

Casteism and the Tsundur Atrocity

The postcolonial history of India involves many of these brutal cases of organized caste-based violence in the rural landscape. The attacks in Andhra Pradesh, in Karamchedu in Prakasam district (1985) and in Tsundur village in the neighbouring Guntur district (1991), represent two brutal instances, although several other atrocities took place before, between and after Karamchedu and Tsundur.¹ At a national level, the early and well-known incidents that occurred during this grim postcolonial trend happened in Kilvenmani village in the Thanjavur district in southern Tamil Nadu, where forty-four Dalits were burnt to death in December 1968. But the cases in Thanjavur and coastal Andhra suggest that modern agricultural technology provided the material basis for the social changes in these villages that led to extreme brutality. As Paul Brass indicates, it is useful to be cautious when explaining violence in the agrarian context simply by referring to a ‘Green revolution’ rather than to more historical explanations.² In fact, it is also important to underline caste as a factor in this context. Some of the cases that happened at the same time as the brutal assault in Kilvenmani are not simply cases of violence in a feudal agrarian structure. Caste relations are embedded in the agrarian mode of production, and the term ‘feudalism’ appears inadequate to explain casteism and violence. It is useful to revisit the ontological difference that Ambedkar emphasized exists between touchables and untouchables, between ‘some bodies’ and ‘nobodies’,³ to understand how the desire to ‘teach Dalits a lesson’ could play out.

Cases of amorous encounters and upward mobility represent possibilities that transgress basic ideas about differences in an ontology of caste. The incident that took place in Kanchikacherla village on 24 February 1968 in Krishna district could be viewed in this context. On that day, Kotesu, a ‘Harijan boy’, was burnt alive.⁴ Kotesu had been charged with stealing two pots and a tumbler, and a group of seven people had tied him to a post in the village, beaten him and later burnt him. While the accusation of theft resonates with a stereotype about Dalits being

less trustworthy people, Kotesu's parents had another explanation; they thought that Kotesu was having a love affair with the landlord's daughter. This brutal punishment in Kanchikacherla had an impact on this first generation of Dalit activists after independence; the Dalit leader Eshwari Bai raised the issue in the state assembly.⁵ The case was also reported in national newspapers, and a Congress politician provoked reactions when he referred to the incident in Kanchikacherla as an example of how the peasantry could exercise justice and prevent thefts.⁶ The accounts of Kotesu's crime therefore differ from being theft to a friendly, if not an amorous, relationship with the landlord's daughter. In any case, the incident in Kanchikacherla had an impact on Dalit activists at that time. The cases that have been central for the contemporary generation of Dalit activists, however, have been those at Karamchedu and Tsundur and, more recently, the suicide of Rohith Vemula. These instances have affected the understanding of how caste-based violence may occur in India today, and the brutal attack in Tsundur, and its scale and details, is one of the key narratives shaping the movements' sense of injustice.

The atrocity in Tsundur village happened on 6 August 1991; eight Dalits were killed in a carefully planned attack. There were tensions in the village at the time of the incident that had arisen after a period of disputes among the youths in the village. If the burning of Kotesu in Kanchikacherla was carried out to prevent the possibility of a love affair between a Dalit boy and a caste Hindu girl, the massacre in Tsundur involves a greater deal. The attacks on the Dalits of Tsundur were carried out to 'teach them a lesson', primarily to try to make them submissive and to comply with their position as the untouchables and to aim to ensure that they do not resist the authority of the caste Hindus. For caste Hindus in the village, the attack was also a matter of maintaining their reputation in relation to neighbouring villages. The massacre is an extreme instance of this logic, as it shows how collective the violence was organized in order to maintain their status and re-embed social relations in the village in line with the norms of dominating caste.

This brutal attack occurred in a context of social and political transformation in the village. There was upward mobility and assertiveness among the Tsundur Dalits, and this provoked a backlash. I had encountered several versions of the mechanism of oppression characterizing the Dalit situation earlier (via interlocutors who were either Dalit activists or people who were close observers), and the same explanation was presented here. This time, however, I learnt about the scale and details of this organized violence that I had never encountered before. Caste Hindus used other explanations for the event that occurred, such as that Dalit boys flirted with upper-caste girls. Although I was also told by one of the Dalit men who had been attacked that this was not true, each of these explanations suggests that caste is central to making sense of why this violence occurred.

In this chapter, I start in the first section by explaining the process of social change in the village and how there were tensions between the two groups that involved strikes, violence and negotiations. The tensions arose in a context in which the facts did not correspond to the ontology of caste and in which there were often ongoing incentives among Dalits to deinstitutionalize caste that corresponded to the attempts to reinstitutionalize caste of some members of the landowning and dominant caste. In the second section, I explain what happened in the main incident in the attack on 6 August 1991. While my main source is the comprehensive Tsundur judgment of 2007 along with the statements of the then special public prosecutor, the facts are, naturally, contested because the perpetrators may be punished. In the third section, I explain what happened after the attack and how the police appeared to be complicit in the attack because of their actions and their poor recording of the initial evidence. Finally, I explain the wider reactions to the massacre in Tsundur. This case provides a background for understanding why many activists in this state participated in the World Conference against Racism in South Africa in 2001, ten years after the attack in this village. As an example of a case of violent casteism, the event of Tsundur illustrates what authors such as Teltumbde⁷ have argued, which is that atrocities are conducted as collectively organized attacks by the dominating castes to kill Dalits.

Social Change, Assertion and Conflict in Tsundur

On 7 July 1991, a group of Dalit boys went to see a film at the cinema in Tsundur.⁸ The cinema had been built one year earlier. Before that time, the inhabitants of Tsundur had to visit the neighbouring village, Modukuru, to watch films. Among the group of Dalit boys was a postgraduate student, Govathoti Ravi, who had come to spend his holiday in his home village. During the film, his friend's foot touched the leg of the chair in front of him, where an upper-caste boy sat. The upper-caste boy rose and criticized the Dalit boy for touching his seat. From his seat, next to his friend, Ravi reacted to these remarks, which he felt were unreasonable and offensive. He told the Reddy boy, 'Don't use those kinds of words', and excused his friend, saying that his action was neither intended nor did the touch create any harm. Ravi explained that it had all happened by mistake.⁹ But the Reddy boy tried to gather support against the two Dalit boys. The episode created tensions, but nothing serious happened that evening. Ravi went to see the *mandal* president, a Dalit and a relative, and accepted his advice not to worry about this incident and to take no further action. He left for Ongole (a town in the neighbouring district, Prakasam) to meet his friend from college.

When Ravi returned from Ongole on the six o'clock train the next evening, however, he was met by a group of sixty to seventy upper-caste men, who started

to chase him. They had been waiting for him to return. Seeing the crowd starting to chase him with iron rods, sticks and knives, Ravi ran away. He ran nearly 2 kilometres into the fields before he was found and beaten. The whole upper-caste group gathered around him, and it felt, Ravi explained, as if the whole group of sixty to seventy upper-caste men kicked him at once.¹⁰ This was, he recollected, when he fell unconscious. He was beaten for half an hour; then there was some respite before they returned to continue the beating. The group of men forced Ravi to drink liquor mixed with urine, handed him over to the police and told them that he had caused problems after drinking alcohol.

His friend, whose foot had touched the Reddy boy's chair in the cinema, was not beaten. Instead, the reaction was directed against Ravi, who, during the beating, was told, 'You, the man who opposed us' – 'How dare you?' He had corrected the behaviour of a member of the caste Hindus and had now been 'taught a lesson' about how he should be subordinate. But the upper-caste anger about Dalit assertion was not limited to him. In fact, the crowd that had come to ask Ravi's father about his son's whereabouts earlier that day had tied up and beaten him to such an extent that he was unable to walk. The father was not aware of the incident at the cinema the previous night. He was a teacher in the village, but his poor health after the beating forced him to resign from his job and move his family to Tenali, the neighbouring town, so that he could access regular medical treatment.

After the incident in the cinema in July 1991, the upper-caste villagers imposed a social boycott on the Dalits of Tsundur. Social boycotts are often used in India to discourage Dalits from acting independently and from demanding higher wages, better work conditions or access to village festivals. Although there had been tensions in Tsundur village for nearly a year, no one could have anticipated the scale of violence that was about to take place, even after Ravi and his father were badly beaten. The village atmosphere was tense – so much that both upper-caste villagers and Dalits arranged internal meetings about these increasing tensions that had arisen after a long period of social changes.

Broadly speaking, the ongoing social and political changes in Tsundur had been evident from the fact that Dalits aspired to access higher education and modern jobs. Dalits had also acquired the habit of having tea and snacks in 'hotels'¹¹ in the village's main street, where upper-caste villagers used to sit without the company of Dalits. The Tsundur Dalits had started to wear better clothes than the upper-caste citizens. In the agricultural fields, the upper-caste parents commented on how neat and tidy the Dalit children looked.¹²

The tensions were mostly felt among the village youths and had been apparent in Tsundur at least since a quarrel between some of the young people had occurred during a drama one year earlier. This minor incident happened when a Dalit boy sat on a brick while watching the theatrical performance in the open space near the

temple. But upper-caste citizens would not tolerate the fact that he sat on the brick. They got angry and started a quarrel, which resulted in injuries on both sides. The episode may be considered as a starting point for the violent process that followed because a series of events took place later that related to the drama.¹³

It was at this time that the Ambedkar Youth Association was organized and became the basis for activism among Dalit youths in Tsundur. Dalit youths had, in fact, become more politically assertive generally. The Ambedkar Youth Association was funded by six to eight members in 1990, and Ravi was among the founders. He had been inspired to start the Ambedkar Youth Association during his undergraduate studies in Krishna district. And when he returned home, he joined his friends and acted as the secretary of the association.¹⁴ The association was active between 1989 and 1991. It was an important symbolic event when the Ambedkar Youth Association organized the erection of a statue of Dr Ambedkar in April 1990 during the celebrations to mark the centenary since Ambedkar's birth, an event celebrated all over India. Statues of Ambedkar can be found all over India today, be that a road junction in a village in Tamil Nadu or at the centre of a city such as Mumbai or Lucknow. This process of identifying with Ambedkar's life and erecting statues of him has, as mentioned previously, been labelled Ambedkarization, and this has largely characterized Dalit mobilization.¹⁵ In Tsundur, the Ambedkar Youth Association erected the statue in the middle of the village along the main road. The statue faced the church located on the opposite side of the road. The upper-caste citizens kept quiet during the period that the statue was being erected.¹⁶

Ambedkar, the symbol of Dalit assertion and modern identity, became very visible in the Tsundur village centre. I happened to see the statue before it was pointed out to me when I first visited the village in February 2008. Standing by the village's main road, I saw the towering statue nearly 100 metres away. I recognized the posture and could clearly see that what looked like a statue of Ambedkar had been placed at the centre of the village. My observation was confirmed – it was Ambedkar, but I only came to learn about the history of that statue later. In essence, the statues of Ambedkar have become the most visible signs of Dalit assertion in India,¹⁷ and the Ambedkar Youth Association in Tsundur had boldly brought its ideas to the fore. The group's assertion of Dalit identity by erecting the statue of Ambedkar thus fitted with the wider trend of Dalit mobilization in India, labelled Ambedkarization.¹⁸

There seems to have been a greater degree of Ambedkarization in Tsundur than in neighbouring villages, such as Modukuru, insofar as Ambedkarization means making Dalit identity visible and being assertive by erecting statues of Ambedkar. Both villages are in Tsundur Mandal, the larger administrative unit that has its centre in Tsundur village. In Modukuru village, however, the statue of Ambedkar is located inside the Dalitwada and not in the village centre, like in

Tsundur. The comparison between Tsundur and Modukuru provides an important insight into the context and potential dynamics of both villages. On the one hand, the caste composition is almost the same. In both villages, the Reddys and Telagas are dominant castes, although Reddys are by far the most numerous. The Reddy community represents what the sociologist Srinivas would have referred to as the dominant caste: they are numerically predominant and enjoy economic and political leverage but are not too low in the ritual hierarchy.¹⁹ In Tsundur, the upper-caste villagers constitute a coherent and dominant section of the society in terms of numbers and their landholdings and economic power. There are close connections in terms of caste and kinship between the villages. For example, the Brahmin priest in Tsundur's Siva temple was residing with his family in Modukuru when I met him briefly in 2008. The upper-caste dominance appears so similar in these villages that one of my Dalit informants in Tsundur asserted that the upper-caste people in both villages are equally dominant in terms of land and economic power. The upper castes are dominant in all fields, including politics, their relationships with the police and their numerical size.

But Modukuru and Tsundur differ in two important ways. First, there are more Dalits in Tsundur than in Modukuru. And second, the Modukuru Reddys appear to be richer and have greater economic assets than those in Tsundur.²⁰ The overall impression is that the Modukuru Reddys appear to use their leverage to pressurize their counterparts in Tsundur to curb the Dalits in that village.

The upper castes in this region have a common reputation for being particularly traditional. This characteristic can mean several things, ranging from observing rituals and having hierarchical beliefs to wearing traditional clothes rather than shirts and trousers. Even today, more upper-caste people than Dalits wear traditional clothes in Tsundur, which is a basic hint that the former are more traditional. Although there have been social and economic changes in Tsundur Mandal since the early 1990s, I was informed that many caste Hindus appeared in court wearing traditional clothing.²¹ In his study of the Tsundur massacre, K. Muruli asserts that the Reddy-dominated villages in Guntur were 'extremely traditional and conservative ... compared to the surrounding areas that are dominated by the Kammas'.²² Muruli adds that there were elements of caste-based exclusion, such as Dalits were not invited into upper-caste villagers' homes.

Untouchability was not apparent in Tsundur, at least during the 1980s, when a young and educated generation acquired a taste for egalitarianism. On the one hand, people like Ravi claimed that there was no untouchability; rather, it was the class that was a problem in the village. He explained there were some instances in Valiveru, a neighbouring village, where Dalits were not allowed to enter hotels. But in the Tsundur cinema, for instance, seats were taken according to the order in which people appeared and purchased their tickets, which could result in Dalits

sitting side by side with upper-caste people. Untouchability was not evident, and the so-called two-tumbler system was a thing of the past.

Hierarchy and status-grading appeared more evident whenever Dalits and upper-castes were assembled for meetings. During discussions, Dalits were expected to sit on the floor, while the upper-caste people sat at a higher level than them. But it is at this point that the generational difference seems to play a role. Dalits used to be represented by elderly people, who were more submissive to the established rules than the younger generation. But this does not mean that untouchability practices, such as the two-tumbler system and prohibitions on Dalits wearing sandals when walking in upper-caste localities, were practised.

In brief, the situation in Tsundur did not appear very clear-cut as far as untouchability was concerned. Yet an elderly widow in the Dalitwada, Mrs Jakraiah, offered me some examples of subtle forms of discrimination that seem to have been the pattern in the village.²³ Mrs Jakraiah said that Dalits were respected while working in the agricultural fields. When I asked about the situation for women, she denied that Dalit women were abused by upper-caste men. She said that the problem used to be that Dalits were abused 'by name' in public places, which indicates how caste-related names for Dalits are derogatory and that their use is a source of humiliation and stigma. But she insisted that there were, in fact, friendly relationships in the fields and seemed to describe a situation of almost mutual dependency: the upper-caste villagers needed a labour force, whereas Dalits needed an income to live on. She explained that religion separated the castes in that the upper castes have temples and Dalits go to church.

No doubt the castes were separated in terms of religion and where they lived. The upper-caste people lived in one part of the village, Dalits in the other. But, nonetheless, there were social and political changes. The growing assertion by Dalit youths of their rights was crucial. But there were several reasons behind the social and economic changes. During my field trip in March of 2008, U. Bullikotaiah, a Tsundur Dalit, enumerated three factors when he explained the social change in Tsundur. As some of his earlier relatives, he had been politically active. Bullikotaiah had contested as an independent candidate in the 1981 elections. At that time, he gained such a powerful position that the upper-caste people wanted to make a compromise so that he should not undermine their campaign.

There were social changes in the village during the 1980s. Reflecting on these changes, Bullikotaiah argued that education, the construction of the railway station and political assertion were the three main factors which altered the situation for Dalits and changed their relationships with members of the dominant castes. The political mobilization made the social changes more visible. The most important effect of the social changes was that Dalits started questioning the situation, and education seems to have been decisive in their increasing assertiveness.

The creation of a railway station in the 1980s made it possible for the Tsundur Dalits to travel outside the village for their daily work. But, more importantly, the railway required manpower and provided employment for 200 illiterate Dalits. Of these 200 Dalits, 180 were given permanent jobs. George Fernandes was the railway minister while the Janata Party was in power at the central level. According to Bullikotaiah, George Fernandes decided that those who had been employed for six months by the railway authority would be granted permanent employment. There was already a double railway track passing by Tsundur village, connecting Tsundur with Chennai and Kolkata. But the railway needed labourers to clean the tracks and to deal with goods. In other words, the need for manual labour created job opportunities for Dalits.

The railway station was instrumental in creating new social habits, such as Dalits using the village hotels for refreshments. This new practice even resulted in Dalits sitting next to upper-caste villagers in the local teahouses (cafés or ‘hotels’). Bullikotaiah explained further that the new practices created a sense of equality among Dalits because they started feeling more equal with their upper-caste counterparts. Thus, employment on the railways and a reliable income created a greater sense of freedom, at least among the section of the Tsundur Dalits who were employed on the railways. The upper-caste villagers, however, used to leave the hotels when Dalits arrived to drink tea.

The social and economic changes were perhaps most visible among the many Dalit students. It had become possible to prioritize education as the basic way for social and economic advancement precisely because of the remarkable sense of social security that emerged with employment in the government sector. In addition to being employed in the railway, Tsundur Dalits were also employed in banks and telephone departments.²⁴ Moreover, upper-caste children were not interested in education at that time, since their families owned land and they could be confident about having a secure income in the future. But Dalit families were much keener to educate their children so that they become independent. So, while upper-caste children had no incentive to ensure their future through formal education, Dalit children aspired to earn a decent living through their studies. Today, everyone wants an education.²⁵ Formal education has become imperative across Indian society. In 1991, however, the upper-caste people in Tsundur were not educationally forward and there was, according to Srinivasulu, a ‘much higher’ degree of literacy among Dalits than among Reddys.²⁶

In 1991, there were an estimated 200 matriculated Dalit children studying outside the village,²⁷ in places such as the town of Tenali and the city of Guntur. Some studied till tenth standard, that is, until they were about sixteen years old, others were undergraduates and there were even fifteen postgraduate students. These figures contrast with the estimated fifty Reddy and Naidu students studying

outside the village at this time.²⁸ The students commuted and therefore used the same means of transportation, such as buses and auto-rickshaws, including 'share autos'. But education was also a more tangible factor in the village's everyday life. Most children went to school. There was a primary school in the village and another in the Dalit hamlet. But the comprehensive school was in Modukuru, and the children Dalit therefore interacted daily with children from caste Hindu families when walking to school. During the 1980s, there were an estimated 200 Dalit children walking to Modukuru every day. Ravi remembered how Dalit children 'spoke freely with upper-caste students' at that time.²⁹ Other Dalits in Tsundur did not recall major incidents between the girls and boys, except some friendly teasing. The upper-caste villagers, on the other hand, did not appreciate seeing their daughters walking in crowds in which lower-caste students were so prominent in terms of numbers, style of clothing and educational merit. Although it seems as if there were more upper-caste boys than girls studying, the difference in numbers between the sexes was not particularly wide. It was in any case with reference to the girls that upper-caste villagers voiced their serious apprehension. They accused the Dalit boys of teasing and even abusing the girls. Although Dalit boys found that the allegations were 'fabricated',³⁰ they were indeed serious charges. And the situation for the girls and the alleged abuse later became the basic explanations for upper-caste villagers' understanding of the problems that arose in the village.³¹

The upper-caste allegations gained momentum because the charge against the Dalit boys of abusing the upper-caste girls relates to the wider theme of the moral status of girls and women. It also serves to project immorality onto Dalits. In a theoretical perspective, an inter-caste marriage is a violation of the ontological difference that shapes the caste system, its grading and identities. Caste is reproduced by organizing marriages within the same caste, and girls widely represent the family's virtue and moral reputation. It is argued elsewhere that it creates a sense of insecurity among caste Hindu men if Dalit boys start – or are capable of starting – a relationship with a girl from the dominant caste community.³² Other sociologists argue, moreover, that gender and caste interrelate in such a way that the grading of caste is expressed through men's ability to exercise manhood, either by controlling the women in their family or by humiliating members of lower castes by humiliating the women in their family. The widespread understanding is that a woman's character represents the family's moral status. At any rate, Tsundur Dalits argued that the main reason for the increased tensions between upper-caste people and Dalits in the village was envy. The upper-caste villagers were envious of the increasing education, sophistication, cultural capital and modern outlook of Dalits.

The social changes in Tsundur, in any case, involved new types of situations and possibilities that did not correspond to the ontology of caste in which members

of the dominant castes could expect that touchables and untouchables would be separated and that the latter would be insignificant and submissive. Instead, the visible sign of the upwardly mobile Dalit youth seemed to have created a sense of ontological insecurity among members of the dominant castes as well as a desire to reinstitutionalize caste relations. Ontological insecurity refers to a psychological sense of anxiety.³³ But the idea of ‘teaching Dalits a lesson’ reflects an ontological drive to reinstitutionalize a dominant caste order.

Given the social changes and the series of ‘provocative’ events, members of the landowning and caste Hindu community wanted to strike back in a more organized manner. The incident in the cinema seems to have represented a starting point for the upper-caste villagers’ interest in striking back. The dominant castes appeared to have united through a common idea of acting against Dalits in the village.³⁴

The tense atmosphere was also reflected by the fact that several individual incidents had been registered with the police. They included cases against some Malas from Tsundur village concerning attacks on some upper-caste Telagas that were alleged to have taken place on 13 and 14 October 1990. On 7 August 1991, some Dalits were also registered for a criminal offence after a reported attack on Chidipudi Punna Reddy. And just a few days after the cinema incident, the police had registered criminal cases against several upper-caste Reddys as well as a group of Malas.³⁵ Indeed, according to the Tsundur judgment, the animosities had, by the end of July 1991, reached a dramatic climax, with clashes between the two communities in Tsundur village. It is stated that

the Harijans were thrown out of employment and they were subjected to social boycott by not being called for coolie work and taking back the leased lands given to them and forcing them to go out of the village. The Harijans were also frequently insulted by the upper-caste leaders by instigating their caste people, to throw them out of the village.³⁶

In this hostile atmosphere between the communities, the police had mobilized a large number of officials to prevent further violence. The social boycott of Dalits further affirmed the split; it implied, for instance, that Dalits were unable to use shops owned by upper-caste people to buy groceries and medicines. Also, travelling outside the village for work meant that Dalits returned home late, often after sunset. Some people believed that the electricity was cut off as Dalits returned home, making cooking difficult and leaving them in complete darkness for the rest of the night. When such tactics occur, they may reflect a wider phenomenon of collusion between upper-caste people and public officials. Upper-caste people generally exercise control over public services. Yet Muruli reports that there was one police constable, who happened to be from a ‘backward caste’, who interfered to avoid the power to the Dalitwada from being cut.³⁷

The increasing animosities in the village made both upper-castes and Dalits arrange internal consultations about how to deal with the situation. On 9 July, for instance, the upper-caste people decided to impose social boycott on the Dalits in the home of the village *sarpanch* (village head), Modugala Sambi Reddy.³⁸ The boycott was also coordinated with neighbouring villages to prevent Dalits from obtaining work as labourers nearby. The boycott merely reflected a divided village in which each part defined the other as a foe. The almost war-like situation included several criminal cases on either side and was therefore well known by the Tenali police. The upper-caste determination was in any case to strike back against the 'provocation of Harijans'.³⁹ They wanted to 'teach the Dalits a lesson'.⁴⁰

A meeting was organized on 4 August 1991. On this day, some 200 Reddys and Telagas met at the house of the *sarpanch* in Tsundur village to discuss how to teach the Tsundur Dalits a lesson. The participants included Reddys and Telagas from nearby villages such as Modukuru, Munnangivaripalem and Valiveru. They concluded that they were 'not to tolerate any other incidents or insult or molestations to their women folk and decided to drive them out of the village for ever'.⁴¹ They reconvened two days later and exercised their anger to an extreme end.

The Attack on 6 August 1991

Large numbers of upper-caste people reunited on 6 August 1991.⁴² Some 100 upper-caste people met a police officer, and one complaint reported to the police that day was about an alleged assault by a Dalit on two upper-caste persons.⁴³ But the upper-caste group had a common intention: a plan 'to kill the Harijans'.⁴⁴ Thus, a group of more than 200 upper-caste people, Reddy and Telaga, started marching from the upper-caste settlement in the village towards the Dalit colony. The group passed the police station, armed with iron rods, axes, spears, sticks and iron pipes.⁴⁵ When the upper-caste people approached the centre of the village and had the upper-caste settlement behind them, they split into two groups. One group headed towards Church Road, the main road in the village dividing the upper-caste settlement from the Dalit settlement ('Dalitwada' or 'Malapalle'⁴⁶). The other group went straight ahead along the railway track into the fields and onto the other side of the Dalitwada. The move was well planned. The group had arranged tractors and other vehicles for transportation. For instance, G. Sambi Reddy, from Munnangivaripalem, a neighbouring village, had come with his tractor and trailer, which accommodated as many as fifty or even sixty people, and they were prepared to attack. Reddys and Telagas from Modukuru mobilized and were waiting in the fields.

Earlier that day, the police had raided the Dalitwada several times, and there were rumours that they were planning to arrest individual Dalits. The actions of

the police had made most Dalit men flee into the agricultural fields and hide in the fields rather than staying at home. And Tsundur Dalits had good reasons to flee. Many police cases had recently been registered against Dalits resulting from the tensions in the village, and more cases were anticipated because of the police action. The police mobilized in large numbers to arrest Dalits and 'entered into their palle' at about 11 a.m.⁴⁷ In addition, the police 'started beating male persons of the palle'.⁴⁸ The Dalit men had left their homes unarmed and were unable to defend themselves against the deadly attack about to come.

The police action thus enabled the attackers to target individual Dalits who were hiding unarmed in the fields. While the armed upper-caste people chased Dalits who had taken refuge in the fields nearly an hour earlier, the police watched the whole situation at a distance and did not interfere or defend the Dalits. Some Dalits left along the Tsundur–Modukuru Road. When the upper-caste people came, however, Dalits fled into the fields. Three of them hid in a jasmine garden. Among them was Jaladi Mattaiah who was forty years old and had not participated in any public demonstrations and had not committed any offence against the upper-caste villagers. Mattaiah had usually spent much of his time with upper-caste people and knew them very well. He was, or so his son remembers, a gentle person. He had no criminal record. Mattaiah was still hiding in the jasmine garden when the group of angry upper-caste people approached one hour later. The group, which arrived from Church Road on tractors and turned towards Modukuru, was led by Modugula Sambu Reddy. The group got out of the tractors and started running into the fields, shouting loudly that they were 'going to finish off the Harijans'.⁴⁹ Some chased those Dalits who were then running towards the channel that ran by the village, others ran towards the irrigation canal. Then there were cries from the jasmine garden. Mattaiah was attacked; his ear was speared, and his head was hit with an axe a couple of times. Jaladi Immanuel, a thirty-five-year-old Mala who had also sought shelter in the garden, was also struck by an axe. Modugula Sambu Reddy, attacked his head with an axe, another man did the same to the middle of his forehead, and then he was stabbed in the face and cut with a knife near his lower lip. Mallela Subba Rao (also a thirty-five-year-old Mala) was not wounded with an axe, but instead he was hit with iron rods on his head, right leg and chest. The other attackers joined in, and their participation resulted in his violent death.⁵⁰ The three men who had been attacked in the jasmine garden died from their injuries.

At the same time, some women from the Dalitwada went to the southern railway gate, which is on the other side of the Dalitwada. They wanted to see what was going on and saw a large crowd of Reddys and Telagas armed with sticks, rods, axes and spears moving and shouting that they should kill any Dalits they could spot.⁵¹ This was the group of upper-caste people who had gone along the railway track earlier and had 'chased the Harijans towards Modukuru side and on the eastern bund of the new channel'.⁵²

At least ten Dalit men were running away towards Modukuru. But having reached the Modukuru railway gate, where there is a small bridge across the canal, they were stopped by a group of upper-caste villagers from Modukuru, who were waiting for them in the field. Thus, squeezed in between the two groups of chasers, the fleeing Dalits were caught and attacked. Mandru Ramesh was struck by an axe on his right hand and wrist, and a knife was plunged into his neck.⁵³ At the Modukuru railway gate, Jaladi Issac, Sankuru Samson and Devarapalli Jayaraju were all killed in front of the cattle shed that stood next to the road that the railway station was on.⁵⁴ Issac was hit in the head with an axe and beaten with iron rods on his head and legs.⁵⁵ Samson was hit and was injured in the face by an axe; his eyeballs were removed and his right ear was cut off, and inevitably, he died.⁵⁶ Jayaraju was not struck by an axe, but he received so many other injuries that he also died.⁵⁷ The killings that occurred in front of the cattle shed must have been a very violent sight indeed.

Meanwhile, the group that had killed the Dalits in the jasmine garden had now travelled in a tractor down to the panchayat office in Modukuru. It is reported that the killers in the jasmine garden had praised their achievements loudly when they returned to the tractor.⁵⁸ The tractor belonged to G. Sambi Reddy from Munnangivaripalem, who also drove it. But the group had not finished its mission: it was on target once again when it reached Modukuru, that is, when it came across some Dalits⁵⁹ who had happened to separate from the group while running towards the Modukuru railway gate and had reached the centre of the village (Modukuru) instead.⁶⁰ Thus, the group, led by the Tsundur *sarpanch*, started chasing these Dalits towards Modukuru gate. One murder attempt failed. In fact, although Tanamchintala Adam⁶¹ was hit with an axe on his right leg and elbow, he managed to escape and ran towards the Modukuru railway gate. Here, he was beaten and then witnessed Issac, Samson and Jayaraju being attacked before he eventually managed to escape.⁶²

Angalakuduru Raja Mohan was also with the Dalits who had ended up at the panchayat office in Modukuru, and he – once he was chased – ran along with the group of Dalits towards the Modukuru railway gate. Raja Mohan was killed; the post-mortem examination concluded that he had died because of a head injury.⁶³ Meanwhile, a group of Dalits managed to get away from the Modukuru railway gate and hurried towards Moparru, east of Modukuru. After some time, a public bus appeared, which had come from Modukuru, and several of the upper-caste perpetrators got off it. They were armed and started chasing the Tsundur Dalits who escaped into the fields.⁶⁴ Dayiri Dhana Raj⁶⁵ was chased nearly all the way back to Tsundur, where he was attacked and beaten, and blood was removed from his body with a syringe. He was also forced to drink drain water and urine. But Dhana Raj was lucky. He was left alive in the fields, though under guard;

Dhana Raj managed to escape from the guard and swam across the canal. He was eventually rescued by some Dalit women, who dressed him up as a woman; wearing a sari like any other woman, he was put on a train from Tsundur station to Tenali the same night.⁶⁶

Altogether, eight Dalits were killed in this major assault and five other persons were seriously injured on this day, 6 August 1991.⁶⁷ The dead bodies were not left behind in the fields, however. Instead, they were put into sacks and thrown in the nearby canals. The first three bodies were thrown in the Tungabhadra irrigation canal, on the western side of the Tsundur–Modukuru Road.⁶⁸ The other bodies were left elsewhere: one to the west of Modukur village, and the remaining bodies were found in ‘the new channel’ and in a ‘branch canal’ on the eastern side of Modukuru.⁶⁹ Eyewitnesses claimed to have seen bodies being packed into sacks, which the culprits kicked ‘with their legs’ before they threw them into the nearby canals.⁷⁰ In short, this was a well-planned attack, resulting in a massacre of Tsundur Dalits in which the upper-caste people became extremely cruel in their determination to ‘teach the Dalits a lesson’. Later, the incident became a major reason for social mobilization and complex processes in legal institutions evolving over many years.

Dead Bodies and Questions about the Police

One of the remaining key questions relating to the events of 6 August concerns the actions – or the inaction – of the police. There were several dead bodies in the village, and there had been a very violent attack in the agricultural fields. It was two years since the Prevention of Atrocities Act (PoA) had been created as an all-India piece of legislation. However, no effective action was taken by public officials to prevent the massacre or to retrieve information about it after it had happened. For instance, there were no reports at the police station on 6 August about the organized attack, which has later been referred to as the main incident in the context of tensions in Tsundur. The police did ‘not know what happened in the fields and surrounding villages’.⁷¹ A head constable from Tsundur police station reported in the later trial that a group of policemen had been looking for Reddys and Telagas, that is, the 300 upper-caste men who had passed ‘in front of the police station armed with deadly weapons’⁷² and who had chased the Dalits on the eastern bund of the canal on the day of the massacre. The police did not catch anyone, however, and they had been instructed to return to the station in Tsundur.⁷³ Later that day, G. Sambhi Reddy from Munnangivaripalem had appeared at the police station. He had arrived on his tractor which some hours earlier had been used to drive the perpetrators. G. Sambhi Reddy asked the police to escort his children from a nearby school back to his village, which they did so as to protect them.⁷⁴

The police in Tsundur did not inquire into the killings of the Dalits before 11.30 p.m. on 6 August, after receiving information from the police in Tenali about dead bodies in the tank in Kondareddy.⁷⁵ The Tenali police heard about the incident in Tsundur when they were recording the statements of the injured Dalits who had been hospitalized in the government hospital in Tenali that night. Yet the Tsundur police did not find any dead bodies when they first went out to search early in the morning on 7 August. Later that morning, police personnel arrived from Tenali and organized search for dead bodies in several directions. They did not find any, however. Instead, it was the local Dalits who found them. Two bodies had been put into sacks, and eight bodies were recovered from canals within a radius of 7 kilometres from the centre of Tsundur.⁷⁶

The crime was not registered as a coordinated or major criminal case by the police, and this raised a serious question about law enforcement during the trial. The special public prosecutor was very critical of the police in Tsundur during the trial; he claimed that the police had undermined the evidence needed for further criminal investigation and the later prosecution. He argued that the '[p]olice have not chosen to book a grand crime' but rather twelve individual 'crimes'. And he added 'that there are contentions by the SCs that their narratives of the events were not properly recorded by the Police'.⁷⁷ In an interview, the prosecutor explained that the quality of the 'first information reports' (FIRs) became 'a very serious matter in the trial'.⁷⁸ Thus, there was ample space for the defence lawyers to argue that the prosecution's twelve FIRs were insufficient to prove that anyone was guilty of committing the violent crimes. The reports were inconsistent. And the poor quality of the evidence made it hard to show that the upper-caste people conspired to kill the Dalits, that is, that they were acting as a group in a so-called unlawful assembly with a common intent to commit a crime. The police appeared more prepared to protect the landowners' children than the victims of the attack that day.

The defence lawyers claimed during the trial, however, that the case was only brought because of 'the so-called Human Rights activists' hue and cry ... for publicity and for various other reasons of their selfish goals, but there is no truth in it'.⁷⁹ The truth was therefore disputed, and the discussion concerning the evidence concerned the police's management of events as they had registered the reports of the incidents from the day of the attack. It was also disputed whether the police sought to curb any subsequent Dalit mobilization and undermine the protests from gaining momentum.

Public Responses and Dalit Activism

The magnitude of 6 August greatly shocked Tsundur Dalits. The news about the major violence committed in the fields of Tsundur and Modukuru not only

reached neighbouring towns and villages but the incident was also reported by national media. The massacre in Tsundur was reported in the newspaper *Times of India* to be ‘the most gruesome ever witnessed in the state’ in ‘terms of toll, diabolic planning and ruthless execution’.⁸⁰ Regional political leaders, furthermore, condemned the attack. The chief minister, N. T. Rama Rao – who ruled at the time of the Karamchedu massacre in 1985 – argued that the Congress government was unable to ensure law and order in the state and that the central government should impose presidential rule in the state.⁸¹ There were therefore many interests at stake in the case. Meanwhile, regional activists mobilized and so did activists in neighbouring states to gather facts about the event.⁸² Katti Padma Rao became a prominent Dalit leader in this context, organizing ‘dharnas’, a special camp to support the victims, and calling for state-wide action. Katti Padma Rao lives in nearby Tsundur, in Ponnur town, and had led the movement Dalit Mahasabha that had been established in 1985 after Karamchedu along with Bojja Tharakam. Both attended the camp in Tsundur along with other prominent activists.⁸³

The burial was led by the social movements, and Maoists were among those who were determined to ensure that the victims were given a Christian burial. In fact, the leaders of the more militant activists, the Naxalites, made their point by burying the deceased Dalit victims in the centre of the village.⁸⁴ The usual burial ground for Dalits is located on the outskirts of the village. Unlike Christians, Hindus do not bury their dead, and the burial in the centre of the village was therefore also contested for religious reasons.⁸⁵ Today, the graves have become powerful manifestations in the village centre. They remain visible on a slope while there are shops on each side and on the opposite side of Church Road. The politically significant burial caused a large crowd to assemble and included many activists and social movements from the whole of Andhra Pradesh.

While there were prominent Dalit leaders in Tsundur after the attack, the local Dalits had been led by Kommerla Anil Kumar up to that time. He was a young man and had been an active youth leader and a prime witness to the Tsundur massacre.⁸⁶ Anil Kumar was, in short, a key person in the Dalitwada; he could act and encourage the Tsundur Dalits. He was a crucial witness to the carnage and was able to confirm how the plot was carried out and how the local police may have been complicit in covering it up. It was therefore a blow for the Tsundur Dalits when he was shot by police on 17 September 1991 in the Malapalle.⁸⁷

This young, articulate Dalit leader was murdered about one week after the Tsundur massacre had been discussed in the Indian parliament. At that time, the Dalit, Bihar politician Ram Vilas Paswan asked the government to clarify its measures to prevent these atrocities. Indeed, the Tsundur massacre was heavily condemned during this parliamentary debate on 9 September 1991. The representative from Tenali, Professor V. Umareddy, stated to the assembly and

its speaker, 'Sir, a shameful incident has been inflicted on Harijans in my own Constituency of Tenali in Andhra Pradesh ... a naked attack on the very social order of the country.'⁸⁸ It was certainly a serious assembly that addressed the brutal killings of the Scheduled Castes (SCs). A representative from Karnataka state, V. Sreenivasa Prasad, went as far as to compare untouchability with apartheid in his clearly self-critical reflection:

Sir, we have always been talking of antiapartheid in this country. What moral right has this country got to talk about anti-apartheid? We can see apartheid in every nook and corner of this country in the form of untouchability.⁸⁹

In spite of this flow of self-critical statements uttered in the national parliament in New Delhi on 9 September, the Tsundur police killed Anil Kumar eight days later. However, although that murder certainly made an impact, the story did not end with Anil Kumar. The Tsundur victims faced a multifaceted struggle for justice involving many movements and activists. It is nonetheless significant that activists who were active in the Tsundur camp would also participate in the World Conference against Racism in Durban 2001 ten years later. However, the government of India objected to any comparison to South Africa regarding caste and race at this conference and in the ensuing 'Durban process' at the United Nations to avoid drawing international attention to caste-based oppression.⁹⁰

Summary

The chapter has offered a detailed description of the tensions, plot and attack in Tsundur village to identify how the organized caste-based attack occurred and how the events played out socially, politically and institutionally. I will follow up the institutional processes in Chapter 5. But the facts that have emerged from this case study suggest that the police force had been more keen to act in accordance with the interest of the dominant order than to ensure protection for Dalits or to implement law effectively. For instance, while eight Dalits were killed by a large crowd of armed caste Hindus from the landowning community, the police had dispersed the Tsundur Dalits. On the day of the attack, the police provided more protection for children of landowners than for those who were attacked in the agricultural fields. The poor registration of evidence in the FIRs after the attack adds another reason to allege that either the police do not effectively implement the rule of law or they may even have been complicit in covering up the attack.

The social and political contexts are nonetheless decisive in explaining why the massacre was planned and carried out at all. The massacre was a violent backlash after a period of upward mobility and assertion among Tsundur Dalits. This is a

familiar mechanism which I have referred to as the mechanism of oppression in the Dalit situation. The social changes in the village resulted in a dis-embedding of traditional caste relations, identity and behaviour there. In addition, there were deliberate, political attempts to deinstitutionalize values of caste through growing youth assertion and Ambedkarization in the village. On top of this, an older Dalit student corrected the verbal abuse that a boy from the landowning community used against the Dalit's friend at the cinema. However, there was a big difference between 'teaching the Dalit student a lesson' and 'You, the man who opposed us' – 'How dare you?'⁹¹ and carrying out a large-scale attack.

The idea of 'teaching Dalits a lesson' to the point of eliminating them from the village – either literally or by discouraging Dalits from asserting their rights in the future – adds further credibility to two types of conceptual discussions. First, the attack reflects an ontological drive in a psychological sense. The drive gains force when touchables and untouchables are not properly separated and graded and is aimed at restoring the ontology of caste. When Ambedkar invented his concept of graded inequality, he pointed out how this system of caste involved an ontological difference between touchables and untouchables. The former could feel important by treating the latter as nobodies. With the social changes in Tsundur, however, this ontology of caste could not be taken for granted, and hence, the idea of 'teaching them a lesson' took hold. But the large-scale attack in Tsundur introduces in the second dimension the notion of a dominant caste. The French anthropologist Louis Dumont criticized the sociologist Srinivas for adopting a vague definition of a dominant caste.⁹² Yet where Dumont aimed at conceptual clarity in terms of using an advanced structuralist philosophy, Srinivas' multifarious notion of the dominant caste captures several aspects of the power dynamics in Tsundur. As in Srinivas' understanding, the dominant landowning caste – which in Tsundur is primarily the Reddy community – had numerical, economic and political advantages. Their position in the ritual hierarchy was not insignificant. Although this community has historically been associated with Shudras, the Reddy caste demanded Kshatriya status in the non-Brahmin movement, and their higher status in relation to Dalits was crucial. Since the Reddy community in Tsundur supported the Congress government that ruled the state at the time, it had a significant political advantage in relation to the state. In addition, the determination to stop the Tsundur Dalits was encouraged by members of the dominant castes in neighbouring villages. United by anger, the ontological drive to restore their status and subjugate the Dalits, made them exercise their power to an extreme degree. Casteism is an intense experience; derogatory remarks suggest that the identity of the untouchables is radically negated.⁹³ The attack of 6 August 1991 in Tsundur was nonetheless about exercising extreme power to intensify and violently re-embed the privilege of caste, and yet the narrative elements of this case became integral to the history of the Dalit movement and the evolving caste-related politics in the state.

Notes

1. According to one estimate, twenty-eight incidents of violence against Dalits were registered in the state of Andhra Pradesh, ranging from that in Karamchedu on 17 July 1985 to the one that occurred in Tsundur on 6 August 1991. K. Balagopal, *Ear to the Ground: Selected Writings on Class and Caste* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2011), 472–4.
2. Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 326–8.
3. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, 'Untouchables or the Children of India's Ghetto', in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches: Unpublished Writings*, ed. Vasant Moon, vol. 5 (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1989), 102.
4. *Times of India*, 'Eyewitness Account Given: Burning of Harijan Boy', 3 May 1968, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/614027427/fulltextPDF/97566C7EEE244A2PQ/2?accountid=11144>.
5. Bojja Tharakam, in an interview with the author, Hyderabad, December 2014.
6. K. Seshadri, 'The Telengana Agitation and the Politics of Andhra Pradesh', *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 1 (1970): 70–1, doi:10.2307/41854361.
7. Anand Teltumbde, *The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India's Hidden Apartheid* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2010).
8. There are different spellings of Tsundur in English. The name can be spelled as Tsundur, Tsunduru, Chundur or Chunduru. The signpost at the train station in the village uses 'Tsunduru', while many prefer using the term 'Chundur' when they write about the village as this is closer to the vernacular version. I will use 'Tsundur' for consistency as this spelling is also used in the court judgments and official materials.
9. Govathoti Ravi, in an interview with the author, Tenali, March 2008.
10. Ibid.
11. The word 'hotel' is used synonymously with restaurant and/or café.
12. From interview with Mrs Jakraiah, Panthagani Manikhyamma, Tsundur, 10 March 2008.
13. Nagaswaramrao, advocate and assistant to the special public prosecutor, in an interview with the author, Tenali, February 2008.
14. Ravi, in an interview with the author, March 2008.
15. Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), 199; Jagpal Singh, 'Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit Identity: Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut District of Western Uttar Pradesh', *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 40 (1998): 2611–8, doi:10.2307/4407245.
16. Ravi, in an interview with the author, March 2008.
17. In fact, the Dalit Bahujan Party in Uttar Pradesh has been criticized for being more interested in statues of Ambedkar and ensuring that these are made of the best material than in the social and economic elevation of the poor. However, Ambedkar

is also the framer of the constitution, and he can be respected for his contribution among non-Dalits as well. This was the interpretation the Mandal revenue officer gave me when I visited his office in March 2008. He was new to Tsundur and expressed much respect to Dalits, although he was an upper-caste man himself. I asked him if the statue of Ambedkar was intended as a provocation. He said it was not and that Ambedkar could not be a possession of the Dalits, since non-Dalits also respect him and consider him ‘theirs’ because he led the work undertaken to create the constitution. I suspect he was being excessively polite, but the point is worth noting. In any case, the Mandal revenue officer of 2008 was talking in a significantly different atmosphere than had been the case sixteen years earlier.

18. Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution*, 199.
19. M. N. Srinivas, ‘The Dominant Caste in Rampura’, *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 1 (1959): 141.
20. My main source on the economic difference is the Mandal revenue officer at the time.
21. In an interview in March 2008, B. Chandrasekhar, the special public prosecutor, mentioned that most of the accused upper castes that appeared in court in 2007 wore traditional clothes such as dhotis and lungis rather than jeans.
22. K. Muruli, ‘Upper Caste Violence on Dalits: Case Studies of Karamchedu and Chundur Massacres’, unpublished MPhil dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, 1995, p. 58.
23. Jakraiah, interview with the author, 10 March 2008.
24. K. Srinivasulu, ‘Caste, Class and Social Articulation in Andhra Pradesh: Mapping Differential Regional Trajectories’, Working Paper 179, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2002, p. 40, accessed 10 July 2019, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2692.pdf>.
25. Moses, in an interview with the author, Tsundur, 10 March 2008.
26. K. Srinivasulu, ‘Caste, Class and Social Articulation in Andhra Pradesh’.
27. Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, *The Chundur Carnage: AP-Civil Liberties Committee Report*, 6, accessed 26 January 2017, <http://balagopal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Tsundur/THE%20TSUNDURU%20CARNAGE-APCLC%20REPORT-PUBLISHED%20IN%20AUGUST%201991.pdf>.
28. Moses, in an interview with the author, 12 March 2008.
29. Govathoti Ravi, interview with the author, Tenali, 11 March 2008.
30. Ibid.
31. See, for example, Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran, ‘Caste and Gender: Understanding Dynamics of Power and Violence’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 37 (1991): 2132, doi:10.2307/41626993.
32. Prem Chowdhry, “‘First Our Jobs Then Our Girls’: The Dominant Caste Perceptions on the “Rising” Dalits”, *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009), 437–79, doi: 10.1017/S0026749X07003010.
33. For discussion of the concept of ontological security, see Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), 50.

34. Ravi in an interview with the author, 12 March 2008.
35. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219) (Tsundur court, 31 August 2007), 23.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Muruli, *Upper Caste Violence on Dalits*, 65.
38. *Ibid.*, 63.
39. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 24.
40. G. S. Nageswara Rao, an advocate from Tenali town and assistant to the special public prosecutor in Tsundur court, in an interview with the author, Tenali, February 2008.
41. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 24.
42. It will be evident in Chapter 5 that what occurred on this day has been disputed because the facts have implications for convictions and sentences. The events that I have mapped are mainly based on a detailed analysis of the comprehensive judgment of 2007, and I have supplemented that with available sources.
43. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 56.
44. *Ibid.*, 25.
45. *Ibid.*, 41.
46. *Wada* means hamlet in Telugu and is part of a larger village; a *Dalitwada* would refer to a hamlet where Dalits from castes such as Mala and Madiga live. *Palle* is often a more general term for village, but it is used here also in a more specific sense to designate the Mala hamlet. So, while 'Dalitwada' or 'Harijanwada' are generic designations for Dalit settlements, 'Malapalle' refers specifically to the hamlet of the Mala caste (or a Dalit sub-caste). The majority of Dalits in Tsundur were Malas, which is why the terms 'Dalitwada' and 'Malapalle' are sometimes used interchangeably in this context.
47. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 41. There was disagreement in the court about when the police entered the *palle* and if they did so at all. It seems clear that the police entered before noon or at least in the middle of the day.
48. *Ibid.*, 42.
49. *Ibid.*, 25.
50. *Ibid.*, 25.
51. *Ibid.*, 26.
52. *Ibid.*, 222.

53. Ibid., 26.
54. Special public prosecutor, 'Written Arguments in SC No. 36/1993. In the Court of the Special Session Judge under the SCs & STs (PoA) Act, 1989 (IV ASJ) Guntur. Camp: Tsundur. SC No. 36/91' unpublished manuscript (1 January 2007), chap. 1, p. 9.
55. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 151.
56. Ibid., 156.
57. Ibid., 159.
58. Prosecutor, 'Written Arguments in SC no. 36/1993', chap. 1, p. 8.
59. Ibid., chap. 1, p. 9.
60. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 27.
61. Referred to in the judgment as 'LW.49'.
62. Ibid., 27; Prosecutor, 'Written Arguments in SC no. 36/1993', chap. 1, p. 9.
63. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 52.
64. Prosecutor, 'Written Arguments in SC no. 36/1993', chap. 1, p. 9.
65. Referred to in the judgment as 'PW.15' (prosecution witness no. 15).
66. Ibid., chap. 1, pp. 9–10.
67. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 160.
68. Ibid., 197.
69. Ibid., 59–60.
70. Ibid., 159–60.
71. Ibid., 57.
72. Ibid., 54.
73. Ibid., 58.
74. Ibid., 55.
75. Ibid., 55.
76. Ibid., 64.
77. Prosecutor, 'Written Arguments in SC no. 36/1993', chap. 1, p. 11.
78. B. Chandrasekhar, Special Public Prosecutor, in an interview with the author, Warangal, 8 February 2008.
79. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 66.
80. *Times of India*, 'NTR Demands Delhi Rule in AP', 12 August 1991.
81. Ibid.

82. Ajith Kanna, in an interview with the author, August 2016.
83. *Times of India*, 'NTR Demands Delhi Rule in AP'.
84. Gaddar, in an interview with author, March 2008. Gaddar, the revolutionary poet, explained that the Naxalites buried the dead in the middle of the village. This was a Christian burial, rather than a Hindu rite.
85. A Guntur lawyer therefore complained against this burial in the centre of the village, arguing that it was a violation of Hindu law, although this case was never processed. Sanjeeva Reddy, in an interview with the author, Guntur, 12 March 2008.
86. Muruli, *Upper Caste Violence on Dalits*, 70.
87. *Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Tenali* (Crime Nos. 65 to 73 and 89 and 90/91 of Tsundur P.S. and Crime No. 64/91 of Amarthaluru P.S.) *vs Accused 1* (Modugula Sami Reddy - 219), 64.
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