPI (ML) Janashakti splitting into many groups such as CPI (ML) Janashakti (Rajanna), CPI (ML) Janashakti (Veeranna) and May 17 Group. This clearly manifested the point that autonomy cannot be interpreted as leading parallel struggles with different ideological basis.

Thus, the Communist movement adopted the agenda brought into relief by the autonomous dalit and women's movement by organizing separate mass organizations. However, these organizations mobilized dalits and women mostly around class issues that affected them. While caste-class and gender-class did benefit the Communist movement in expanding into different sections of the society, the hierarchisation it made between these issues- primacy of class unity over specificity of caste and gender -did not affect the movement directly (though it did result in a slow growth of the movement). The relations with the 'external' movement remained mostly fragmented and underproblematised. The issues of specificity remained undermined. It was the influence of this within the Communist movement that got finally articulated in a much more significant manner than before. This influence on an 'internal' movement, led to a more serious and comprehensive articulation of the idea of autonomy and solidarity. Much similar to the autonomy movements that emerged within the autonomous caste and gender movements; civil liberties movement which functioned more as a frontal

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40 CPI (ML) Janashakti, 'Kula Samasya' (Telugu), undated.

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organization of the People’s War Group raised pertinent issues that implicitly implied ‘internal’ autonomy. The contradictions and debates that emerged in the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), in a way summed up the emerging dynamics in the Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh.

APCLC was formed in early seventies as a mass organization of various Marxist-Leninist groups. Excepting few individuals with liberal disposition, most of its members either sympathized or belonged to one or the other Naxalite groups. It is the nature of the composition of the organization, which decided the contours of the civil liberties movement in Andhra Pradesh. In its second State level convention, held in Warangal on 4th May, 1980, it adopted its manifesto wherein the purpose of the civil liberties organization was declared as struggling for the protection of democratic rights, strengthening the peoples’ right to struggle, opposing the atrocities of feudal landlords, capitalists and the state machinery, condemning the police excesses and violations, strengthening peoples’ movements struggling for social transformation, fighting for abolition of capital punishment and finally work with other civil and democratic rights organizations in other states. This period could be designated as the first phase in the evolution of civil liberties movement in Andhra Pradesh. In its functioning APCLC focused on State repression against the ML Movement – fact findings on encounter deaths and lock-up deaths, providing legal assistance for the arrested ML activists, protesting against police for right to organize public meetings, processions and dharnas. The basic assumption during this phase of functioning of APCLC was to use democratic institutions (judiciary, pressurizing legislative bodies, presenting memorandums to government officials and ministers, etc) to both protect the civil and democratic rights of ML movements’ activists and muster public support and opinion in favour of the radical left movement.

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41 APCLC, ‘Paura Hakkula Avagahana Charcha Patralu’ (Telugu), undated, p.23.
However, after 1985 with the Karamchedu massacre and steady rise of various social movements such as that of women’s, environment, dalits, etc, a large number of issues came to be characterized as within the framework of civil liberties and human rights. APCLC began to respond to various other issues outside its initial set parameters. It began to investigate lock-up deaths of common people; atrocities on women, such as dowry deaths, domestic violence; atrocities on dalits, such as investigating and bringing out reports on Karamchedu and other massacres; environmental issues such as ominous effluents being left by industries into water tanks; hunger deaths, and about famine conditions in various districts. During this second phase in the growth of civil liberties movement, it expanded by investigating various issues brought into relief by various autonomous social movements, outside the fold of the Communist movement. In an essential sense, this was the beginning of autonomy for APCLC. It grew beyond the immediate issues that concern the armed struggle. However, since the Communist movement had a macro perspective of transformation and sympathized with the issues of autonomous movements, at one or the other level, this expansion of APCLC was not perceived as an issue of emerging autonomy for the organization. In fact, this expansion was welcomed as, the growth of mass organizations and reaching out the middle class sections of the society, which otherwise maintained distance from the Communist movement.

However, with the beginning of the decade of 1990s, the issues of various social movements began to emerge in a more complex and inter-connected manner. The very essence and nature of civil liberties movement came under scrutiny. The cardinal point was not in lending support to caste, class and gender movements and their issues independent of each other but when they enter into a conflict and multiple contradictions unfold simultaneously. In many ways, the starting point for this could be traced to the Koyyur kidnap on January 30, 1993, when a tribal MLA was kidnapped from the Visakhapatnam district by the PWG. The issues of dalit rights and use of anti-democratic means came into conflict with the revolutionary movement on the one hand and the expanding civil liberties perspective on the other. APCLC intervened to resolve the
crisis, demanding the release of the kidnapped. They however, articulated the autonomy necessary for APCLC, in negotiating such a situation in more clear terms than hitherto. The then president of APCLC wrote that “many people felt aggrieved that the principle of reservation was not extended to kidnap and abduction... the tribal in and around Koyyur felt that Balaraju is a good tribal leader as he was consistently working for the upliftment of the tribal”\textsuperscript{42}. The democratic consciousness brought into relief by the autonomous dalit movement, made the leaders and members in APCLC struggling for human rights answerable. Similarly, APCLC as an organization using various democratic and legal means had to oppose within the contours of a civil liberties perspective, such methods as kidnap and abduction. “The practice of taking as hostages persons unconnected with the specific issue between the government and the PWG is a practice we in APCLC never approved of. We have been as human rights activists against this type of political practice. Whether the police hold people in illegal custody or the Naxalites kidnap and take as hostages persons unconnected with the specific issue involved our stand has been the same”\textsuperscript{43}. They argued that means used for attainment of an egalitarian society are as important as the end goal. This in many ways kicked off a serious debate on both the essence of these arguments and the limits of a civil liberties organization. Many of the activists in APCLC argued that human rights should be comprehended dialectically and in an unequal society, there cannot be equal rights. The debate on the relation between a distinct ‘human rights perspective’ and the ‘revolutionary perspective’ became louder. In retrospect, the then President wrote, “for human rights activists Koyyuru (and earlier Gurthedu) raises issues regarding the concept of human rights itself; the advisability of expanding the concept and thereby enlarging the field of operation of human rights work. What should be its relations with radical and democratic movements? Has it any transforming role while operating the institutions available within a democratic set up? Should it merely confine itself to maintaining a crime audit of the state? All such and related questions need to be debated”\textsuperscript{44}.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p.498.
Gradually, many common people affected in various ways began to approach APCLC for justice. Initially, it was argued that such issues (i.e. democratic rights of individuals vis-à-vis democratic movements) fall beyond the purview of APCLC. Similarly, pressure from autonomous dalit and women's organizations also increased on APCLC. For instance, the issue of SCs, STs and BCs being killed as informers. It was argued most of the dalits who surrender from the party have no social network through which they can join back 'mainstream' social life and settle in respectable positions, like most of the upper caste surrendered naxalites do. It is therefore possible for the police to pressurize these vulnerable people to get converted into informers and pass on information\textsuperscript{45}. If the revolutionary movement is oblivious of this underlying logic of unequal social conditions and targets dalits as police informers, should organizations such as APCLC condemn and bring into light the issue of democratic rights of dalits, or not? Various women activists within APCLC raised the issue of various forms of domination on women, within the naxalite groups, which was often undermined as 'internal matter of the party' and no fact-finding committee was constituted. The democratic consciousness that 'personal is political' needs to be incorporated into the civil liberties movement and it cannot turn a blind eye on such incidents\textsuperscript{46}. The demand for protection of an independent 'democratic space' for APCLC became imperative. APCLC negotiated not only conflicts over the issue of democratic rights of dalits and women vis-à-vis the ML movement but also about inter-group rivalry between various revolutionary groups. This was possible only due to an independent human rights perspective. During the APCLC convention in Kurnool, in 1993, the issue of expansion of civil liberties movement with an independent perspective over various forms of violence in civil society was debated and remained inconclusive. Later, discussion papers were printed and circulated and all the units of the APCLC in most of the districts in Andhra Pradesh debated on these two emerging and contesting perspectives, for well over a year. Those activists sympathetic to the ML movement argued that violence cannot be understood in neutral terms and all

\textsuperscript{45} Op.cit, APCLC, p.25.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p.108.
forms of violence cannot be equated. They argued that State violence has to be distinguished from that of transformatory or revolutionary violence and the primary purpose of APCLC should be to fight for the rights of democratic (revolutionary) movements and expand the space available for them to struggle, so that an egalitarian society could be achieved.

A National Convention on 'Democratic Movements and Human Rights perspectives' was organized in Hyderabad, to further discuss these issues and finally they went for voting over these contending perspectives at the Guntur Convention of APCLC towards the end of 1997.

Those members with an alternative perspective formed the Human Rights Forum, in October 1998. They argued that “the political structure of the State and the social-economic structures of caste, class and gender have received some recognition as oppressive structures, but are yet to assume equal importance in the eyes of the rights movement. The State-class framework continues to dominate, for no cogent reason. But both caste and gender are major sources of not only violent suppression but also routine and insidious denial of rights. There is no scale on which their effect can be adjudged less severe than that of state and/or class”47 (emphasis added). Second most important difference HRF sought from APCLC was on a characterization of the State that is acceptable to all the three – caste, class and gender – movements. “In fact the State–class framework that unconsciously guides our thinking of rights has come from militant–leftist movements and the problems of suppression they have faced from the State and the exploiting classes... But if we are ready to learn equally from the dalit movement and the women’s movement and the politics of various minorities, religious, ethnic or linguistic ... These movements have mostly sought to empower themselves by making use of and enlarging the democratic political space and the political and civil rights available in the

present state and the political system ...” \(^{48}\). Finally, they argued, “we believe that unjust and unfair use of violence even by a popular movement must be openly condemned, not because it is violence but because it is unjust” \(^{49}\). Thus an independent human rights group was formed out of the demands for autonomy 'internal' to the Communist movement. Since 2000, HRF and APCLC however have been working together on various issues. Communist movement’s further growth and expansion hinges on integrating these alternative radical perspectives for autonomy. In course of time, as in the context of women’s and dalit movement, an internal–external continuum seems to be the plausible alternative, on which solidarity between caste, class and gender movements is possible. In other words, in negotiating and integrating the ‘internal’ demands for autonomy – independent organization and perspective – into its agenda, Communist movement would not only recognize the autonomy and significance of the caste and gender movements but also make efforts towards a more substantive solidarity with them.

This process in its initial form could be visualized in the manifestation of autonomy and legitimacy granted to an independent human rights organization – Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) – by the Communist movement. “The group which came to be known as the Committee of Concerned Citizens (Paura Spandana Vedika) was not formed at the instance of any authority or organization. It emerged on its own open to reflect the voice of large democratic section of the society which is tired at being reduced to a mute spectator in the game with peoples’ lives played by the State and the Revolutionary Parties” \(^{50}\). CCC not only proclaimed it to be an independent organization but also shared many common points with HRF, in its search for a democratic space. CCC, like HRF, argued that majority of those getting killed were poor and belong to the backward castes, scheduled castes and tribes; urged PWG to recognize the possibilities of empowerment within the political system, for instance 'oppressed sections like dalits, women and backward castes have for the first time got an opportunity

\(^{48}\) Ibid, p.2.
\(^{49}\) Ibid, p.4.
to get elected to the local bodies’, after the new Panchayat Raj Amendment Act; also urged PWG to recognize the importance of implementation of rule of law; separated people and the naxalite groups; condemned high degree of brutality even in the way naxalite parties deal with people as no less abominable than the third degree methods used in police camps. Most of these issues are very similar to what HRF raised, in its formulations for an independent human rights perspective. By no stretch of imagination can one argue that PWG accepted all these arguments of CCC, but recognized in its reply to the Committee that, “though there are some short-comings in the report of the concerned citizens, we feel that the committee of concerned citizens has exhibited an essentially democratic approach” (emphasis added). This recognition of a ‘democratic approach’, one could argue implicitly endorses certain notion of autonomy and the significance of caste and gender rights, highlighted by the human rights organizations and the autonomous dalit and women’s movement.

Thus the Communist movement in its relation with the autonomous caste and gender movements, has encountered similar demands from its own dalit and women cadre on the one hand and the civil liberties mass organization on the other. These ‘internal’ demands for autonomy would create substantive conditions for durable solidarity with ‘external’ movements as well. The notion of autonomy and solidarity are thus conditioned around the emerging internal-external dynamic.

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51 Ibid, (Refer Committee’s first and second reports).
52 Ibid, p. 18