

DOCUMENT

Review Report on the Experience of Our Work Through the Dalit Platform

**Excerpts From Report Adopted at the Central Committee Meeting:
January 16-18, 2026, Thiruvananthapuram**

INTRODUCTION

The Political Review Report adopted by the 24th Party Congress directed the Party to undertake a comprehensive review of its work on Dalit issues and the functioning of the Dalit platform. It states:

We have to examine also how the platforms we set up to take up dalit and adivasi issues are working. There is a tendency in the Party to leave such issues to these platforms with the Party not directly intervening in social issues. On the other hand, these platforms are becoming exclusively for work by the dalit or adivasi members of the Party and there is no integration with the wider democratic movement. After discussion of the experience of how these platforms are functioning in various states, we can set out some directions and corrective steps. The class organisations should also take up social issues and coordinate with the social platforms.

The objective of this review is to make a comprehensive assessment of the Party's work on Dalit issues by evaluating achievements, identifying significant experiences and lessons, recognising major weaknesses and shortcomings that have hindered growth, and proposing necessary corrections in both political understanding and practical intervention.

This review assumes particular significance in the present political context marked by the growing threat of Hindutva communal forces and the intensification of attacks on minorities, Dalits, Adivasis, and women by Manuvadi elements. Mobilising Dalits and other oppressed sections against the communal and neoliberal policies of the NDA-BJP has become an urgent task in the struggle to defeat and isolate the BJP and RSS communal forces.

The neoliberal economic policies initiated by the Congress government and accelerated by the BJP government under Narendra Modi have had a particularly adverse impact on Dalits, who constitute the largest social group within India's working class. These policies

have primarily facilitated the transfer of public resources and assets to big corporates, while imposing severe burdens on working people. The accelerated privatisation and contractualisation drive, the refusal to introduce reservations in the private sector, and the increasing informalisation of employment have together weakened the constitutional mandate for reservations and social justice. Further, the abandonment of the Special Component Plans has sharply curtailed targeted public spending for Dalit development, leading to a further deterioration in their socio-economic conditions.

In its third term, the BJP government has intensified these anti-people measures. The notification of the labour codes, the attempt to replace MNREGA with the drastically diluted GRAMG Act, and the notification of the Electricity Amendment Act will severely and directly affect the livelihoods of Dalits and impose onerous financial burden on low income households.

Nearly eleven years of BJP rule have witnessed the consolidation of right-wing, communal, and authoritarian forces displaying neo-fascist tendencies. Caste-based atrocities have increased in the Manuvadi environment fostered by the BJP and RSS forces. The RSS-BJP-Manuvadi combine is aggressively promoting casteist ideology under the cover of SanatanDharma. At the same time, it seeks to co-opt Dalits and other oppressed castes into its communal agenda through the manipulation of caste identities, while preserving and reinforcing existing caste hierarchies. Sub-caste divisions are cynically exploited to fragment oppressed communities and consolidate political influence. A key element of this strategy has been the mobilisation of sections of oppressed castes against minorities on communal lines.

In this context, countering the BJP and RSS forces requires large-scale mobilisation of Dalits alongside other sections of the working people to confront caste oppression, class exploitation, and to advance the struggle for social justice. Present conditions are relatively more favourable for such mobilisation, given the worsening of livelihoods, the rise in caste atrocities, and growing apprehensions about the dilution of constitutional provisions related to reservations and social justice. By intensifying and strengthening the Party's work among Dalits, we can reinforce the broader struggle against the corporate-communal nexus represented by the BJP-RSS combine.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF DALITS

Dalits across India continue to face deep and structural socio-economic deprivation. Landlessness remains widespread, and existing landholdings are largely small, fragmented, and economically unviable. Land alienation and pauperisation have continued unabated. Wage rates of agricultural labourers—among whom Dalits constitute the largest single component—have either stagnated or declined. The dilution of the Special Component Plan has further weakened targeted public spending, with allocations falling well below mandated levels, poor utilisation, and widespread practices of notional spending and diversion. These failures underscore the need for a strong central legislation to ensure effective planning, allocation, and monitoring of sub-plan resources. Neglect of housing and basic amenities persist despite multiple government schemes, with Dalits remaining

spatially segregated in rural colonies and crowded in urban slums, reinforcing caste-based inequality in living conditions.

Dalits also experience systematic exclusion in health, education, and employment. Health outcomes remain significantly poorer due to socio-economic deprivation, unequal access to services, and discrimination within healthcare institutions. In education, poverty, weak public infrastructure, and entrenched caste bias result in lower attainment, alienation, and, in extreme cases, student suicides. Employment patterns are marked by persistent discrimination, low wage, and confinement to informal and insecure work, especially as the private sector expands without reservation safeguards. Migration has emerged as a survival strategy, with Dalits forming a large share of migrant and bonded labour. While migration may loosen some local forms of caste control, it largely reproduces inequality in new settings, as caste oppression continues in the absence of structural reforms and effective enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.

Caste oppression continues to shape the social conditions of Dalits within India's hierarchical caste system, manifesting in both everyday discrimination and brutal acts of violence. Violence and coercion are routinely used to enforce caste hierarchies, particularly when Dalits assert their rights, challenge degrading social norms, or demand equality and dignity. Dalit women are the most severely affected, as they face triple oppression based on class, caste, and gender.

Official data and civil society reports point to persistently high and rising levels of caste atrocities, alongside widespread institutional apathy, weak enforcement of protective laws, declining conviction rates in some states, and administrative and political efforts to dilute accountability.

STRATIFICATION AMONG DALITS

In the post-independence period, a significant petty-bourgeois middle-class layer has emerged among Dalits. Reservations in education, public employment, and political representation, along with targeted welfare and development schemes, have facilitated this process.

However, apart from this relatively small middle-class section, the economic condition of the vast majority of Dalits has not improved in any meaningful way. Most Dalits remain economically marginalised. Nearly 80 per cent live in rural areas, often trapped in chronic poverty and indebtedness. In urban areas, many Dalits reside in informal settlements and are concentrated in low-paid, insecure jobs within the informal economy, including stigmatised occupations such as manual scavenging.

This economic stratification is also reflected in widening disparities among Dalit sub-castes. The uneven distribution of benefits from reservations and development programmes among sub-castes has reinforced these internal inequalities. Sub-castes such as the Mahars in Maharashtra or the Chamars/Jatavs in Uttar Pradesh were historically better positioned to access education and state employment, thereby widening the gap between them and other Dalit groups. Competition over limited benefits has often placed

Dalit communities in tension with one another and has fuelled conflicts around demands for sub-quotas.

PROLIFERATION OF DALIT CASTE-BASED ORGANISATIONS

The growth of petty-bourgeois sections among Dalit castes created favourable conditions for the expansion of identity-based organisations and movements. After the 1980s, a large number of Dalit organisations emerged across the country. As identity politics expanded, Dalit identity increasingly fragmented into sub-caste identities and further into smaller divisions, leading to the formation of numerous splinter groups and organisations.

These organisations vary widely in terms of strength, levels of activity, political orientation, and commitment. Many of them take up issues seriously and engage in struggles, while others remain individual-centred or exist largely as paper organisations. Several Ambedkarite organisations have had a significant influence on educated Dalits through social media and digital activism. Cultural assertion also continues through Ambedkarite celebrations, literature, and art, reinforcing opposition to caste discrimination and social oppression.

Whenever these Dalit organisations raise democratic demands and come forward to fight caste discrimination and for social justice, we should not hesitate to work with them. We should seek to work with all such organisations, except those that promote the politics of the BJP and the ideology of the RSS.

DALITS AND POLITICS

Ruling class parties have actively exploited these fragmented identities to secure political support against rivals—a process referred to as “social engineering.” The BJP has emerged as the most aggressive practitioner of this approach, using it both for electoral gains and to wean away sections from established identity-based political formations.

In essence, identity politics represent another form of bourgeois politics. As a result, this trend undermines Left and class-based politics while strengthening bourgeois parties.

In the post-Mandal period, the anti and pro-reservation movements, along with intensified caste-based mobilisations, gave rise to identity-based political narratives and the emergence of new political forces appealing to specific castes or caste combinations. In Uttar Pradesh, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which openly championed the Dalit cause, succeeded in forming the state government. Though on a smaller scale, similar developments occurred in other states, such as the rise of Ram Vilas Paswan’s (LJP) party in Bihar, P.T party and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) led by Thirumavalavan in Tamil Nadu. The Republican Party of India, formed in 1957 and concentrated mainly in Maharashtra witnessed several splits during this period.

In Kerala surveys estimates suggest that around 51% of Dalit voters supported the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in the 2016 assembly election, rising to about 69% in 2021, making Dalits an important component of the Left’s support base there.

In states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, caste identity plays a stronger role in shaping political choices, and Dalit voting has more often consolidated around specific parties like the BSP.

DALITS AND THE BJP

Historically, the BJP drew limited support from Dalits, with its vote share among them hovering around 10 per cent nationally before the rise of Narendra Modi. This pattern changed during Modi's first term. Dalit support for the BJP increased significantly—from about 24 per cent in 2014 to roughly one-third by 2019—marking a notable expansion of the party's social base. In the 2024 general election, however, post-poll analyses suggested a modest erosion of this support, with the INDIA bloc regaining ground among Dalit voters, particularly in regions where caste-based politics remained salient.

Politically, the BJP has benefited from the fragmentation and weakening of traditional Dalit parties. The party has strategically targeted non-dominant Dalit sub-castes through leadership promotion, candidate selection, and support for demands such as the sub-categorisation of reservations. Nevertheless, BJP gains among Dalits remain uneven, varying sharply by region, sub-caste, and local political context.

The RSS has deployed a mix of ideological, organisational, cultural, and welfare-oriented strategies to draw sections of Dalits into the Hindutva fold. For a long time, it has worked among Dalit communities through a long-term approach that employs multiple methods while carefully avoiding any challenge to the fundamental structures of the caste system.

The RSS has also sought to co-opt Dalit icons by reframing them within a broader Hindutva narrative, alongside conducting deceptive social inclusion campaigns and community service programmes in Dalit localities. It has systematically exploited changing political and social conditions to expand its influence among Dalits. To some extent, these efforts have succeeded, particularly by mobilising sections of Dalits against Dalit Christians.

ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATION OF DALIT PLATFORMS

The formation of the Dalit Shoshan Mukti Manch (DSMM) in 2014 through an all-India convention was an important initiative of the Party. There were two specific objectives in forming such a platform. It came in the background of the realisation that the Party had little or no access to the Dalit masses in many parts of the country and had limited influence among them. Rise of identity politics among Dalits and conscious efforts to keep Dalits away from Communists by various Dalit organisations, required that the Party think of special efforts to reach out to Dalits. Further, the class and mass organisations were also not able to draw the various sections of Dalits to their fold. Hence the need for a broad platform which would consistently take up the entire gamut of social and economic discrimination and oppression of Dalits and mobilise them.

At the same time, the Platform would work in such a manner as to link up the Dalits who associate with it to the wider democratic movement, breaking down the barriers set by identity based Dalit organisations. The platform should work in tandem with the class and

mass organisations so that common bonds are forged and Dalits join the wider democratic movement.

Experience from its work over the last decade shows that it has made some positive interventions, but not to the extent of its expected potential.

NATIONAL

Since the formation of the DSMM, efforts have been made to put into practice the above perspective at the national level. During the last four-year period as well, the DSMM All India Centre, despite the absence of regular full-time personnel, responded to major Dalit issues as and when they arose, though such interventions remained intermittent. The third DSMM National Organisational Convention was held in Begusarai, Bihar, in December, 2022. An All India Convention on Dalit issues was organised in Delhi in November 2023, in which around 20 organisations and several individual personalities, participated. This convention resulted in the formulation of a Charter of Demands. On the call of this convention, a series of propaganda and agitational activities were organised across the country, with varying levels of participation in different states. Further, at the initiative of the DSMM and the All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU), a two-day National Dalit Summit was held in Hyderabad in August 2023, in which 350 representatives from 100 organisations from 21 states, along with several prominent personalities, took part. An appeal focusing on key Dalit issues was adopted at this conclave. However, we were unable to take the necessary follow-up steps to sustain the momentum generated by the conclave. Through the joint initiative of DSMM and AWU, a three-day study camp was organised for activists of both fronts from the Hindi-speaking states. Meetings of all India office bearers and Fractions were being held but not to the extent needed.

Much more work could have been accomplished if a properly functioning centre had existed.

STATES

Reports from the states indicate that the Dalit platform has emerged as a visible and credible force in several states, consistently taking up struggles against caste discrimination, untouchability, and atrocities.

Overall, our work on Dalit issues shows some improvement across states, though with varying levels of intensity and seriousness. In many states, leadership has responded to incidents by visiting affected sites, meeting victims, and taking up issues with the authorities. However, sustained agitations and mass protest actions have been limited, particularly in the Hindi-speaking regions.

Among all states, Tamil Nadu stands out for its comprehensive and consistent interventions. Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front (TNUEF) led the struggle against more than 2,000 incidents of caste oppression over the past decade. These interventions have resulted in the recovery of Panchami lands, the securing of over 1,000 house-sites, and the demolition of more than 25 untouchability walls. Every year, on the death anniversary of

Comrade P. Seenivasarao, TUNF undertakes direct mass actions against the practice of untouchability. TUNF also organised a 450-kilometre padayatra from Salem to Chennai against honour killings. Through the Dr. Ambedkar Education and Employment Centres, more than 1,000 individuals have secured government employment. Notably, the insurance front has been extending sustained support in running these coaching centres in Chennai and Coimbatore for the last 15 years.

The units in Telangana (KVPS), Andhra Pradesh (KVPS), Karnataka (DHS) and Maharashtra (JSS) have also been active to a certain extent in addressing Dalit issues and caste discrimination. In Kerala, our unit was able to take up important issues with the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government for redressal, with positive outcomes. The LDF government undertook several path-breaking initiatives to empower Dalits, including appointing Dalits as *pujaris* in temples.

West Bengal (PBSNM) and Tripura (TSCCC) units also in spite of facing a new situation after our electoral setbacks are trying to renew our links with Dalit masses by taking up their issues. Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Bihar units also are active albeit in a limited way. In contrast, several other states—especially in the Hindi-speaking belt—initiated work against caste oppression but failed to sustain it for various reasons. Uttar Pradesh and Punjab lag behind, despite having the largest Dalit populations.

An analysis of our platform's activities in different states reveals certain important shortcomings in our work.

First is our failure to mobilise Dalit masses to assert their constitutional democratic rights. The platform's interventions in most of the states, remain largely reactive, confined to responding to incidents of Dalit atrocities. There is a lack of sustained, independent state wide initiatives, continuous campaigns, or organised local struggles, resulting in limited mass mobilisation of Dalits to assert their rights and resist everyday forms of discrimination.

Second, there is a near absence of local struggles in rural Dalit hamlets and urban bastis/slums. Across most states, the platform's presence at this level remains minimal. Struggles rooted in hamlets and bastis are vital for mobilising large sections of Dalits and building durable mass support. Consistent action on issues such as caste discrimination, access to basic amenities, and other everyday concerns is essential not only to address immediate problems but also to weaken bourgeois and communal influences and to bridge divisions among different communities.

Third, the importance of broad mobilisation involving all class, social, and mass forces in the struggle against untouchability, caste oppression has not been adequately recognised in some states and has often been neglected. The Dalit platform organisational form was conceived precisely to enable such broad mobilisation of forces, organisations, and individuals to fight caste discrimination and oppression. Tamil Nadu—and to some extent Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh—platforms are mobilising broader forces through joint actions and were able to earn respect from Dalit and other social organisations. In Maharashtra, the Party and JASS actively participated in broad-based movements on issues such as Khairlanji, Kharda, Bhima Koregaon, the Parbhani custodial death, the Bhokardan atrocity, grazing land struggles in Beed, and police atrocities in Pune, through protests, delegations, and sustained solidarity with the victims' families. In Rohru,

Himachal Pradesh, in October 2025, a Dalit minor died by suicide after being brutally assaulted for allegedly “touching” the house of a Savarna person. Demanding the immediate arrest of the perpetrators, the Party, along with DSMM and other Dalit organisations, organised protests in Shimla, followed by conventions at the state and district levels.

However, except in a few states, the platform has frequently functioned like a conventional mass organisation rather than as a broad-based, unifying forum. Efforts to reach out to other Dalit organisations have been either insufficient or non-existent.

In this context, we must remember that our platform should consciously function as a catalyst to build broad and sustained unity in the struggle for social justice. Even if many Dalit organisations often exhibit reluctance to engage in united actions with wider class and democratic forces, we must patiently work to bring these organisations into broad-based united movements.

Fourth is complete absence of planned activities to counter the spread of HindutvaCommunalism. Several state reports have pointed out the growing influence of the RSS among Dalits through cultural, ideological, and service-based interventions, aimed at drawing sections of Dalits into the Hindutva fold. Despite this, in many states neither Party fraction committees nor Party committees have systematically studied RSS activities among Dalits or prepared concrete action plans to counter its influence. As a result, Hindutva propaganda targeting Dalits has not been effectively challenged, and specific, sustained interventions in this sphere remain limited. Only Telangana report notes that Dalit platform in the state has made some efforts to counter Hindutva communalism. Folk culture, which is vibrant among Dalit communities, offers significant potential as a tool to counter communalism and Manuvadi ideology. Yet, there has been no sustained or organised effort to utilise this cultural space. In this respect TNUeF’s ten days of cultural programmes in August last year is a notable example to emulate.

Similarly, despite the severe economic deprivation faced by Dalits, there has been little initiative to undertake social service activities in Dalit localities, urban slums, or habitations—an area where the RSS is actively intervening to expand its influence.

Strengthening ideological, cultural, and social service interventions is therefore essential to effectively counter the growing penetration of Hindutva forces among Dalits.

Fifth, is insufficient attention from Class and Mass Organisations to the struggle against issues of caste oppression. All the State reports show that nowhere, except Tamil Nadu, our class and mass organisations are part of our platform.

In Tamil Nadu, representatives of class and mass organisations are included at all levels of the platform. This association has not only strengthened the platform but has also, in turn, helped expand and consolidate the mass organisations. Over the past three years, through the activities of the (TNUeF) platform, AIKS units were formed in 8 villages; AIWU units in 13 villages; DYFI units in 15 villages; AIDWA units in 16 villages; trade union units in 16 villages; tribal association units in 9 areas; and one unit of the SFI was also established.

Class and mass organisations of workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, students, youth, and women formally recognise the struggle against caste discrimination as part of their objectives. However, in practice, at the all India and at the state level, this task has not

received sustained or focused attention, especially trade unions. Interventions on Dalit and other social issues remain irregular and unsystematic. In a few states, trade unions have extended financial assistance, and there have been some joint activities between agricultural labour unions and Dalit platforms on social issues. Student organisations in certain states have taken up issues related to welfare hostels. While these experiences are positive, they remain isolated and inadequate.

The active participation of our class and mass organisations and inclusion of their representatives in the Dalit platform is essential to give it a broader character and to curb the penetration of narrow identity-based trends in its activities.

Sixth is the lack of effective Party's Intervention on Dalit social issues. In most of the states, the Party's direct intervention on Dalit issues remains weak and uneven across many states. In most cases, Party activities are confined to issuing press statements, making representations, and undertaking occasional visits to victims' families.

As a result, the Party's independent and continuous work among Dalits has remained limited. Anti-caste work is often treated as the exclusive responsibility of the Dalit platform, leading to minimal direct intervention by the Party itself.

There are, however, notable exceptions. Party units in Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, have performed relatively better, demonstrating that wherever the Party takes a more active and leading role, the impact is positive.

State reports identify several factors responsible for the Party's insufficient attention to Dalit platform work. The West Bengal report notes the prevailing confusion within the Party. It notes that the need to accord special importance to cases of caste oppression and discrimination has not yet been fully accepted by all Party comrades. As a result, the Party remains hesitant and divided on this issue. There is a perception among some that anti-caste struggles constitute a "caste movement." Other factors include the persistence of conservative social conditions, growing influence of communal forces and upper-class and upper-caste composition of sections of the party leadership.

Entrenched parliamentarianism plays a major role, as fear of alienating dominant caste sections or upsetting electoral calculations leads to hesitation. Another misconception is that taking up social issues necessarily strengthens identity politics, whereas in reality, failure to address social oppression leaves space for ruling-class-sponsored caste forces to fill the vacuum.

In sum, Party intervention in anti-caste struggles has been inadequate and requires significant strengthening, particularly at the district level.

IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Almost all state reports point to the existence of certain ideological weaknesses and confusions regarding social justice, caste, class, and their interrelationship. These weaknesses, in turn, constrain the functioning and activities of our platform.

Caste-Class Confusion

A weak Marxist understanding of class, caste, and their interrelationship persists among some of the cadre. They are influenced, to varying degrees, by identity-based ideologies, including sub-caste influences. It is incorrect to assume that the Party or activists working on the Dalit platform are immune to identity-based politics. Identity-related issues are deeply embedded in society, and their influence inevitably affects sections of the Party and the platform. This is reflected in the expression of several erroneous ideas in the discussions of party fractions regarding the platform's character, composition, and political orientation. The strongest influence of identity politics has been visible in Telangana. Earlier, the Party Polit Bureau addressed two letters to the state party, pinpointing the erroneous views prevalent in sections of the party.

The growth of identity-based trends represents a form of bourgeois influence. All Party state committees are therefore required to undertake sustained political education and training from a Marxist class perspective in order to deepen the Party's understanding of the relationship between caste and class, and to effectively counter the influence of identity politics.

Some misconceptions

There is a widespread, though often unarticulated, belief within the Party that Dalit platforms should be run exclusively by Dalits. This has translated into the perception that such platforms must function solely under Dalit leadership. For example, the West Bengal state party fraction holds the view that the platform's work should be carried out by cadres of Dalit background, while Dalit Party members active on other fronts are expected to participate and play a key role in implementing its activities. One argument advanced against broader participation is that non-Dalits lack the lived experience of untouchability and caste atrocities. While this argument has some merit, it discourages wider participation, weakens the Party's collective responsibility in addressing caste oppression, and limits the platform's role.

The influence of this misconception within the Party is evident in the way responsibilities for organising the Dalit platform have been assigned. Often, these responsibilities are left exclusively to comrades from Dalit backgrounds. As a result, the forum currently consists of Dalit comrades.

A similar misconception is reflected in the approach of some state committees, which convene separate meetings exclusively for Dalit Party members at the state or district level, under the pretext of reviewing or discussing Party work among Dalits.

This thinking also manifests in the practices of the Party and its class and mass organisations, which often avoid directly addressing issues of caste discrimination or oppression. There is an implicit assumption that such issues will be handled by the Dalit platform, and that their own active involvement is not essential.

However, there is now growing clarity within the Party that the Dalit platform should not function as a Dalits-only forum. In a few states, the platform already includes activists from both Dalit and non-Dalit backgrounds, reflecting a more inclusive approach. This not only strengthens the struggle against caste oppression but also reinforces unity based on class.

There is a tendency among a few cadres to argue that the slogan of social justice should become the main agenda for advancing Left and democratic forces in our country, citing the uniqueness of the caste system in India. This approach is incorrect because, instead of integrating the twin struggles against caste oppression and class exploitation, it places exclusive emphasis on the former.

Some comrades also confuse united action by social organisations with a political front. Slogans such as *lal-neel* unity are sometimes misinterpreted as a political line or as the basis for a long-term front.

Similarly, calls for fronts based on the unity of social forces such as SCs, STs, BCs, and minorities reflect an identity-based approach that replaces the unity of the Party's basic classes, and the broader democratic masses.

It is also important to adopt a correct and balanced class approach toward the legacy of great personalities such as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Jyotirao Phule, and Periyar. They were among the foremost fighters against caste oppression and social inequality, and their contributions—as well as the continuing relevance of their ideas—must be unequivocally acknowledged. At a time when the RSS and Hindutva communal forces are attempting to appropriate these figures into their ideological fold by distorting their ideas, such efforts must be firmly resisted. Their progressive and radical legacy should instead be asserted, defended, and carried forward by the Left.

At the same time, it is necessary to maintain theoretical clarity. Marxism and Ambedkarism represent distinct ideological and political currents, and any attempt to eclectically combine them risks diluting the class outlook and conceding ground to identity politics.

Misplaced Apprehensions about Disruption of Class Unity

Another but entirely different type of erroneous view in some comrades is that raising sectional demands of oppressed groups disrupts class unity. In practice, avoiding struggles against caste and gender oppression in the name of unity only alienates the victims of injustice and pushes them towards narrow identity politics. Genuine unity is strengthened not by silence, but by resolutely addressing injustice and persuading other sections of the working people to support these struggles. The Party's programme is clear: the struggle against caste and social oppression is integral to revolutionary activity, inseparably linked to the fight against class exploitation, and essential for building durable class unity. In a society deeply fractured by caste and other social hierarchies, the working class is socially heterogeneous and vulnerable to prejudice. To overcome this, the Party and class and mass organisations must intervene proactively through organised movements addressing the specific problems of oppressed sections, ideological, cultural struggle against social prejudices, and social reform initiatives among workers, while participating in all genuine democratic anti-caste platforms.

Only such a balanced and principled approach can integrate struggles against social oppression into the broader project of class struggle and counter the divisive strategies of the ruling classes.

Approach to the Dalit Platform: Some Organisational Questions

Many comrades working in this platform, in the course of their discussions, have been raising several organisational questions: the need for mass membership; whether the platform should be confined only to Dalits or allow non-Dalits to participate; whether separate wings are required for different sections among Dalits; the manner of constituting executive or coordination committees at various levels; the desirability of having multiple office-bearers with specific designations; and the nature of the hierarchical structure of the platform. Some comrades even express the view that DSMM should be transformed into a structure similar to our class and mass organisations, functioning in a centralised manner.

Question of Mass Membership

When the Party decided to take up Dalit issues in the then prevailing concrete situation in 2014, it consciously chose the form of a platform (DSMM) rather than a traditional mass organisation. This decision was taken in the context of the proliferation of Dalit organisations, and the fragmentation of Dalits along sub-caste lines. Under these conditions, the Party felt it was more appropriate to build a broad platform that could unite these fragmented forces around a common objective of social justice to lead towards a left and democratic alternative.

Party sought to mobilise all those—Dalits and non-Dalits alike—who are committed to the struggle against caste oppression into a common struggle. It was also envisaged that all our mass organisations would participate in this platform and function as its core, strengthening the class perspective and enabling the platform to represent all sections of people genuinely interested in the cause of Dalits. The DSMM must function as a platform at the all-India level and at other levels, except in states where a mass, membership-based organisation already exists. Even in Tripura, where mass membership is enrolled, occupation-based organisations—of fishermen, washermen, cobblers, and sanitation workers—were formed from 1978 onwards and were later brought under the Tripura Scheduled Caste Coordination Committee in 1982, with a clear class outlook.

Therefore, under present conditions, strict adherence to the platform form of organisation is essential. Any deviation from this approach carries the serious risk of the platform degenerating into yet another caste-based organisation, fostering narrow caste consciousness instead of contributing to broader social and political transformation.

DEMAND FOR SECTIONAL DALIT ORGANISATIONS

Another contentious issue concerns proposals to form separate organisations for different sections of the Dalit population, such as Dalit workers' unions, Dalit students' federations, Dalit women's organisations, Dalit employees' federations, and similar bodies.

Telangana state Report mentions several such organisations affiliated with the Dalit platform. These included women's, students', and employees' Dalit wings, as well as occupational and cultural bodies such as the Tanners Association, the Inter-Caste Married Persons Welfare Association and Grave yard workers union. Similar demands for forming sectional organisations are now emerging in some other states as well.

We must not allow the formation of separate, sectional Dalit organisations. Instead, we should encourage leaders of the Dalit platform to take up sectional issues in coordination with the relevant class and mass organisations, rather than creating parallel structures.

In this context, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between professional or occupational associations and organisations based purely on social identity. Class and mass organisations must remain the primary forums for addressing professional and occupational issues of different sections of Dalits. At the same time, systematic cooperation and co-ordination between the Dalit platform and these organisations should be developed to ensure that the specific problems faced by different sections within Dalits are effectively addressed. It must be recognised, however, that unless class and mass organisations actively and consistently take up the concrete issues of Dalits in their respective spheres, the pressure to form separate sectional organisations will continue and cannot be effectively countered.

ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONAL FORM OF THE PLATFORM

Even without a formal membership system, the Platform requires an organisational structure at different levels to ensure day-to-day functioning as the work of the Platform expands. This raises several practical questions, including the conduct of conferences without formal membership, the selection of representatives without elections and the relationship between units functioning at different levels.

The proposed model is an activist-based organisational structure without mass membership. These activist groups should be formed irrespective of social background and may include activists co-opted from other mass organisations. At each level, smaller committees or groups may be constituted based on consensus to carry out activities, through periodic conventions. Such structures may extend up to taluk level depending on the extent and depth of the spread of our activities.

Despite this clarity, experience shows that in several states both Platform and Party leaderships have found it difficult to consistently adhere to the platform model. There has been a tendency to replicate the hierarchical and highly centralised organisational forms of mass organisations, even in the absence of formal membership. This should be avoided.

The Party and the platforms must work out concrete action plans at the central and state levels, taking into account the following suggested demands, with necessary modifications based on local conditions.

CHARTER OF DEMANDS

1. Ensure strict and effective implementation of the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, including time-bound investigations, speedy trials, and accountability of officials.
2. Enact the Rohith Vemula Act to prevent caste discrimination in educational institutions and ensure institutional accountability.

3. Scrap the National Education Policy (NEP) and replace it with a publicly funded, inclusive, and rational education policy.
4. Enact comprehensive legislation guaranteeing the Right to Health, with universal access to free and quality public healthcare.
5. Protect and strengthen land, wage, and tenancy rights of Dalits and other weaker sections.
6. Make the acquisition of Dalit lands illegal. Where acquisition is absolutely unavoidable, provide land-for-land compensation.
7. Recognise housing as a fundamental right and ensure affordable, dignified housing for all.
8. Enact and strictly implement central legislation for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Sub-Plans, with mandatory allocations, spending, and monitoring.
9. Take steps to fill up Backlog posts and extend reservations to the uncovered departments.
10. Enact central legislation to ensure reservation in private sector employment.
11. Scrap VB-GRAMG, restore and strengthen MGNREGA, expand guaranteed workdays and wages, extend employment guarantee to the urban poor.
12. Launch a special Central Plan to build quality physical and social infrastructure in rural Dalit habitations and urban slums.
13. Halt the Assault on the Constitution's Core Values: Secularism, Democracy, Federalism, Social Justice, and Socialism.

CONCLUSION

Neo-liberal reforms have eroded the gains of reservations and affirmative action, weakening earlier illusions among sections of Dalits and other oppressed groups about achieving full social justice within the existing system. At the same time, sustained attacks by the BJP-RSS on the Constitution have deepened fears about the dilution of constitutional guarantees related to social justice.

Alongside these threats, neo-liberal policies, cuts in welfare and social security, and the growing aggressiveness of dominant castes under the Hindutva-Manuvadi project have devastated Dalit livelihoods and heightened insecurity. Taken together, this situation creates an opportunity to build united struggles to defend social justice and resist neo-liberalism and Manuvadi communalism. Party, class, mass organisations and the Platform must seize this moment to educate, organise, and mobilise Dalits as an integral part of the broader Left and democratic movement.