CHAPTER - IV

TELANGANA PEASANT MOVEMENT
TELANGANA MOVEMENT: CERTAIN THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

The beginning of the United Front Policy in the thinking and practice of the CPI, can be traced back to the Dutt and Bradley thesis of 1936. Governed by the United Front proposition, the CPI formulated its role in anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle. It facilitated a two-fold front: (a) an alliance with the Congress and leftist forces against their common enemy, the British colonialism, but at the same time preserving its independent identity; and, (b) a broad alliance of rural classes against feudalism. As a consequence of this, the CPI, and its rank and file worked in close alliance with the Congress in their common struggle against the imperial British State from 1936 to 1947, albeit with its ups and down. On the anti-feudal front, the policy under its leadership and the All-India Kisan Sabha's, led to a series of anti-eviction struggles, and a serious campaign for tenancy legislation and anti-zamindari struggles in different pockets of the country. As a part of this policy, there were the 'no-tax', 'no-rent' campaigns in Gujarat, the anti-eviction, and
anti-zamindari movements in the United Provinces, Bihar and Andhra under the CPI's leadership. More specifically, during the war, it led to the "grow more food" campaign and the mobilisation of the peasantry against arbitrary and forcible war levy collection and, hoarding and black marketing by the feudal and business classes.

Telangana, as a part of this all-India struggle, reflected the all-India pattern in itself. The AMS after the Bhongir Conference in 1944 reflected it in a more consistent manner. The Communist-led AMS took up the question of feudal vetti and forcible collection of levy, and campaigned against them by mobilising all segments of rural population, who were targets of feudal oppression and domination. Though the AMS in its radical sangam

The timelag in the antifeudal and anti-Nizam struggle in Telangana has to be viewed against the backdrop of 'people's war, slogan of the CPI in 1942 and its reluctance to support such a struggle in the Hyderabad state. It was after the change in the CPI's national policy after the war, the communists in Telangana could plunge into a militant agrarian struggle. There was a resurgence of agrarian militancy in the post-war period after a lull during the people's war period, elsewhere as well. Mohan Ram, 'The Telangana Peasant Armed Struggle, 1946-51', Economic and Political Weekly, June 3, 1973, p.1025.
phase was practically transformed into a united front of all classes against feudal landlords and the Nizam's state, a consistent theoretical articulation of the struggle seems to have waited till May 1948.  

'It was in May 1948, in the famous theses of the Andhra Secretariat, a theoretical statement to justify the Telangana struggle was made. Rebutting the Ranadive line, adopted at the Second Congress of the CPI in February-March 1948 (which proposed the Soviet type of insurrection), the Andhra Theses put forward an alternative path for the Indian Revolution given the semi-feudal and semi-capitalist character of India. Drawing from the Maoist theory of "New Democracy" and the experience of the Chinese Revolution, the Theses argued for a protracted and prolonged agrarian revolution in India. Such a revolutionary path, theoretically termed as the "Peoples Democratic" revolution, is viewed as two-fold: the first stage of bourgeois democratic revolution developing into the

Telangana Communists were known for their lack of sophistication and inadequacy in theory. It was the Andhra Communists who for the reasons stated above, guided their Telangana comrades. It must be pointed out that compared to their counterparts from Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Andhra communists had reputation only as mass leaders but never as intellectuals. See, K. Seshadri, 'The Communist Party in Andhra Pradesh', in Iqbal Narain (ed.), State Politics in India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1967, pp. 389-390.
second one of socialist revolution under the leadership of the proletariat, with the peasantry being predominant in its participation. For the realisation of the two-stage agrarian revolution the united front is seen as the appropriate means. As a consequence, the Andhra Theses proposed a broad united front of all anti-feudal classes, including "the rich peasantry and middle bourgeoisie as the allies of the proletariat in the People's Democratic Revolution", and further asserted that "such a wide front of armed struggle could take shape under the leadership of the Communist Party".

Apart from the anti-feudal dimension, the Telangana struggle also had a nationalist dimension. With the direct intervention of the Nizam's state and Razaakars on the side of the feudal landlords, and the perpetuation of atrocities on the people, the movement (which, otherwise was operating within the legal framework earlier) culminated into a fullfledged armed struggle, and turned into anti-Nizam in its stance.


The close alliance and loyalty of the Nizam to the British gave the Nizam's rule a distinct colonial linkage and colour. In the context of the CPI's post-war national policy, the communists in the Hyderabad state, apparently governed more by the exigencies of the rapidly developing situation in the princely state than by any consciously worked out design, plunged into an all-out struggle against the native ruler. Needless to add that the earlier reputation of the AMS as a cultural organisation of the Telugus came in handy at this stage. Added to this was the Congress-led agitation against the Nizam, with which the communists entered into a united front, which in practice proved to be quite zig-zag and chequered. But it is worth mentioning that what led to the convergence of the politics of the Communists and Congress was their combined aversion to the Nizam's autocracy and the desire for a linguistic reorganisation of the composite Hyderabad State, the absence of which was seen as a hindrance to the cultural aspirations and social development of the linguistic constituents.
It was the communists who made a concrete appeal and concerted effort for the realization of Vishalandra. ¹

Thus, the Telangana Armed Struggle combined in itself, not only an anti-feudal dimension, but also the characteristics of a national liberation and nationality struggle.

Beginning of the Peasant Struggle

The oppressive landlordism and State positively disposed and intervening in its favour, on the one hand, and the entire rural population crumbling under its weight, on the other, was the essence of the agrarian unrest, which was only intensified by the war-time crisis. While the oppressive landlordism led to a distinctly anti-feudal feeling among the rural folk, the pro-landlord intervention of the state turned them into anti-Nizam. These two in their unity were latent in the consciousness of the subaltern classes.

But instances of spontaneous and symptomatic manifestation of agrarian discontent and anti-feudal rebellious instinct were not rare. The AMS, which by now had become a united mass front of all anti-feudal and anti-Nizam aspirations, entering into the countryside had acted as a catalyst by sparkling the contradictions latent in the agrarian crisis and gave an expression to the rebellious potentialities of the subaltern classes.

How the objectively structured crisis was translated into the popular collective cognition and transformed and captured in the development of the agrarian movement, both in its expanse and intensity, is the subject-matter of discussion here. The details of the struggle, especially its manifest forms are fairly well documented, both chronologically and geographically, in the memoirs as well as in the academic works. Most of these writings, following the dominant paradigm of historiography, however, tend to limit themselves to the interpretation of the fairly well-known historical facts and events, which belong to the world of organised politics, in the present case, the role of the AMS and the CPI, and
their leaders. In this historiographical practice, the interpretative space, to a large extent if not totally, is filled by the details of the explicit and organised world of politics. As a result, the historical process is viewed in a one-sided fashion as an organised expression and as a making of the conscious elements from above. Most of the writings on the Telangana either tend to glorify the heroism and activism of the AMS and Communist party or to be overtly critical of their mistakes. Further they deal with the mode of organisation of masses and forms and levels of consciousness in their organised manifestations. Everything, therefore, is seen as falling into this pattern and variations or departures are relegated into the background. In otherwords, the existing historiography, preoccupied with organisation and consciousness, ignores the role of spontaneity and popular mentalité - in the peasant movement.

Now, it is time to go beyond this dominant historiographical practice and to reconstruct the
people's history. For this kind of reconstruction, it is necessary to recapture the popular commonsense consciousness - the people's perception, their responses and reactions, their hopes and despairs - and restore their pride of place as makers of their own history. Here a word of caution is warranted. To undo the doings of the traditional Marxist historiography is not to go to the other extreme and to commit excesses of a different kind that flow from the above criticism. The question is one of correct emphasis - the dialectical relation between the domain of organised politics and that of subaltern spontaneity, and not an over- or under-emphasis.

With the entry of the AMS into the countryside and the enthusiastic mass support rendered to it, it spread to a large area and seen as the "redeemer" of the people within a short span. Needless to add, Nalgonda district was the main locus of the struggle.

1. For writing the people's social history, it is necessary to depend on the oral sources. The reason why it is also called 'Oral History' for a historian of Telangana struggle there is no dearth of oral data, since most of the participants and observers of the period are still around. But the problem is with the differences in the versions of a particular event by the leaders and the illiterate participants, which poses difficulties in judging their factual authenticity and still more in arriving at an assessment of the distance in the perception of these two types of actors and their judgement of their own social actions.
For historically, Nalgonda was infested with the most rapacious and notorious landlords; it had a history of spontaneous rebellious past and anti-feudal instinct; and a sense of indignation at injustice was very much part of the everyday commonsense world view of the masses. In addition, this district was never outside the 'mainstream' of political developments, on the contrary, was very much responsive or vibrant to the macro-level political processes.

Thus the immense popularity of the AMS, called *sangam*, in Nalgonda district. With the Bhongir conference its influence soon spread to newer areas. The *modus operandi* of the AMS here was as follows: either an educated youth, who happened to come into contact with the AMS and became its member, returned to his village and spread the political message of the AMS; or, the villagers having heard of the AMS and its pro-peasant policies and activities approached the AMS activists and enlisted themselves as its members and turned their village into a *sangam* base; as in some cases; or, the AMS leaders on their extensive tours happened to pass through the village in question
and brought it under the net of the sangam's influence. In all the above cases, it was youth who showed tremendous enthusiasm for sangam, while the older generation remained in the background. The political message of the Bhongir conference spread like a wild fire and ignited the entire rural landscape. Its magical significance was embodied in the chitti (membership receipt) which was perceived as a talisman by the problem-ridden peasantry on the one hand, while it sent shock waves down the spine of the landed gentry, on the other. As a result of the token identification of AMS with its membership receipt during this phase (1944-46), it had come to be known as chitti sangam.

1. The popular response to Chitti sangam is captured by the following slogan: 'sangam chitti Vettiki - Swasthi'. Its meaning is that membership in the sangam is the way to liberation from vetti. For an account of the popular perception of the talisman image of chitti, literary sources are helpful. See, 'Sangam Chitti' a short story by P. Venkateswar Rao in Meejan (Telugu daily), May 19, 1946; and Tirumalagiri Ramanjaneyulu, Sangam, Jana Sahithi Sanskritika Samakya, Nagaram (Andhra Pradesh), 1986.
Spontaneity in Peasant Movement

The history of spontaneous peasant resistance has got so thoroughly mixed up with the history of the CPI in general and that of the AMS in particular that it is necessary to identify its margins and delineate the specificity of its domain, for, it was the peasant spontaneity in Nalgonda both in its historicity and its contemporaneity to the war crisis that constituted the background and thereby made an organised peasant struggle possible here. Hence certain instances are in order.

The earliest and fairly popular incident was the Bandagi case in Kamareddigudem village in Vishnur ilaka of old Jangaon taluq.¹ The deshmukh of Vishnur, Rapaka Ramchandra Reddy has passed in the annals of Telangana history as the most notorious landlord having unquestioned domination over sixty villages in Jangaon. The domination constituted of vetti, illegal exaction of mamuls, land-grabbing,

---

¹ Jangaon was then a taluq in Nalgonda district; now it is in Warangal district.
(known for his insatiable hunger for land), authority to sit over arbitration involving peasants in litigation and accumulation of wealth through loot and arson. It was organised and perpetuated by custom and tradition; and to mend the occasional non-conformity, private armed gangs were maintained by the deshmukh. Added to it, with the abkari contracts and money lending under the landlord's clout, the control of the deshmukh on the rural social life had become total. In all these aspects he was a cut above the average, the reason why he was most dreaded of the lot of his genre.

Bandagi was an independent minded, muslim small peasant. He was unjustly dragged into land litigation by his elder brother, who was a henchman of the deshmukh. On the face of it, it was a family dispute between co-persons over partition of landed property. But the reasons in fact were different: firstly, to force him to submission (as Bandagi's religious identity with the rulers facilitated the non-compliance) and secondly, to benefit the elder brother. The deshmukh using his right to arbitration, ordered for forcible eviction of Bandagi from his land. The deshmukh doras of Telangana were known for this type of acts of kindness.
through benefaction to their henchmen in the proverbial fashion of robbing Peter, paying to Paul, to keep them loyal forever. But Bandagi, unwilling to accept the arbitrary judgement and not succumbing to the pressure from the deshmukh, went in an appeal to the civil court at Jangaon. As usual the case dragged on for years, which in itself was a harrassment of worst kind for a small peasant of meagre source of livelihood. Finally when the judgement was pronounced it turned out to be in Bandagi's favour. Unaccustomed to tolerate resistance of any kind the deshmukh hatched a plot and got Bandagi murdered by his gang.¹

Though the above event was an instance of individual resistance and heroism the significance of such exceptional events and individuals in the folkloristic worldview cannot be under-emphasized; for, they symbolise individual courage and resistance to the mighty feudal domination as much as the desire for social justice - drawing a demarcating line

between *nyaya* and *anyaya* — in the folkloristic memory, as it is evident in the fact that the village bards still sing in praise of Bandagi, eulogizing his courage and sense of justice. During normal times the feeling for justice coexists side by side with or rather subsumed by fatalism and passivity that preponderate peasant life and thinking, but during extraordinary times of crisis these symbols are resurrected and they become source of inspiration for individual and collective action against structures of dominance.

Another instance that occurred before the intervention of organised politics, though later assisted by it, was in Palakurthi in the *vilaka* of the *deshmukh* of Vishnur. Ailamma, a woman belonging to Chakali caste had been a tenant of a Karnam landlord for over two decades. Being independent minded and courageous, she resisted the attempts of the notorious *deshmukh* to occupy her land and merge it with his own. Telangana landlords, as discussed earlier, were known for their insatiable

---

hunger for land for which they used to resort to various kinds of methods: persuasion, litigation, arbitration and lastly to threats. If all these failed in the rarest of the rare instances as it were - they used to turn to direct physical intervention through their private goonda armies as the ultimate resort. Vishnur deshmukh was known for this aspect of the feudal notoriety, which in itself was a vindication of his uncontrollable greed for land and the way of maintaining his authority by unleashing terror. Having failed in forcing her into submission, the landlord in this particular instance, resorted to the ultimate means of sending his private gang under the leadership of the most notorious of his henchmen one by name Onamala Venkayya, who was known for his flair for arson and thirst for human blood.

This was towards the end of 1945. By then the AMS had spread its wings to the deshmukh ilaka and sangams were established in Kadivendi, Devuruppala, Seetharampuram, Nirmal and Baguruppala. As soon as the news reached them, the sangam activists of these villages intervened promptly and prevented the impending
arson and loot. This of course proved to be an occasion for the direct confrontation between the landlord and the AMS activists and the show of their relative strength. This event for the first time demonstrated the weakness of the landlord vis-a-vis the organised might of the people and to that extent brought the hitherto unchallenged authority of the dora into question.

ANATOMY OF PEASANT MOVEMENT: THREE CASE STUDIES

The agrarian resistance put up in Nalgonda occupies a unique place in the history of the Telangana peasant struggle. The logic of development of anti-feudal resistance can be studied here in its transition from latent to manifest, individual to collective and spontaneous to organised phases. Given the geographical vastness of the area covered, any discussion on the movement invariably tends to be in terms of generalities, thereby the specifics are missed out. For anatomical considerations it is necessary to descend from general to specific and examine the dialectic of development of the movement in the macro-totality of a village.
For this purpose an attempt is made in the following section to examine the dynamics of the peasant movement by taking up the case studies of three villages, viz., Kadivendi, Kurraram and Dhacharam from the three different taluqs of Jangaon, Bhongir and Huzurnagar of the Nalgonda district respectively.  

The following criteria are kept in mind in the selection of the case studies, to capture and assess the complexity and variations in the course of the movement. They are: firstly, that the villages have come under the active influence of the movement; secondly, it is seen to it that the villages selected differed with regard to the nature of relationship between spontaneity and organised politics and the emergence and formation of political activists; thirdly, to capture the total reality of the movement in its complexity, three different villages are chosen to represent variations in geographical and socio-cultural space and intensity of the movement; and finally, the

1. The present researcher conducted field study in twenty villages in the four taluqs of Jangaon, Aler, Miryalaguda and Huzurnagar (approx. five villages each during the years 1985-86 and 1987. Earlier, he wanted to go into the case studies of Khalsa, Jagir and Sarf-e-khas villages in the proportion of 3:2:1, given 6:3:1 ratio of their actual number in Telangana and differences in the administrative and structural composition of the three types. But the Sarf-e-khas and Jagir villages, which he attempted to examine were either rajakaar strongholds (where rajakaar and police camps were erected) or there was no movement. This is the reason why the study confines itself to three villages chosen from three different taluqs keeping in view the differences in the nature of development of the struggle.

The following discussion is based on the notes collected during the field work.
criterion of land distribution is taken into consideration in order to assess the differential impact of the movement. The three villages of Kadivendi, Kurraram and Dacharam to a large extent fulfil these criteria.

Case Study I: Kadivendi

Kadivendi was one of the biggest and important villages in the ilaka of Vishnur deshmukh, Rapaka Ramachandra Reddy while the deshmukh used to reside and operate from Vishnur, a few kilometers away from Kadivendi, his widowed mother opted for Kadivendi. Usually, the women in landlord families followed purdah system and were addressed to as 'dorasani' (literally meaning, mistress of dora i.e., lord.) On both these counts she was or rather proved herself to be an exception. Landlords in Telangana, as mentioned earlier, used to have entrenched interests in multiple vocations: agriculture, moneylending and abkari contracts. This old lady was actively engaged in all these three fronts: she used to be physically present in the fields directing the agricultural operations; to lend money and make loans in grain
(pechchulu) with a high rate of interest (usually 50%, sometimes even more) both in cash and kind; and to extract vetti in a more severe fashion than perhaps any of her male counterparts.

Having received a call from the gadi (landlady) one had to report to the duty, come what may. Nobody was an exception. Neither the young girls who had attained puberty, whose going-out of home was considered to be inauspicious, nor the lactating mothers who were still on their beds nursing their infants were exempted. Quite contrary to the rituals and health considerations of occasions of puberty and delivery, the women were dragged out of their houses and driven to the workplace. The treatment meted out to mothers of young children was still more shocking and inhuman. They used to be allowed to breast-feed their children only after empirically testing their maternity, by ordering them to press their breasts to ascertain whether milk was in fact oozing out or not.1

1. If it sounds unusual and exaggerating, listen to the older generation of Kadiwendi residents who having experienced the notoriety of the dorsaani still stand witness to the bygone days.
In addition to this, the service castes were made to render their *vetti* services whenever they were summoned to, and the peasants to supply the plough yoked bullocks (*vetti nagalu*) and other agricultural implements during the agricultural operations. Thus the *vetti* was all-pervasive and all-inclusive. In all these extractions a goonda gang groomed by her son Ramchandra Reddy used to assist her. All this is preserved in the memory of the people, who still remember that she was referred to, in private conversation, as 'dayyam munda' or 'korivi dayyam', for her unparalleled notoreity.

It appears that the old widow used to revel in her crude exercise of domination. In this respect, she, perhaps quite consciously, maintained herself to be a cut above her son. The above description demonstrates is no uncertain terms that patriarchy implicit in *purdah* was inapplicable to her. Added to it, the common practice of women of landlord families being addressed to as *dorasani* was interestingly violated in this case. Everyone was made to address

1. *Field notes, Kadivendi, November 6-8, 1985.*
2. Means 'whore of a devil' or 'devil-incarnate'.

For a detailed discussion, see, Chapter II.
her 'dora', contrary to the gender specific dominant ideology of patriarchy implied therein, as also despite the irony in the paradox.

Fairs and community festivals were (and still are) very much part of the cultural ecology of Telangana rural life. Occurring periodically, they function as a mechanism to reassert the communitarian spirit in the social life. One such was the Vana Kondaiah jatra in the Telugu month of Vaishakhha for the propitiation of the local deity in Kadivendi. On this occasion, the practice prevalent was that all the villagers, irrespective of their caste and economic position, used to congregate at the temple-site and perform puja and sacrifice hens and goats to the deity and have vanabhojanam (feasting in the woods). Even this event was not exempted from the mamuls. The Reddy landlady used to collect half of the sacrificial foul or animal as mamul. This practice, though was felt to be unjust and resented right from the beginning, albeit covertly, continued for a long time, until it was put to an end abruptly. The youth of the village though as yet unmediated by the larger political realities took an initiative and convinced
the elders to stop the sacrificial ritual at the temple site; with the stoppage of the ritual, the vanabojanam also stopped. Thenceforth, after the actual performance of puja at the temple, the villagers used to return to their homes and feast. Traditionally, we are accustomed to view revolt and resistance in terms of events that are or tend to be violent and ignore latent and symbolic. In the background of a terribly oppressive social situation, even a minor departure—actual or symbolic—from the dominant social practices would constitute a significant protest of sorts.

In the academic scholarly conception, feudal authority is seen in terms of exercise of extra-economic coercion and brute force. But popular-folkloristic notion, seems to be at a wide variance with it—in the sense that though it obviously includes the coercive aspect of domination as it is integral to everyday experience of the rural masses but it has an added dimension that can broadly be described as moral. While the former is crude and to an extent measurable, the latter is subtle and qualitative. The folkloristic notion of morality is a reflection of the larger social reality: as the
latter is a hierarchically stratified structure with a distinction of lower and higher, the former also makes a moral gradation. But the popular view of morality makes a subtle distinction between the landlord's relation to others and to the members of his own family. It generally tends to measure the two with different yardsticks and views them on totally different standards. Given the predominance of passivity and fatalism in the folkloristic worldview during the normal times, landlord's domination over property, life and women, and right to possess and violate anything that attracts his attention is rather naturalised. But anything similar with respect to his own family would be seen as a transgression of morality.

One such incident that lowered the image and moral authority of Vishnur deshmukh was his marriage to the girl initially chosen to be the bride of his eldest son. Neither second marriage per-se nor keeping a number of adabapas nor loose sexual morals with respect to other women were considered a taboo. But the aged deshmukh's marriage to his 'would have been'
daughter-in-law constituted an exceptional transgression of the moral behaviour. Soon after the marriage, the two elder sons got enraged and deserted him. This left him in total isolation. The graying generation in Jangaon narratively suggest that this event marked the decline of the landlord both materially and morally and finally culminated in his total destruction. Whether it is true or not is a question beyond the scope of our inquiry. But it definitely tells something quite significant about the popular perception. It was the transposition of the popular conception

1. In the feudal culture of Telangana, the relation to one's daughter-in-law is considered to be as sacred as the relation to one's own daughter. The sanctity is also applicable to one's sister-in-law as well, with slight variation: the elder brothers' wife is held in equal esteem as one's own mother and given due respect, and younger brother's wife is treated as one's daughter. But in Northern India, especially in Punjab and Bihar not only joking relationship with in-laws is allowed but marriage with the widow of one's brother is permitted. In landlord families in Telangana, strict purdah system used to be maintained. The daughters-in-law and younger sisters-in-law were prohibited from coming face-to-face let alone conversing with the elder male members of the joint family. The only occasion on which they were allowed to see the bride was at the time of marriage. For similar evidence see, Hugh Gray, 'landed Gentry of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh', in E. Leach and Mukherjee (ed), Elites in South Asia, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p. 125.
of morality\(^1\) onto the landlord in question that made
the people to view his decline as a consequence of
his specific (and not generic) moral degeneration. In
otherwords, the weaknesses of the deshmukh on the
moral front are viewed in the folkloristic worldview
as an important reserve for the subalterns that
strengthened them morally vis-à-vis the deshmukh and
thereby became to some extent a cause and justification
of the rebellion. A flair for materialistic interpre-
tation of history should not devalue the significance
of ideology—moral sense being an important component
of it—in the making of history.

---

1. The concept of morality operative in the lower
castes differs from that of the upper castes. The
divorces, elopes and remarriages were (and still
are) very high among the former. Remarriage with
ones former husband's close relatives and cutting
'across' relationships—meaning with his brother or
even with his sister's husband—was though
considered 'bad' but not totally unacceptable, in
the sense that it does not lead to excommunication
of individuals concerned, from the caste. In this
instance, the judgement of the landlord's behaviour
is made with the yardstick governing the relations
in the feudal families. In this sense, the graded
conception of morality in the subaltern world view
is an instance of the elements from the dominant
feudal culture and ethos being assimilated by the
subordinated.
The first-ever protest against the dominance of the deshmukh in Kadivendi mediated by the macro-political process, took place during the tableegh movement. The tableegh did not discover a firm ground in Kadivendi but Doddi Mallaiah, an adventurous young man belonging to Golla caste, known for his independent and rather arrogant attitude, did respond to the news of tableegh with an eye on the benefits that it entailed for the lower castes. Having already become a target of the deshmukh, Mallaiah appears to have found support in it within the system by converting himself to Islam for his protection. This seems to have brought about a significant change in the attitude of the deshmukh towards him. This also set an example for others. Soon a group of young men followed the example of Mallaiah. But when an individual tendency or deviation becomes a phenomenon or group characteristic, it ceases its virtue or exceptionality and merges its specificity and individuality and gets coopted by the system, by being generalised. The same thing seems to have happened in the case of Mallaiah as well. He was soon implicated in a number of court cases and once again made a target of the landlord's harrassment.
The process of dissent formation in Kadivendi, that was logically a forerunner to the peasant movement, thus seems to have started much earlier to the entry of AMS. Nevertheless, it remained as a way of questioning, without challenging feudal authority, for it was limited to a group of young men in their late teens or early twenties who mostly acted as individuals, yet to be crystalized into a collectivity through the mediation of the AMS. Nalla Narsimhulu belonging to the Padmashali caste was one of the most promising of these young men. While getting education in the local school along with the children of the deshmukh and other landed families was almost a dream come true for the rest, in Narsimhulu's case, it was made possible because of his father's 'parapathi' (influence) with the Kadivendi dorasani. Being by nature hardworking and good at studies or rather better than the children of the well-to-do upper castes seems to have added to the confidence. The result of this was the sense of independence which he claims to have displayed right from his early days. After the completion of his schooling, he left for Bhiwandi to work in cloth mills. The migration to the textile industrial centres of the North from Telangana was then and as now viewed
as a mark of achievement.\textsuperscript{1} This proved to be a brief stint. After returning to the village, Narasimhulu was engaged by the Guntur Reddies or 'Christian Reddies' (as the migrant coastal Andhra peasants were- and are- known in Telangana)\textsuperscript{2} to tutor their children. While the entire village was subordinated to the deshmukh, the Christian Reddies maintained a measure of independence. The deshmukhs, the villagers recall, consciously maintained a distance from them. The reasons were obvious: firstly, their religious identity with the British rulers gave them a privileged position and the frequent visit of the Christian 'fatheries'.

1. The number of emigrants from Hyderabad state to Bombay province in 1921 was 206,842 and in 1911 it was 140,990. The figures for Telangana are not available. See, Census of India 1921, Vol.XXI, Hyderabad, State Part-I p.70.
2. The phenomenon of Christian and Kamma peasant migration from prosperous coastal districts to Telangana seems to have begun in the early decades of this century. They bought lands and settled throughout Telangana wherever they could find fertile land and irrigation facilities. They were the first to introduce modern technology in agriculture, while the local peasants including landlords used to cultivate the traditional crop varieties applying primitive techniques and abstain from utilising fertilisers. Their settlements were (and are) called 'Guntur Palles' by the local people irrespective of the place of immigrant's origin.
(as the missionaries are known locally) to the local church showed their proximity with the alien government; secondly, they were independent migrant families from the British governed Madras presidency and being a later addition to the feudal village structure they were not fully integrated into it and hence their independence.

Narsimhulu's relations and interaction with these families opened for him newer ways of looking at the age-old feudal reality. More importantly the elderly Daoud Reddy inspired him to question the ways of the deshmukh and sharpened his critical thinking. But this Daoud Reddy had no explicit politics but only a general human concern and partiality for the oppressed, which made him fairly popular among the villagers. This was in 1944, after the Bhongir conference. Having heard the success story of the sangam Daoud Reddy took initiative and encouraged villagers to join the sangam. In those early days when there was nobody to turn to, Reddy's encouragement and moral support became instrumental.

Soon an AMS leader by name Rama Chandra Reddy,
who was then camping in Nirumala, was consulted and the subscription books were brought and in a few days time as many as three hundred members were enrolled. As a result of this *vetti* and other feudal practices abruptly stopped and whenever they were approached to perform the services, people used to show the *sangam chitti*, as a symbol of their refusal. As was the case elsewhere, in Kadivendi too the *sangam chitti* came to assume the significance of a talisman. All this happened quite spontaneously and without any external intervention barring the symbolic presence of *chitti*.

The next issue that was taken up immediately was that of the arbitrary levy collection described earlier. In Kadivendi as well, with the exemption of the deshmukh family the levy burden was squarely shifted onto the peasantry. The youth of the village, encouraged by the spontaneous mass enthusiasm, wanted irregularities in the levy collection to be corrected.

---

Reflecting on this episode Nalla Narasimhulu narrates:

I went to Hyderabad, met the leaders at the AHS Office and talked to them about the irregularities... We met the officials concerned and requested them to direct the local officials to go into it and ensure its proper implementation. The tahsildar was duly instructed. But the tahsildar, like all the local officials, was hand in glove with the deshmukh and gave him information about his visit. Knowing the ways of their operation and tactics, we sixty youngmen organised ourselves into a group and kept watch on the gadi to prevent shifting of grain from gadi. Despite all our efforts, part of the grain was shifted on the sly. The next day when the tahsildar arrived in the village, the villagers gathered in large numbers and pressured the reluctant tahsildar to proceed with levy procurement from the dorasani. Though the goondas of the deshmukh, who were twenty in number, tried to stop us, we finally succeeded on account of popular pressure. This was tantamount to the 'beheading of the dorasani.'

This incident not only proved a significant set-back to the feudal authority but set the stage for an intensified conflict leading to the subsequent unfolding of events. All the important activists were implicated in false cases as having attacked gadi and indulging in arson. Even murderous attacks were said to have been planned on the activists. This only strengthened the mass resistance and people became more vigilant.

1. Interview with Nalla Narasimhulu, Jangaon, November 8-9, 1985.
What is to be noted here is the question of autonomous activist formation. The Kadivendi case clearly demonstrates the relationship between the spontaneous mass upsurge and the formation of organised politics in the context of an oppressive social structure. Even a overwhelmingly spontaneous movement has its critical core which, however rudimentary or elementary it might be, gets nurtured and develops over a period of time or decelerates governed by the logic and resource potential - symbolic and material - of the movement. The subaltern critical element has a commonality with the spontaneous popular participation, i.e., in terms of schooling into politics through collective experience. It is this element that binds them together, for they speak and think in the same idiom and share values.¹ However spontaneous a movement may be in its origins, it cannot succeed in the realisation of its objectives especially when the enemy is formidable and has entrenched organisation (which includes the state). It is the reason why a movement, which though in its initial phases seeks to justify itself based largely on its internal resources,

later tends to turn to larger macro-political processes to muster support and sustain itself. It is the dialectic of social development.

Kadivendi was no exception. After the levy incident and cooked up criminal cases the sangam activists of Kadivendi increasingly looked up to the AMS leadership for guidance and support to fight the cases in courts.¹ "United you stand, divided you fall" seems to have been the advice.² The subsequent plans of the deshmukh to weaken the brittle organisation made the villages realise it. The threats to the activists became frequent and the number of goondas, ostensibly to guard the gadi, increased to forty signalling the impending danger. Taking the clue, volunteer dalams were organised immediately with members drawn from almost all castes.³ Yet it still remained defensive in its nature.

The expected did happen soon. A plan was hatched to attack the sangam office and to execute it forty goondas were employed. In a fully drunken state, as

1. This is inaccurately attributed to the prevalence of legalism and reformism in the leadership of AMS and seen as a continuity from the liberal phase, Barry Pavier, op.cit., pp. 87-89.
2. For details on the point of view of AMS leadership, see, A. Ram Chandra Reddy, op.cit., p.36.
3. Only Harijans see to be an exception. The reasons were: their structural dependence on the landlord which was the cause of their 'slavish existence', and lack of social consciousness in them.
they were, they threw stones at an activist's house in the vicinity of gadi, by name Lingaiah. This was at about 7 pm. Soon hundreds of people collected in front of the gadi, and what subsequently transpired is narrated by a witness to the incident thus: 1

People congregated shouting slogans: 'Hail AMS and Hail CPI'. Goondas got scared seeing them in hundreds. One of the goondas, apparently dazed, fired at the crowd. It stuck Doddi Kumaraiah and he fell on the ground bleeding profusely. The situation became quite tense: with people raged and passions heightened.

This was on 4th July, 1946. The day of Doddi Kumaraiah's martyrdom. The histories on Telangana movement trace the beginning of the movement from here: 2 apparently taking the armed phase of the movement to be real beginning. As a result, the unfolding of the process in its spontaneous manifestation is viewed as the 'pre-history' of the movement. This is conceptually related to a mechanical distinction between the form and essence, fact and logic, and outward manifestations and deeper processes. Another dimension, closely related

2. CPI's perception of the movement's beginning is evident in its celebration of Silver Jubilee of the Telangana Movement in 1971.
to it but of a different order, is the distinction between the organised manifestation and spontaneous expression. The histories on Telangana implicitly working with this, magnify the former and neglect the latter or alternatively subsume the latter in the former.

The present study being an attempt at the reappraisal of the inter-connections between the two domains, takes the 'essence' rather than the 'form' and traces the origins of the movement from 1944 itself. But then, Doddi Kumaraiah's martydom did unmistakably herald a new phase of sharpened contradictions, with the social spectrum increasingly polarised between anti-feudal social forces under the AMS leadership on the one side and feudal classes ranged with the state on the other. To face the state the movement had to be expanded to new areas. This became evident with the passage of time.

The first instance for the Kadivendi sangam was the taking up of land struggle of lambadis in Dharmapuram. Dharmapuram and Lakshakkapalli were two maktha villages under Puskuri Raghava Rao,
who as makthadar was vested with total rights on the villages granted to him. The land in the village being his, he had a right to evict (bedaakhal) the peasants at-will. In return of this right he had to pay a fixed amount to the state. What occurred in Dharma-
puram was an instance of bedaakhal. The evicted lambadis, incensed by this rose in revolt and beat up the goonças of Puskuri Raghava Rao. In this the lambadis were supported by Vishnur deshmukh - an instance of personal rivalry between Puskuri family and Vishnur dora.\(^1\) But later, Raghava Rao seems to have wooed Vishnur dora by bribing him. As a conse-
sequence of their collusion, lambadis were once again forcibly evicted from their lands and subjugated to the makthadar. As soon as the news of sangam and its victory reached Dharmapuram, the lambadis invited the sangam. Around a thousand activists from Kadivendi, Devuruppala, Sitarampuram and other neighbouring villages, each armed with a guppa (stick or club), a vadisela (sling) and a red flag moved to Dharmapuram to restore the fifty acres of land to the lambadis. It made the makthadar panicy. He called in the police and magistrate to intervene, who in turn

\(^1\) The landlord class in Telangana was highly divided within itself, on caste lines; personal rivalry was also a significant factor for this division.
ordered for the arrest of activists. Mohan Reddy, the leader of the struggle, and few others were arrested. But the mass resistance not only succeeded in getting them freed but also in the police camp lifted from there. This was a major incident of direct confrontation between a still largely spontaneous mass movement and the state.¹

The news of Doddi Komuraiah's murder acted as a catalyst in the intensification of the movement in Kadivendi. It became a daily routine in the village to take out processions with people armed with gutpas and vadiselas. But its impact was not confined to Kadivendi and its neighbouring villages alone. It soon spread to villages afar and caught the entire Nalgonda like wild fire.² The dramatic impact of the event, of course, was the consequence of AMS propaganda, but the mass participation was largely spontaneous. In almost every village where chitti sangam had some following, voluntary dalams armed with gutpas³ were formed. It became customary to take out processions regularly in the villages.

1. For a different version, see P. Sundarayya, op.cit., pp. 41-42.
2. Especially, Jangaon, Bhongir, Suryapet, Huzurnagar and Miryalaguda taluqs.
3. The decision to form voluntary corps was taken by the CPI keeping in view the increased frequency of attacks on the leaders and activists.
Besides this, the voluntary dalams used to travel to another village and mobilise people to join the procession and form dalams; and they in turn used to go to a third village while the dalam from the first returned to its village. Jaithrayatra (Victory March) became the mode of transmission of radical message. Neither the leadership of the AMS nor the Communist Party, let alone the local activists, seem to have had any fore-sight or design regarding the potentialities and possible path of the struggle. The movement was largely directed by the exigencies of a rapidly developing situation characterized by the emotional outburst of people's anger at the exploitative landed gentry. But the logic of the movement, apparently governed by common sense worldview, was one for the sustenance of the popular participation through the expansion of its area; the substance was offensive on the oppressers. Thus the expansion not only diluted but also decelerated the feudal reaction. Gutpa came to symbolise the spirit of this phase: the reason why the organisation was called Gutpa Sangam. In other words, while during the earlier phase of chitti sangam the major activity was protest through petitioning, during the phase of gutpa sangam

it was the direct attack on the structures of feudal
dominance.

On the other side of socio-political spectrum
the landed gentry, sensing the gravity of fast
developing situation, reacted by closing ranks among
themselves \(^1\) and seeking increased police assistance
to meet the anti-feudal challenge. The result of the
systematized landlord-police collusion was the mass
arrests of the activists and filing up of criminal
cases on the changes of loot and arson. And also
goonda attacks and police raids became frequent. Added
to it, the fact and rumour of arrests \(^2\) and the
consequent harassment forced the students, youth and
sangam activists to go underground. This was true
even of the areas where the movement was still at
its low ebb. Thus the combined attacks and terror
unleashed by the state and landlord goondas in collusion
with each other rendered any semblance of open and legal
activity on the part of the people, irrespective of
their politics and extent of involvement in the peasant
movement impossible, thereby rendering their safety

---

1. In the initial stages of the movement, the
differences within the landed gentry came in
handy. There are instances of some landlords
coming forward to play the AMS against their
rivals. But as the movement intensified they
realised that their collective (class) interests
were at stake.

2. With the unleashing of terror by the state, mere
rumour of an impending arrest seems to have left
many individuals with no choice but to take the
side of the movement actively.
contingent upon their involvement in the sangam. As a consequence some on their own and others forced by circumstances, together swelled the ranks of the sangam. This is a fact seldom analysed.¹

Case Study-II: Kurraram

Kurraram was a samsthanam village under the Rajapet raja² in the northern part of Bhongir taluq. Apart from Kurraram there were eight villages under it.³ The raja, like most of the jagirdars, had all powers relating to the administration of the samsthanam concentrated in his hands. The raja had his residence in Hyderabad and the tehsil of the samsthanam was


2. The name of the raja was Jaswantha Rao belonging to Reddy caste. Men belonging to this caste, generally, had the suffix 'Reddy' indicating their community. But in the case of samsthanam holders, they seemed to have longed to have 'Rao' suffixed to their names. Another instance of this was the raja of Wanaparthy (in Mahabubnagar district) by name Raja Rambhupal Rao though he was a Reddy. This was perhaps because of the fact that most of the samsthanam holders were Brahmans and the Reddy samsthanams imitated them. It was also, perhaps, on account of their craving to distinguish themselves from the deshmukhs and peasant Reddys.

3. The remaining eight were: Rajapet, Namle, Maasayipet, Korikonda, Peddapadu, Sadupalli; Challuru and Enkiryala.
located at Rajapet. In all these villages the raja had lands and they were leased out to the well-to-do peasants. Only in Rajapet there was 'self-cultivation'. The land here used to be cultivated with the vetti labour of the harijans (known as vetti madigalu) from the samsthanam villages,\(^1\) with the agricultural implements supplied by the peasants called vettinagallu, and also by employing jeethas under the supervision of a gumastha appointed for this purpose.

In addition to this, men belonging to service castes like Chakali (Washerman), Kummari (Potter) and Mangali (barber) (alongwith harijan) used to go to Hyderabad with ghee, rice, fruits and other provisions collected from these villages travelling for two days on foot and stay there for a month to perform domestic chores for the raja's family. In return for their services, vetti men used to be given coarse grain and broken rice called mukalu to feed

---

\(^1\) From each village, a harijan used to go to Rajapet and stay there for eight days to perform vetti. During the peak seasons the number used to be more in correspondence with the requirements of the agricultural operations, which were to be completed at a brisk pace.
themselves on. After rendering a month's *vetti* service, another batch used to be despatched to replace them. This monthwise rotating *vetti* system was called *nelasari vanthulu*.

In the villages, given the absence of the *raja*, the domination was literally exercised by the patwari and patels, with the service castes and *balothadars* being at their beck and call. The *balothadars* had to daily present themselves at the village accountant's workplace (called *chavadi*) by turns; they had to go around the village beating *dappulu* (*drums*) to make *chatimpulu* (public announcements); to attend to the officers whenever they were on tour; to keep a watch on the *chavadi* day and night and to take evening rounds in the village beating *dappulu* in a ritualistic fashion (known as *diviti salaam*) perhaps to announce the end of the day. Added to this they were to attend on the *vatandars*—to meet both their farming and domestic requirements.

1. In addition the service castes had *inams* and the harijans had *balotha inams* in their respective villages. These *inams* were small stretches of land given in lieu of their services and were exempt from tax liability.
The Kurraram experience was different from that of Kadivendi in one important structural aspect. The Kapu-reddi petty landlords, of 'Pasam' (family surname) here were holders of 'patel' vatan, whereas elsewhere the deshmukh 'dora's were generally the vatandars. Because of this difference the Kurraram Patels were not entitled for any customary rights over peasants and their vetti-nagallu.

There does not seem to have been much of spontaneous protest in Kurraram. This can be explained by the absence of possibility of identifying a concentrated expression and personification of oppression caused by the non-presence of the raja in the actual site and the 'patel' status of the landlords in the immediacy. Added to this, the existence of three Pasam families with claims on the post of patel in turns had added to the dilution of domination because the villagers could turn to any of the three family head men in times of distress and need. ¹

1. In the case of the deshmukh landlords, the separation of brothers in the family used to be settled through the partition of the villages in their ilaka, as they had a number of villages under them. This did not lead to any hierarchical division of their authority and dilution of their domination. Instead the area under them got shrunk as a result of distribution and correspondingly their domination was further strengthened. In the case of the small 'patel' landlords, as their lands usually were located within a village, family separation resulted in the split of their domination.
The only instance of popular attempt at protesting against the vetti system by the harijans of Kurraram that the present researcher could unearth during his fieldwork was their response to the missionary activity of a Christian 'fatherie' by name Nathaneal. This was the first ever attempt by a Christian missionary in this area to establish a church and convert the harijans and the response of the harijans therefore becomes significant.¹

The emergence of the movement and birth of political activists in the Kurraram case were different. While in Kadivendi, both these occurred largely spontaneously, in Kurraram the emergence of the movement was the result of repeated intervention from the AMS. Arutla Ram Chandra Reddy and Laxmi Narasimha Reddy, who had friendly relations with 'Pareddi' Madhava Reddy² of this village, used to visit him on and off and discuss with him the

1. Interview with a seventy five year old harijan by name Volluri Pochaiah. He was one of the first to convert to Christianity and later joined the communist dalam under the leadership of Pasam (popularly known as Kurraram) Ram Reddy. Interview, Kurraram, dt. 28.12.1985. At present most of the harijans in the village are Christians and CROSS, a missionary organization, is famous among them and a night school is run by it.

2. This gentleman who knew Arutla brothers was originally from 'Pareddi' family of Dharmareddigudem (near Kolamupaka) but went in illarikam (adaption by marriage) to 'Pasam' family of Kurraram and settled there. It was this contact that was made use of by Arutlas to spread the movement in the Bhongir area.
developments in the AMS. The result of this person-to-
person contact was the formation of a group of young
men belonging to the petty landlord and well-to-do
families, especially from 'Pasam' family; some of
whom have attended the Bhongir conference of the AMS
as delegates. But out of this group, an youngman, by
name Pasam Ram Reddy emerged as the most active
member. It became a routine with him to go to the
Harijanwada (Harijan locality) and discuss their
problems; which invariably centred around the practice
of vetti and untouchability. But the Harijans'
response was lackadaisical as they viewed vetti as a
naturalised practice, and their adherence to it was
a habit reinforced by their ignorance and servile
mentality. But Ram Reddy's tireless and unceasing
persuasion seems to have had some impact on the Harijans'
attitude.

This mobilization of Harijans obviously brought
Ram Reddy into a direct confrontation with his own
kinsmen, especially, his uncle, who happened to be
the patel of the village. Unable to bear one of his
family members (caste and class, apart) organising
protest against his authority, he tried his hand at the first method of cajoling and coaxing as it is usual on such occasions; when this yielded no results, he brought the question of partition of family property to the fore—thereby widening the gap.

Ram Reddy’s involvement, on the other hand, extended to the newer areas. It became a usual practice with him, to go to neighbouring village with one or two local activists from Kurraram, and spread the anti-feudal political message of the AMS. Though the initial response was hesitant and lukewarm, very soon sangam branches were opened in a number of villages including Kurraram. The first act of open rebuttal of the existing normative framework was the temple-entry by the Harijans in Yadagiripalle under his

1. Ram Reddy’s style of functioning was distinct: he used to visit the Harijans wearing simple, homespun, coarse cloth and dressed as they were; and to ask for and insist on drinking water, and ambali (gruel) or ganji in their houses; and still more significantly, he would never let others wash the bowls used by him. All this was in the early phase of campaigning in the neighbouring villages, where he had relatives. Given his upper-caste and landlord background, these acts of ‘declassing’ and ‘decasting’ himself were significant in a symbolic sense, to won him a place in the hearts of the downtrodden who were victims not only of feudal oppression but also of caste-oppression. A mere political propaganda perhaps would not have broken through the caste barriers.
leadership. As the movement expanded in its geographical area, _vetti_, _mamuls_ and the levy payment was stopped.

With the entry of the struggle into the armed phase, a _dalam_ was formed under Ram Reddy,\(^1\) to combat the attacks of the Razaakars camped in Rajapet.\(^2\) The popular response to the invitation to join as volunteers in the _dalam_ was overwhelming. The arms were collected from _vantadars_ who volunteered to give their arms - mostly _burmar_ and _natu tupakulu_ (country guns). As the size of the _dalam_ expanded, it was split in stages, and finally into six and Ram Reddy was elevated to a zonal commander to supervise over these _dalams_.

The composition of these _dalams_ is worth commenting here. While the leaders of the _dalams_ were from the dominant Kapu-Reddy community,\(^3\) the members were drawn in from Telaga, Goundla, Vaddera

---

1. Ram Reddy was one of those who were given guerilla training in the Andhra area.
2. Other Razaakar camps were at Pochannapet and Bachannapet.
3. The leaders of the _dalams_ were Jatti Ram Chandra Reddy Bondugula Narayan Reddy, Gottam Venkat Reddy and Vadla Balaiah. Among these, only Balaiah belonged to the Viswa Brahmin (artisan) caste, whereas the rest were Kapu-Reddies.
and Harijan communities besides Kapu. In Ram Reddy dalam alone there were as many as five Harijans.

The preponderant participation of Harijans seems to be unique about the composition of dalams in this area compared to Jangaon and Miryalaguda-Huzurnagar areas. This can be explained by the fact that most of the villages in this area were under samsthanams and jagirs. With the doras and jagirdars being physically absent from their ilakas, the power in effect was exercised by the 'patels'. With the formation of AMS a significant section of the youth of the 'Patel' families was drawn actively into the movement, who in turn could impress upon the Harijans, and bring them into the movement. But in Khalsa villages, the Harijan participation seems to have been low. The presence of the deshmukh doras and the structural dependence of the Malas and Madigas (two of the more sizeable Harijan castes) on them, precluded the possibility of any space for independent decision

1. In a sense the "Former masters became their new leaders", as it is evident in the way the Harijan members of Ram Reddy dalam refer to him as dora, though affectionately. Field notes (interview with 75 year old Volluri Pochaiah and others of Kurraram), Kurraram, dated 28.12.1985.
and action on their part. Instead, they seem to have spied on the sangam activists and their movement in Khalsa villages. The instances of their being punished for their betrayal were not rare.¹

In addition to the structural distinctions, there were the differences on the character of the movement. The development of the movement in Kurraram area took a leap and expanded with the intensification of the Rajaakar activity. The central focus here was on the anti-Nizam character of the movement. Pareddi Madhav Reddy thus suggests:²

Most of us have joined the movement with an opposition to Rajaakars and to fight their goondaism... We also fought against the vetti and other forms of feudal oppression... But we at the most were participants in the anti-Nizam struggle. The reason why we supported the withdrawal of the movement in 1951.

¹ In Kadivendi, two Harijans were beaten up for leaking out the information on the activities of sangam to the deshmukh.


A report of the Andhra Provincial Committee, observes that the tendency of disassociation and even betrayal of the squad and zonal leaders from the 'patel' landlord families, "who joined our squads in the hope of protecting their properties and families in the struggle against Rajaakar raids, have all gone over to the Congress and actively helped the police and the army to hunt out our hideouts, our dumps and get our squad members and leaders arrested"... soon after the Police Action. See, 'Political and Organisational Report (Andhra-Telangana after Police Action) A Report by Andhra P.C.' 1949, available at P.C. Joshi Archives, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, p.3.
Case Study-III: Dacharam

Dacharam was a Khalsa village in Huzurnagar taluq. The deshmukh Jadakamalla Laxmikantha Rao was a Karnam by caste. Associated to it was Ellaram - a bechiraag\(^1\) or deserted village. For all practical purposes Ellaram was part of Dacharam; but only in revenue records it was treated a separate village. The dora had lands in both the revenue villages; so also a few of the peasants.

The village was no way different from other deshmukh villages as for the nature of feudal exploitation was concerned: there was vetti and illegal mamul exactions; and, all sections of the population were subjected to it.

\(^1\) Bechiraag literally means 'absence of light', i.e., there were no houses and nobody resided in Ellaram. People say, long ago, it was a resident village, but due to some reason it was deserted, and the residents came and settled in Dacharam. The precise reason for the desertion is difficult to unearth.
Though the village was under a Karanam\textsuperscript{1} dora, who was asaldar patwari, he appointed a gumasta (clerk) by name Nandamari Sri Ramaiah, a Kamma, by caste, as was the usual practice with most of the deshmukhs, for it was infradig their doratanam (lordship) to work as 'accountants' and patels personally.

The topography of the village was such that all the lanes from the different localities converged at the road that passed through the gadi, which in turn, opened the village to the outside world. Any body intending to go out of the village, had to invariably pass through the street. It was outside the precincts of the gadi, the deshmukh used to get the penta (cattle dung) heaped up sprinkled over the street. In addition to this – as if this was not enough – he had pumpkins planted on the manure, which spread over the street. No one was to step on the

\textsuperscript{1} In Telangana the patwaris predominantly were from the Niyogi sect of Brahmin caste. But in popular parlance, they were called 'Karnams', by treating it as a caste for its long association, Karnam, literally means 'village accountant'; it is derived from the word 'Karaneekam', meaning 'the practising of accountancy'. It is an instance of transposition of the profession on to the caste.
plant. Being the only outlet to the outskirts, if any cattle happened to tread on the leaf or flower of the plant, the owner to get his animal freed had to pay jarimana (penalty) at the atrocious rate of Rupee one per leaf and five per flower. This was only just one instance of his unexceptional notoreity.

The other instance of his notoreity was on the front of 'sexploitation'. Any girl in the village, on attaining puberty, was to spend her first night with the deshmukh; so was also the girl coming into the village as a bride. Even outsiders visiting their relatives in the village were not spared. Any women who caught his fancy was to be made accessible to him. His mark in this respect was so notorious in this area, that nobody was willing to give their daughters in marriage to this village. The people's aversion at the landlord is captured in the following popular saying: 'Dacharam pillanivvadam kanna dani gonthu piskadam manchidi' (Better to throttle a girl to death than marry her off to Dacharam). As a result


2. Even this extremely despicable situation was not without its hilarious moments. One such occasion was: when a touring drama troupe was staging pouranika story, one female character happened to be fancied by the aging deshmukh, whose desire and demand was duly transmitted. But the female character as it eventually turned to be was played by a male member of the troupe. This was narrated by a harijan from Dacharam, dt. 27.11.1985.
of this obnoxious practice as many as sixty men over the age of forty at one time remained unmarried and forcefully embraced bachelorhood - something unimaginable in an agrarian society.¹

But the popular aversion and hatred had no corresponding manifestations of popular outburst until it was swayed and swept by the rising volcanic tides of the AMS - led peasant struggle in the taluq. The incident that inspired the people at Dacharam occurred in Keethavarigudem, a Khalsa village. The Harijans, Chakalis and Mangalis in this village, stopped *vetti*, under the guidance of AMS activists Haribandla Omkar and Laxminarayana.

Though the stoppage of *vetti* by the Harijans and other service castes in Keethavarigudem proved to be relatively easy but breaking the cordon of the Karnam *dora* of Dacharam proved difficult. It seems to have become a challenge of sorts for the enthusiastic AMS activists to penetrate into the citadel. Thenceforth, they made frantic, efforts to spread the message of

₁. This head-count was done by the AMS activists during the struggle. Interview with Haribanda Omkar at Penchikaldinne, dt. 26.11.1985.
emancipation to Dacharam by using the caste linkages of the lower classes from Keethavarigudem and other villages. No sooner had their message reached them than the vetti was stopped abruptly. More than the organised might of the people within Dacharam, it was the developments outside that seem to have effected and directed the changes in this village. Added to this the caste background of the dora appears to have been an important factor in the determination of the process of change; for, firstly, the Karnam landlords were in numerical minority in this area; as elsewhere; secondly, they were notorious for their vengeful and manipulative behaviour and underhand intrigues rather than intrepidity. 1 The 'minority' psychology and the traditional incapacity to organised physical brutality 2

---

1. There is a local proverb, 'Karnala paga Katiki Povina thappudu', which means that 'the vengeance of the Karnams pursues you to the grave'.

2. The Karnam landlords, neither of Dacharam, nor of Pathepuram village maintained any private goondas. Instead their domination constituted of their traditional caste superiority and their landed property. The Reddi landlords, in contrast, invariably groomed private thugs; the alphabet of organised private violence was part of their 'second' nature.
persuaded them to withdraw in the face of resistance from the subordinate classes. Once vetti practices ceased, the Karnam landlord quietly migrated to Miryalagudem.

The developments in Dacharam, as described earlier, were fostered by the developments in the neighbourhood. Only as a part of a larger and fast-changing political reality, the village experienced certain changes. Though the objective conditions in the village were conducive for the development of the movement, but quite peculiarly, the logic of its manifestation was different. The 'movement' seems to have ended as soon as it 'began' or rather got initiated. The raison d'être was externally stimulated - vetti being stopped at the behest of sangam operating from Keethavarigudam. The Karnam dora fled away from Dacharam scared as he was of the organised might of the sangam outside, the fast-changing situation elsewhere and the potential possibility of injury to his pettandari (feudal dominance) and dikhava, being apparently sensed in the initial collective action in the abrupt stoppage of vetti. As the struggle of the people of Dacharam was fought by an external agent
and after the exit of the physical embodiment of the domination and oppression, the people it seems, had nothing to rally against. Though the dora seems to have harboured hopes of return to the village as was evident in the fact that he buried his wealth by making bhosanams (hidden treasury) to the walls of his chamber in his gadi, the villagers had no reason to worry about it. Thus, with the target of their hatred removed, the people of Dacharam relapsed into passivity and complacency.

Added to this, even the class structure seems to have been conducive for this complacency. Next to the deshmukh, there were around a dozen small landlord Kapu-Reddy families. In addition to their land, these families leased in a part of the land belonging to the dora. Though as tenants they never appeared to have had any trouble with the dora; but, in the context of the changing rural power equation, they were to gain nothing in addition to what they actually acquired with the exit of the dora - both in terms of land and social status. As it were, Dacharam, was one of the first villages in Huzurnagar to be experimented with land distribution.
programme.\textsuperscript{1} Quite significantly, in order not to antagonise and rather to appease this strata, the AMS left the land owned and the land leased-in by these families untouched, even though it was above the ceiling limit. With the major share thus grabbed, the land left over was distributed among others. Thus on both the fronts, initially against vetti and later for land distribution, the agency of change was derived. It was this conspicuous absence of independent political articulation that was the single most important factor for the movement's failure to strike roots, and for the non-contribution of leaders and activists to the movement from this village.\textsuperscript{2} On the other hand, the dalam had base of its rank and file from Keethavargudem. There were members from Golla, Goundla and Harijan (three members) castes in this dalam.

**Comparative Analysis:**

On the basis of the case studies of Kadivendi, Kurraram, and Dacharam, presented above, certain observations and generalisations with regard to the

2. This village case study is chosen to understand the phenomenon of 'non-contribution'.
origins, development and character of the movement can be made. These three villages represented three different types in terms of the overall character of the movement; Kadivendi was endogenous; Kurraram mediated; and Dacharam exogenous. In terms of the relationship between macro-level political processes and the emergence and development of the movements: in Kadivendi the movement was largely autonomous and overwhelmingly spontaneous; in Kurraram it was mediated as it was, the outcome of repeated intervention of the AMS leadership and the impetus was given from outside; Dacharam, differed from the two villages—neither it was spontaneous, nor was it totally determined and integrated by the AMS into its fold, at best it can be characterised as a 'side-effect' of the movement in the neighbourhood, for it was partial in all its dimensions.

The birth of the political activists and their caste and class background is reflective of the nature and emergence of the movement: as the causes of the movement in Kadivendi were internal to its social microcosm and its agrarian structure, the rank
and file here sprouted out autonomously from within
and hence there was preponderance of the artisan and
service castes and lower classes both in the leadership
and dalams; as the movement in Kurraram was caused by
the intervention 'from above', the activist formation
was influenced by the top leaders of the AMS, whose
intimate contacts were, obviously, with the upper caste
and small landlord youth-despite the leadership being
drawn from this stratum the members of the dalams were
from the lower caste-classes. In Dhacharam, the
external causality and limited life span of the movement
seems to have precluded the possibility of activist
formation - its signal 'non-contribution' to the
movement is what is striking and noteworthy about it.

Then we come to the aims and objectives of the
movement. The balanced and even relationship between
the spontaneous and organised aspects of the movement
appear to have determined its development and its
integration with the overall dynamic political character
of the Telangana struggle. It began initially as an
anti-feudal struggle, subsequently, however, with the
changing political configuration it became very much
part of the anti-Nizam struggle. In Kurraram though
the movement focussed on anti-feudal issues, it was predominantly anti-Nizam and anti-Razaakar (perhaps, because it was a late starter) and it was stopped as soon as the anti-Nizam objective was realised (many activists, in fact, surrendered after the Police Action), and it did not visualise anything beyond this. In the case of Dacharam, the precise nature of the objectives of the 'movement' is difficult to determine, though it had begotten all the major achievements of the movement - vetti was stopped and land was distributed - perhaps, because of its non-integration into the overall macro-movement.

\*\*The Armed Phase of the Struggle\*

With the transformation of the movement from the phase of defensive chitti sangam to that of offensive gutpa sangam, the revolutionary potentialities of the movement became increasingly clear. On the other side of the political spectrum, the plan of the state to stiffle the movement, with the weight of its physical might at this stage became evident - finally culminating in the banning of the Communist Party and the AMS in November 1946. The party took the decision to strategically
expand the geographical spread of the movement and intensify it by building up armed peasant resistance to the state offensive. The first step in this direction was the collection of arms of various descriptions; country guns, revolvers and whatever they could lay their hands upon. ¹ The targets obviously were the landlords, vatandars, makhthedars and the police nakas (police out-posts with two or three constables). Even the village hunters mostly belonging to Tenugu and Besta castes who had country guns, either volunteered or were forced to hand-over their weapons to the sangam. With the procurement of arms, the unarmed volunteer dalams became armed ones. Compared to the armed might of the state, sangam was ill-equipped both in respect of its arms and training equipment. But it had the popular support and initiative on its side while the landed gentry-who by now had migrated alongwith their families to urban areas, (mostly to Vijayawada)² could reenter the villages only with the support of the police.

1. In some parts, the procurement of arms seems to have began even earlier to this.
2. Some of small landlords and well to do peasants who were sympathetic and even those who were at the lead of the armed dalams sent their families to urban areas to escape from the anarchy created by the razaakaars. For instance, Kurraram Ram Reddy and Madhav Reddy sent theirs to Vijayawada.
The popular initiative and resistance in the early phase of confrontation with the police deserve attention. In the event of police attack on a village, the traditional *dolu* (drum) placed on a height on the outskirts used to be beaten signalling people working in the fields and of neighbouring villages who in turn used to gather with firearms, sticks and slings to confront the armed police. To protect themselves from the bullets *gongallu* (country blankets made of sheep-wool), gunny bags and mats were used. The role of women was secondary to men in the peasant resistance. They used to supply their men with stones to slingshot the enemy—perhaps an instance of sexual division of labour. For their own protection and to safeguard their honour, women used to move in groups and always carry chilli *powder with them*. These primitive methods of self-protection prove the innocence of the people beyond doubt, which in itself is a testimony to the predominance of spontaneity in popular resistance.

With the intensification of the movement and the fleeing of the landlords, patwaris and patels, the entire system of rural administration was paralysed.
and brought to a standstill. In the place of traditional administrative structures, *gram rajyams* (village governments) were established with five (the reason why they were also known as *panch* committees) or seven members chosen from the 'village elders' who were acceptable to the people. In other words, structures based on coercion were replaced by *gram rajyams* with the popular collective initiative and consent. *Gram rajyams*, as a result, assumed the character of an alternative administrative structure embodying subaltern hegemony albeit in an embryonic form. The *gram rajyams* were entrusted with all the responsibilities related to civil administration varying from intra- and inter-family disputes to land disputes; and more importantly the redistribution of land.

In addition to *gram rajyams*, armed *dalams* (squads) were organised for defence purposes each with forty to fifty members, which after Police Action were split into smaller squads consisting of five to seven members. They were not only entrusted with military functions but also with the political function of ideological education, and supervision over the *gram* committees and the proper implementation of land redistribution programme.
The organisational structure of the squads and Committees can be understood from the diagram given below: 1

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Regional Committee} & \quad \text{(or Provincial Committee)} \\
\uparrow & \\
\text{Area Committee} & \quad \text{Political and} \\
\uparrow & \quad \text{military functions} \\
\text{Zonal Committee} & \quad \text{(or panch Committee)} \\
\uparrow & \\
\text{Dalam} & \\
\uparrow & \\
\text{Gram Committee} & \quad \text{(civil administrative functions)}
\end{align*}
\]

According to the estimates of the Communists, the parallel administration through \textit{gram} committees was set up in 3,000 villages covering an area of 16,000 square miles during the course of the movement. 2 In these villages the communists in the armed squads were called 'cheekati doralu' (lords of the night). 3

---

3. The police and Razakaars were called 'pagati dorallu' meaning 'lords of the day'.
Instead of going into a detailed empirical account of the activities of gram committees and dalams and the connected events village by village, it would suffice to identify the broad contours of the movement during this phase; firstly, the abolition of vetti which was confined to certain villages was generalised with the expansion of the movement and systematized with its intensification; secondly, non-payment of land and abkari taxes, rents and mamuls was made total; thirdly, the godowns storing levy grain and gariselu (storage bins) of the landlords were attacked and grain was distributed among the rural poor; fourthly, in villages, where from landlords happened to flee, crops belonging to the landlords and their henchmen were captured, kallams (threshing platforms) prepared and grain was distributed; fifthly, the structures and symbols of feudal domination like the gadi and the records of the patwaris were made special targets during peasant rebellion; and sixthly, livestock of the landlords was distributed among the people. All this on the one hand.

*For a detailed chronicle of activities and events, see, P. Sundarayya, *op.cit.*
The collapse of traditional feudal authority and state structure, consequent to the expansion and intensification of the movement, and the enthusiastic and preponderant mass participation had brought about 'pressure from below' for the redistribution of land. It is the 'land reform from below' (inter-relationship between the land redistribution and popular participation) seen in the overall context of Agrarian Question during the Telangana movement that is the subject-matter of discussion in the next chapter.