

**‘HISTORY OF DALIT MOVEMENT AND IDENTITY
IN UTTAR PRADESH: 1900-2000’**

THESIS

SUBMITTED

TO

**BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
LUCKNOW**

**FOR AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN**

HISTORY

**BABASAHEB
BHIMRAO
AMBEDKAR
UNIVERSITY**



SUBMITTED

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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2015

Dedicated

To

My Beloved Parent

Shri. Khem Karan Lal

Smt. Mahadevi Verma

DHARMENDRA KUMAR VERMA

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis entitled '**History of Dalit Movement and Identity in Uttar Pradesh: 1900-2000**'. Carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. V.M. Ravi Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University) Lucknow is an original work and it has not been previously submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma in this or any other University.

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Date:

Ph. D. Research Scholar

**BABASAHEB
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प्रज्ञा शील करुणा
ESTABLISHED 1996

बाबासाहेब भीमराव अम्बेडकर विश्वविद्यालय

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This thesis entitled '**History of Dalit Movement and Identity in Uttar Pradesh : 1900-2000**' submitted by Mr. Dharmendra Kumar Verma for Doctor of Philosophy has not been previously submitted, partially or wholly, for any other degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this thesis should be placed before the examiners for their consideration for the award of Ph.D. degree.

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My research, in essence, is a journey to explore into the domain of Dalit life world. This journey has not always been a happy one, but has invariably been a rewarding experience. I had moments of joy and happiness, interspersed with periods of sense of frustration and despair. But all in all, a good learning experience indeed.

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DHARMENDRA KUMAR VERMA

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CHAPTER: 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER: 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is about capturing the of identity formation process among Dalits in Utter Pradesh (known as United Provinces during British period). By so doing it deals with multiple dynamics of identify formation process undertaken and impact of the process in the political mobilization of in colonial and the post colonial periods of India. In short this study investigates the genealogies of Dalit identity formation process and context and content of that process in Utter Pradesh during the period of 1900-2000. Thus our study is historically rooted account of Dalit identity formation process and its impact upon political and social dynamics of Dalits of Utter Pradesh.

Modernity process that emerged in 18th and 19th century Europe and its transplantation in Asian, American and African continents with colonization process created paradigm of multiple identity formation process. Colonial modernity created competitive scramble for maximizing the interests of various social groups in India.¹ In this process, creation and dissemination of distinctive identities became an essential condition for upward mobility. This process was however done within the matrix of colonial socio-economic and cultural milieu. Traditional social divisions in India were rearticulated and crystallized in order situate in the colonial modernity process.² This process indeed had significant impact upon the emergence of a body of epistemological categories on former untouchable castes of India and at present known popularly as

¹ G. Shah, (Ed), *Dalit Identity and Politics*, Sage, New Delhi, 2001.

² S. Bandyopadhyay, *Form Plassey to Partition: History of Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2004.

Dalits.³ This study investigates the evolutionary trajectory of Dalit identity formation and THE forces that influenced the process in Utter Pradesh. This is important as Utter Pradesh witnessed vibrant form of political assertion of Dalit community and its ability to translate the assertion into political power. In this context a study on historical analysis of Dalit identity formation is useful to understand the dynamics of attempt of Dalit to transform their lives in the context of colonial and post-colonial periods.

Sociological dimension of identity formation implies the process of stability and rootedness is imported by traditions including customs, laws, codes & rituals. The sense of difference and distinctiveness of the community is expressed through flags, emblems, costumes, special food and sacred objects.⁴ The sense of continuity with previous generations is rooted in the memories of past sacrifices, victories defeats and deeds of heroism. Collective courage, honor, wisdom, compassion and justice confer the sense of destiny and mission.⁵ By all means identity formation process is a complicated phenomenon. Our study deals with multiple dimension of identity formation process took place in north Indian state of Utter Pradesh with particular reference to former untouchable castes generally known as Dalits.

Conceptually the process of identity formation imbibed certain essential features. The pre conditions for community collectivity are determined by the following factors:

1. A shared history i.e. the shared memories of successive generation of the collective community.

³ Bearnad Cohn, *The Bearnad Cohn Omnibus*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009.

⁴ James E. Cote, 'Sociological Prescriptive on Identity Formation: the culture-identity link and identity capital', *Journal of Adolescence*, 19 (5), 1996, pp. 417–428.

⁵⁵ K. Woodward, *Understanding Identity*, Bloomsbury, New York, 2003.

2. One or more common cultural characteristics which can serve to distinguish members from non-members such as institutions, customs, relations with non members, color, language etc.
3. A sense of solidarity on the part of at least a significant segment of the collective community.⁶

The erstwhile untouchable of the Hindu Social order are clearly distinguished from the other Hindu castes and obviously symbolize the uniqueness of the community. This collectivity based upon on the notion of Untouchability has gradually, come to be known as Dalits, meaning the battered or crushed or broken people. The second characteristic is that the origin of Dalits or Untouchables or Untouchability is a controversial subject. Some historians have put forward the racial theory, others the occupational theory and some others have put forward the broken people theory in support of its origin. Some attribute Untouchability to beef eating; others say it was due to contempt for Buddhism by the Brahmins.⁷

Broadly speaking Dalit as social category represents the section of people who were placed at the lowest rung of the Hindu society. They were treated as untouchables and were known by different names in different parts of the country. They were called as Ati-Shudra, Antyaja, Avarna or namm-shudra. Generally Dalits were subjected to inhuman incriminatory practices all over India. The shared memory of the Dalit community includes all sorts of restrictions that were put on them by the law giver

⁶ Peter J. Brook, and Jan E. Stets, ed, *Identity Theory*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009: S.M.N. Sivaprakasam *Dalit and Social Mobilization* New Delhi, Rajat Publication, 2002.

⁷ Paul Ghuman, *British Untouchables: A Study of Dalit Identity and Education*, Asghate, London, 2009.

thereby making life hopeless for them. The untouchability to which the community was subjected has no parallel anywhere. These inhuman practices having religious sanctions are the bitter memories of Dalit Community. The other characteristic that binds the Dalit community is their common history.⁸

Eminent historian R. S. Sharma reflected upon the origin of caste system in the following words:

As per the nature of Rig-Veda and Atharva Veda, the caste system must have come into being during the end of Atharva Veda. Tribal Society was transformed into classes. Though labor was divided, presence of poets could be seen in the same family. When Aryans and non - Aryans began to interact caste divisions. Maitreyani samhita gave right to the upper castes to accept the shudras in the form of property. Jaiminiya Brahmin literature ordered the shudras to wash the feet of the upper castes. According to the Latyatan Shraut scriptures food grains, a cow, agricultural impl ement and two laborers' (Ati-shudra) should be donated to the Brahmins. Gradually, the process of turning the laborers into slaves, preventing them from education, knowledge & religious rituals began. Stories of their defiling touch and sight gained ground. Then came the Manu Smruti making the four-fold caste system rigid and permanent. For centuries, it was believed that the law of Manu was the ideal law for society. Manu termed the life beyond the villages as graveyards. Even today, the law of Manu is regarded as ideal by number of people.⁹

⁸ E. Jelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on Ambedkar Movement*, Monohar, New Delhi, 1996.

⁹ R.S. Sharma *Sudras in Ancient India: A Social History of the Lower Order Down to Circa AD 600* , Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1990, p. 52.

There are some factors that facilitate the unity and common identity of communities. Historically, these factors evolve and prepare congenial atmosphere for emergence of community solidarity among certain communities. This is important pre-condition for identity formation process. The following factors facilitated identity evolution and formation process among Dalits of India.

Fragmentation and Solidarity:

In spite of several common features, which bind the Dalits with a common bond, the collective Dalit community is not homogenous in real sense. The factors that divided the Dalits are:

Language:

The Dalits from different states speak different languages. This difference of language is one of the major factors that divided them in the country. Without any common purpose, linguistic differences further hamper the mobilizing force necessary for Dalit organization.

Caste:

Another important divisive factor is caste itself. Caste is a retrograding factor in a single linguistic group. Within the same linguistic group caste forms a distinct unit thus giving the respective members different identity from each other. These castes very rigidly follow hierarchy of status among themselves. For e.g. in Maharashtra certain Dalit castes like Chamar and Maang consider themselves superior to Dhor and Mahar and thus

are identified as separate units. Similarly in Uttar Pradesh, Bhangis and Chamars are distinct caste units and are placed at different positions vis-à-vis their social status. These hierarchies are found in all parts of the state. Thus caste becomes a very important divisive factor in the mobilization of Dalit masses and more so in a single linguistic group.

Customs:

Different Dalit castes have different customs and thus discourage any meaningful interaction. And hence, (and also) due to superior-inferior feeling within a single linguistic group inter-caste marriages are uncommon. Each caste thus preserves its own separated identity thereby delaying Dalit solidarity.

Occupational Differences:

Majority of the members of the various Dalit castes is still involved in their-traditional occupation. These involve manual and menial work. Thus they are occupied as sweepers in public or private enterprises or as tanners in tanneries or as cobblers in small or big footwear companies etc. while these occupations are carried out for monetary gains, they are looked upon as mean and degrading not only by the non-Dalits but also by members in a very similar fashion as was regarded at the beginning of the caste system. This attitude of the Dalit caste members has further accentuated the gap for any meaningful collective action.

However, in spite of all these fragmenting characteristics, there have been constant efforts on different fronts to consolidate the Dalits masses in different parts of the country. Emergence Dalit collectivity as a process originated in the British colonial period as a response to the modernization process. This process was championed by several eminent intellectuals such as Jyotirao Phuley and his wife Savitribai Phuley, Periyar Ramaswamy Naicker and Narayan Guru, Bhimrao Ambedkar, Swami Atchutanand and others towards social awareness among Dalits about their rights, self-respect and individuality.¹⁰

In the past few decades many organizations (political, students and Dalit) have made efforts to organize the Dalits irrespective of their caste affiliations. To name few of these: All India SC-ST Federation, Dalit Students Association. All India Revolutionary Students Federation and United Dalit Students' Forum of the Jawaharlal Nehru University may be mentioned. Student organizations, of Dalit medico or engineering, were forceful in forging unity among Dalit students and also to provide an instant support to their fellow brethren.¹¹

According to P.G. Jogdand, oppressive consciousness of Dalits facilitated for unity and common identity. They suffered from the multiple deprivations and were the victims of "cumulative domination". He also argued that after two thousand years of practicing untouchability the roots of this evil has gone so deep into the system that the

¹⁰ R. Krishasagara, *Dalit Movement in India and its Leaders, 1857-1956*, M.D. Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

¹¹ M.N. Sivaprakasam *Dalit and Social Mobilization* Rajat Publication, New Delhi, 2002

untouchables (now the scheduled castes) are subjected to the numerous social, economic and religious disabilities even in independent India.¹²

Namdeo Dhasal, one of the leading leaders of the Dalit Panther (who is now associated with Shiv Sena, political party of Maharashtra) puts forth his own definition of Dalit which includes Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, neo-Buddhists, landless laborers and all those economically exploited. He has adopted a class approach like Marxists to define the term Dalit.¹³

Another definition has been offered by Dr. Pantawane one of the well know Dalit writers. According to him, Dalit is not a caste rather a symbol of change and revolution. He rejects the existence of god, rebirth, soul, sacred books that each discrimination, fate and heaven, because these have according to him made Dalit as a slave. For his it is this oppression that brings Dalits together for achieving a sense of cultural identity. He also proposed that Dalit now is a source of confrontation against domination and hegemony. This change has its essence in the desire for justice for all mankind.¹⁴

The social discrimination is deeply ingrained in Dalit psyche. Exploitation, oppression, humiliation and multiform of deprivation still persists even after independence. At the level day to day living, Dalits are treaded in all possible unfair ways by upper caste Hindus especially Brahmins. Dalit contribution is not recognized in any area: they are always put in an environment which will hamper their personal

¹² P:G. Jogdand, *Dalit Movement in Maharashtra*, Kanak, New Delhi, 2013.

¹³ Dhasal Namdeo, *Itihasachi Chakra Ulti Firvu Naka Nahitar khaddyat jal*”, a pamphlet published by himself (in Marathi) Bombay Sept..1974

¹⁴ Pantawane Gangadhar, *Wadalance Wanshaj* (in Marathi) Prachar Prakashan, Kolhapur, 1982.

development and performance. Constant attempts are made to destroy their “self”. They are neglected and not given due importance they deserve.¹⁵

Dalit as a concept and its present usage has its seeds in the writings of two great Indian personalities, one, a nineteenth century Marathi reformer and revolutionary Mahatma Jyotirao Phuley and two, again a Marathi intellectual, writer and revolutionary Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Phuley in his writings used commonly the title for Dalits shudra-atishudra. According to his definition shudras are untouchable backward classes (sachuta pichari jatian) and ati-shudra is indigenous people (mule nivasi means original settlers). According to him in order to make shudras-ati-shudra their slaves, the priestly caste (Brahmin) divided them into two castes or classes. He wrote that it was Brahmin’s conspiracy against shudras ati-shudra¹⁶ Mahatma Phuley perhaps also is the first person who has used the term Dalit in connection with caste as dalitodhar (uplift of the depressed)¹⁷ Dr. Ambedkar deals in detail the concern of achhuts (untouchables) in his famous work ‘The Untouchable’¹⁸ but it is said that the term Dalit was first coined by him to describe the scheduled caste¹⁹. According to him” “there is no racial difference between the Hindus and the Untouchable²⁰” Dr. Ambedkar stated that: “This book may therefore, be taken as a pioneer attempt in the exploration of a field so completely neglected by everybody”.²¹ It means the field is still open for more exploration and study.

Where the present use of the term/title Dalit is concerned, in real sense both the use as well as a broader meaning (concept) behind it has been worked out by the Dalit

¹⁵ S. Thakur, *Dalit Struggle for Self Liberation*, Neha, New Delhi, 2012.

¹⁶ Khapde, O K., *Mahatma Jyotirao Phuley (in Hindi)*, New Delhi, 1990,

¹⁷ Zelliott, Eleanor, op.cit. P. 271.

¹⁸ B.R. Ambedkar, “*The Untouchable* ‘IN Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches, edited by Vasant Moon ,VOL.7, Education Department, Government of maharashtra, 1990, p. 149.

¹⁹ L. Murugkar, *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra*, Bombay, 1991, p.6.

²⁰ B.R. Ambedkar, Op, Cit., p.242.

²¹ Ibid., p. 241.

Panthers Movement of Maharashtra in early seventies and later on other movements in the same state. Dalit Panthers even tried to broaden the scope of its use by including: “Members of scheduled castes and tribes, Neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion.”²² But one of the best definitions of the term is given by a Marathi Professor Gangadhar Pantawane in these words: Dalit is not a case. Dalit is a symbol of change and revaluation. The dalits believes in humanism. He rejects existence of God, rebirth soul, sacred books that teach discrimination, fate and heaven, because these have made him a slave. He represses the exploited man in his country.²³

Having narrated multiple meanings of Dalit it is to be noted that generally Dalit category considered as ‘outcastes’, because they were not according to the architect of the system fit to be included in the four-fold graded caste structure of Indian society. On the basis of this status, they were made to bear extreme form of disabilities in the form of oppression, for centuries, which made them almost lose their humanness, and finally they reached the state of being ‘no people’. In fact because of the outcastes considered people and their struggle, this term Dalit has got a new connotation, which has a more positive meaning.²⁴ It must be remembered and stressed against that dalits does not mean caste or low caste, or poor; it is in essence, a fact that refers to the state of a section of people to which they have been reduced and now they are living in that.²⁵

²² Lata Murugkar, *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra*, Bombay, 1991, p.237.

²³ Pantawane, Dr Gangadhar, ‘Evolving a New Identity: the Development of Dalit Culture’, in *Untouchable Voice of the Liberation Movement*, edited by Barbara Joshi, New Delhi, 1986, P, 79.

²⁴ Joshi, Barbara, R, op.cit, p. 3.

²⁵ Massey James, *Root –A Concise History of the Dalits*, Delhi, 1991, p.10.

Besides the expression of Dalits several other words are used to represent the former untouchables of India. Those expression as follows: Dasa Sasyu, Rakasa, Asura, Nisada, Awaraa, Panchama, malichhe, Svpakas, Chandal, Achhuts, Exterior Castes, Depressed classes, Scheduled Castes, Harijan, etc. Besides these names, there are a number of the other titles or names, which have been given to them at regional level, for example, Chuhra in Punjabi (North West India), Bhangi or Lal Begi in Hindi (North India), Mahar in Marathi (Central India), Mala in Telugu, Paraiyan in Tamil, and Pulayan in Malayalam (South India), Chandal or Namoshudra in Bengal. We should work towards removing these expressions and terms from the vocabularies of our various Indian languages.

About the general importance of history, H.K. Trevasikis in the preface of his work 'The Land of the Five Rivers' (1928) has said: "History is the key to the solution of many of the world's problems of the present day. And this is particularly true with regard to India, whose history has impressed on her such a different background, physical, racial, psychological and economic from that of England or Europe".²⁶ In more clear terms E.H. Carr has stated the role or function of a historian, when he said: "The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it, as the key to the understanding of the present. Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insight into problems of the present. The function of history is to promote a profound understanding of both past and present through the interrelation between them".²⁷

²⁶ Trevasikis, High Kennedy. *The Land of the Five Rivers*, Oxford, 1928, p. v. preface.

²⁷ Quoted in Romila Thapar, *Interpreting Early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi , p.113.

Romila Thapar interestingly proposed that it is British colonial construction of Indian that mainly responsible for emergence of cultural nationalism which is mainly Brahmanical in nature. The most powerful and influential theory was that of Aryans, according to which most of the Aryans were a branch of Indo-European race and language group, who invade North Indian around 1500 B.C. and conquered the indigenous peoples and “established the Vedic Aryan culture which became the foundation of Indian culture.”²⁸ She also says this race theory “has not only served cultural nationalism in India, but continues to serve Hindu revivalism and, inversely, anti-Brahmin movements’.”²⁹ She also referred to the Nationalist historical writing work, in Indian Society. The nationalist historians were concerned only with those ideas, which were related to the national problems. In a nutshell what we see in her discussion is the role of ‘ideology’ in writing the historical interpretation and its impact upon evolution of social and cultural fabric of modern India.

Historicity of untouchability, institution of caste and condition of Dalits became much pursued concepts in the modern Indian history. History emerged as a domain wherein legitimacy for claims over Dalit identity is being deployed. *Beyond the Four Varnas* by Prabhati Mukherjee³⁰ throws light on the historical roots of the Dalits explicitly. A good record of first hand views-some of the Dalits themselves are found in Barbara R. Joshi’s work *Untouchable! Voice of the Dalit Liberation Movement* (1986).³¹

²⁸ Ibid, pp, 1-2.

²⁹ Ibid. p.18.

³⁰ P. Mukherjee, : *Beyond the four Varnas, The untouchables in India*, Delhi, 1988.

³¹ Joshi, Barbara R, op.cit, p.3.

Eminent historian Eleanor Zellio's book entitled *Untouchable to Dalit* mainly highlights Dr. Ambedkar's role in the Dalit Movement, which she calls "Ambedkar Movement".³²

In a real sense Dalits as the 'subject' of history or literary works, we find in two kinds of writings' by Dalits themselves. The first Kind of Dalit writer's work includes: poetry, autobiographies short essays and speeches. In these categories, lead has been given by Marathi Dalit writers. Two of the anthologies of their translated works into English which have appeared recently, are "Poisoned Bread" edited by Arjun Dangle (1992)³³ and, "An Anthology of Dalit Literature" edited by Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot (1992).³⁴ These collections of Marathi Dalits, besides revealing the deep inner rooted agony and pains in the very humanness of Dalits, also tell us imposed upon them by the caste structured society. The following few verses from these anthologies reveal to us the changing status of Dalits in human history, from 'object to 'subject', Arjun Dangle in his poem 'Revolution', says:

We used to be their friends
When, clay pots hung from our necks
Brooms tied to our rumps
We made our rounds through the upper lane
Calling "Ma-bap, Johar, Ma-bap"....
Today we see a root-to-crown change.
Crows-jackals-dogs-vultures-kites

³² Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, *Indo-Aryan and Hindi*, Calcutta, p.25.

³³ Dangle, Arjun (ed.): *Piosnesd Bread (translation from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature)*, Bombay, 1992.

³⁴ Anand, Mulk Raj and Eleanor Zelliot (eds), *An Anthology of Dalit Literature (poems)*, New Delhi, 1992.

Are our close friends
The upper lane doors are closed to us
“Shout victory to the Revolution”
“Shout Victory”
“Burn, burn those who strike at tradition”³⁵

The editor’s note to the poem says that the last part “Shout Victory to the Revolution” “is a quotation from a Brahmin poet. Dangle’s point is that while the elite call for revolution, those who revolt are burnt. It is true now that Dalits also recognized themselves as fuller ‘human beings’, meaning, a ‘subject’ of their history. This truth what we find in the following verses of Sharan Kumar Limbale’s poem “White paper”:

I do not ask
For the sun and moon from your sky
Your farm, you land,
You’re high houses or your mansions
I do not ask for gods or rituals,
Castes or sects
Or even for your mother, sister, and daughters
I ask for
My rights as a man
My rights: contagious caste riots
Festering city by city, village by village,
Many by man

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 43-44.

Fro that's what my rights are-
Sealed off, outcaste, road-blocked, exiled
I want my rights, give my rights
Will you deny this incendiary state of things?
I'll uproot the scriptures like railway tracks.
Burn like a city bus you lawless laws
My friends
My rights are raising the sun
Will you deny this sunrise?"

The second kind of a few written works, we now have, in which attempts have been made to reach directly to the historical roots of the Dalits. Of course, towards this direction a beginning was made by Dr. Ambedkar in various speeches and writings, during the thirties and forties. But his major work in this direction, was published for the first time in 1948, under the title "The Untouchables?" in which he dealt specially with two questions "Who were they? And why they became untouchables? Dr. Ambedkar has even hinted to the common roots of three groups of our people namely (i) the Criminal Tribes: (ii) the Aboriginal Tribes; (Tribal's) and (iii) the Untouchables (Dalits). He holds the Hindu civilization responsible, which created the three sections and the present state of our society.³⁶

In an interesting book of Lata Murugkar entitled 'Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra presented a sociological appraisal of Dalits movement of problem from the

³⁶ Ambedkar, Dr. B .R. op.cit.,p. 239.

point of view of Dalits.³⁷ The other work which presents Dalits as a 'subject' is *Roots: A Concise History of the Dalits*. These studies attempt to document the attempts made by Dalit intellectuals and movements for new dynamic identity.³⁸ To regain the fuller self-identity Dalit have to become the 'subject' of their own history. The responsibility of regaining that identity lies upon the Dalits themselves; others possibly can enable this process.

Customarily, Dalit refers to untouchables or outcastes. It is an ancient Marathi term meaning 'fields-broken-into-parts'. In the nineteenth century, Marathi social reformer Jyotibharao Phule used the phrase to signify those sections of the society, which are, attributed and the lowest position in Hindu caste system. Ambedkar equalized it with the meaning of downtrodden, more specifically, with 'broken-men'. Gandhi synonymized it with 'Harijan' and S.M. Mate recognized them as 'Asprushta' meaning untouchable, while British used the term 'Depressed Classes' to reform them. In the post, these castes were called Ati-Shudras or Avarnas, placed outside the Chaturvarna system. They were also achchuta i.e., untouchables. Their touch, voice and even their shadow was believed to pollute caste Hindus.³⁹

The Dalits identification process emanates from the caste structure locally defined in each region as untouchables in the séances that their touch and sometimes even their shadows were considered polluting other higher castes. Traditionally, the identification of a popular caste used to be assisted by differences in style of clothing, hairstyle, food-

³⁷ Murugkar, Lata, op.cit., p. VII (preface)

³⁸ James Messy, op cit, p.14

³⁹ Shah, Ghanshyam, *Dalit identity and politics*, ed., Sage Publication, New Delhi.2001.

practices, standard of living and many other lifestyle choices. Thus, giving rise to the social distance within the Hindu caste structure.

The word Dalits does not confine itself merely to economic exploitation but also to suppression of culture-way of life and value-system and, more importantly, the denial of dignity. In other words, the Dalits are socially weak, economically needy and politically powerless people who are being deprived of basic rights and are suppressed on account of their lowly birth.⁴⁰ It was vehemently objected by various social reforms like Gandhi, Ambedkar etc. their action provided a new social space and identity for untouchables.

Though Ambedkar did not popularize this word in his writings and philosophy, but has remained a key source in its emergence and popularity.⁴¹ It is of relatively recent origin nearly of the 1960s in the public debate. Dalit panthers and organization of Dalits in Maharashtra used the term to assert their identity for rights, human dignity and self-respect. The word Dalit however has acquisitioned general acceptance during the riots between SCs and others caste group in Bombay in the early 1970s. Later, the term acquired a wider connotation on account emergence of Dalit literature.

It has essentially emerged as a political category given the prevailing situations. For some, it connotes an ideology for fundamental change in the social structure and relationships. According to Gangadhar Pantwane, Dalit is not a caste. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. The Dalit believes in humanism.⁴² While Ambedkar believes that 'Dalithood is a kind of life condition which characterizes the exploitation, suppression

⁴⁰ Michael, S. M .*Dalit in Modern India: Vision and Value*, Vistaar. New Delhi. 1999.

⁴¹ Shah, Ghanshyam. Oc pit.

⁴² Ibid.

and marginalization of Dalits by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper castes under Brahminical ideology'.⁴³

Further, the Indian Constitution termed them as 'Scheduled Caste'. It attempted to replace the negative identification of untouchables with a positive social identity by enclosing exceptional amenities and, thus, bringing them into mainstream. It is a fact that independent India replaced the identity of untouchables and gave them a new identity i.e. Scheduled Caste.

It is argued that when one asserts one's Dalit identity one conveys a message that he/she is not united with the hierarchical 'Hindu' fold; one is oppressed and marginalized.⁴⁴ Now, they have begun to articulate their identity, asserting not only equality for themselves but also struggling to bring about revolutionary changes in the social order based on equality and liberty. In a way, Dalit identity conveys their aspirations and quest for a new social order. Since 'consciousness itself is a product of struggle, which requires us to internalize repression by the other, and 'raising consciousness' is merely a stage in this dialectic of resistance and repression.⁴⁵ This is essentially a political agenda. For that, they launch struggles on various issues and participate in electoral politics. Thus, the term Dalit encompasses a firm rejection to the hierarchical Hindu social order.

⁴³ S.M. Michael, op cit

⁴⁴ Pathak, Avijit, *Modernity, Globalization and Identity: Towards a Reflexive Quest*, Aakar Books. Delhi. 2006.

⁴⁵ Meister, Robert, *Political Identity; Thinking through Marx*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

In present times, the term Dalit has been a catch phrase for politicians, social scientists, and even the rural as well as urban folk. It encapsulates all the oppressed and exploited sections of society like scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and even women.⁴⁶

In Uttar Pradesh, the word Dalit was never a familiar word for the lower castes before the Bahujan Samaj Party popularized it in the last two-and-a-half decade or so. Before this “Harijan” was the most popular word. A fierce debate took place between the detractors of Gandhi and his supporters about the alleged motives of the former behind the popularization of the word for the lowest of the low castes of the Hindu society. The term harijan was indeed used by Narshi Mehta, a poet saint and reformer of Gujarat (Seventeenth century), which was later popularized by Gandhi in the twentieth century, incidentally, the term was also used for the children devdasis, the temple prostitutes, who were also technically the children of the gods (Harijans), but were looked down upon in society for their low social-economic status. The debate continued in the Indian media and academic circles for a long time in the 1990s when Kanshi Ram and Mayawati took exception to the use of the term for those now the BSP called Dalits.⁴⁷

The aspirations of Dalits of colonial and post colonial period were mainly driven by two factors: better life and respectable identity.⁴⁸ Democratic system in independent India gave them an opportunity to make their identity stronger to emerge as power center. In the arenas, over the years the general elections have been showing a powerful ascertain though the changes in their electoral behavior. This changed electoral behavior indicates

⁴⁶ Shah, Ghanshyam , op cit. .

⁴⁷ Pradeep Kumar, Dalit Politics in India; BSP Breaking Ground in UP ‘mainstream, Vol.XXXVII.No.19 may1, 8, 1999.

⁴⁸ S.M. Michael, op cit.

that they have now entered into a new phase of political consciousness, mobilization and organization. Now they are striving to create a new political identity for themselves by using the levers of competitive politics and emerging as a strong and imperishable political bloc.

According to the 2001 census, the total SC population is 166.6 million, i.e. 16.2 percent. SC population had a decadal growth of 20.5 per cent during 1991 and 2001. The sex ratio SCs is 936 in comparison to 933 of total population. The literacy rate of the SCs is 54.70 percent as compared to the 64.80 percent of the total population. However, the literacy rate among the SC females is 41.90 percent 53.70 percent of general female. Of the total SC population, 45.61 percent are agricultural labourers and only 32.50 percent are cultivators. The reverse is true of the general category for which the respective figures are 20.70 percent and 19.99 percent.

There is an effort on the part of Dalits to carve out a distinct political niche, indeed an identity, as far as their voting behavior is concerned. Their assertion in electoral politics in order to occupy political and economic space and, thereby, also enhance their social status, is bound to face stiff opposition- physical as well as political, as a result, Dalits have adopted multidimensional strategies ranging from social measures, such as acquiring education, to getting organized for both electoral as well as non-electoral exigencies.⁴⁹

This study mainly concentrates on the state of Uttar Pradesh which emerged as interesting case study for Dalit politics. Many studies have emphasized on the important

⁴⁹ Pushpendra, 'Dalit Assertion through Election', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34 (36), Sep 4, 1999, pp. 23-27

of caste in electoral politics in UP. It is most populous state in India, with a population of 199,581,477 million people as of 1 March 2011.⁵⁰ Lower cast population covered here are those who are listed in the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe lists (Modification) order 1956 for Uttar Pradesh, this order lists 66 castes in the scheduled for state, of which 64 are scheduled castes throughout the state and two Kori and Gonad are for a part of the state. Scheduled Castes of Uttar Pradesh as follows: Chamar, Passi, Dhobi, Khatik, Dusadh, Basor, Dhunuk, Balmiki, Kori, Dom, Gonad, Kol, Dharikar, Kharwar, Musahar, Beldar, Kanijar, Nat, Bhuaiar, Ghasi, Habuda, Hari Kalabaz Kapadia Karbal, Khairaha, Agariya, Badhik Vadi, Bansfore, Baewar, Bedia, Bhandu, Bauriya, Korwa, Lalbegi, Mazhai, Parika, Paradiya, Patri, Saharia, Sansiya, Bahelia, Balai and Bawarai. percentage wise scheduled composition of scheduled caste as follows: Chamar(56%) , Passi(14%), Dhobi(6%), Kori(5%), shilpkar(3%), Balmiki(4%), khatik(2%), Dhunuk and Korwa(1%). the rest of the 57 castes account for a bare 8 percent of the Scheduled caste population.⁵¹

The total population of Scheduled Castes, according to census 2011, in UP is 35,148,377 i.e. 21.15 percent. In recent years, it is the state of UP that has experienced a strong wave of identify ascertain based on caste and community, which has had a significant impact on the entire country. The single dominant party system centered on the Congress has declined, and narrower parties, such as the BJP, the SP, and the BSP, have emerged. These shifts have generated much debate on both the reasons for these profound changes and impact they have had on the state.

⁵⁰ Census Report, Uttar Pradesh, 2011.

⁵¹ R.S. Mathur, 'Source and forms of Discrimination against Scheduled caste in U.P', Indian Journal of Industrial Relation, Vol.11, No (Oct., 1975), pp. 207-221.

Political parties have both created and exploited awareness of lower caste identities, leading to an ‘upsurge from below’ that has brought new social groups into the political mainstream. They have both introduced and pushed demands for self-respect, dignity and social justice for those groups. They are also responsible for the resulting fragmented multiparty system, hung assemblies, and political instability in UP. Parties such as BSP have used the strategy of caste mobilization based on the ideology of Ambedkarism for electoral gains. Thus the major vehicles of social change based on identity assertion in the case of UP have been political parties, the manner in which they have generated awareness about distinct identities, and the way in which they have brought new groups in politics.⁵²

Review of Literature

Scholars writing on India have argued that the resurgence of identities based on caste and religion in recent years is not merely the product of primordial ties but also has a strong materialist basis, and is embedded in a specific socio-economic context. Paul Brass has pointed out that ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing societies such as India that are undergoing rapid social change. The processes of modernization and industrialization often tend to proceed unevenly, benefiting some sections more than others, leading to conflict and competition for political power, economic benefits, and social status among competing elites both within and among different ethnic categories.⁵³

⁵² Sudha Pai, (eds) *Political Processes in Uttar Pradesh: Identity, Economic Reforms and Governance*, Orient Longman. New Delhi. 2007.

⁵³ Brass, Paul R, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Sage Publication. New Delhi: 1991.

Nandini Gupta discusses the links between occupation and social status and poverty more directly, and then the incorporations of migrants in cities as wage labourers. She assesses the connection between both of these and a religious power movement, Adi Hinduism.⁵⁴ Challenging the notion of caste as a colonial artifact, Susan Bayly explores the emergence of the ideas, experiences and practices which gave rise to so-called 'caste society' over a period of 350 years, from the pre-colonial period to the end of the twentieth century. Combining historical and anthropological approaches, Bayly frames her analysis within the context of India's dynamic economic and social order. She, thereby, interprets caste not as the essence of Indian culture and civilization, but rather as a contingent and variable response to the enormous changes that occurred in the subcontinent's political landscape both before and after colonial conquest.⁵⁵

Zelliot studies the history of Maharashtra to find out the roots of this most unusual movement among the 'untouchables'. She describes the history of the social, political and religious movement of untouchables led by Ambedkar from its 19th century roots to the recent development of Dalits literature, and the political development and the Buddhist conversion.⁵⁶

Zoya Hasan analyzes the structure and issues of party politics in north, India and, more specifically, in relation to the response of certain castes and classes in Aligarh district of western U.P. she assesses the patterns and shifts in mobilization over a fifty-

⁵⁴ Nandini Gooptu, 'Cast and Labor: Untouchable Social Movement in Urban Uttar Pradesh in The Early Twentieth Century', in Peter Robb, ed., *Dalit Movements and the meaning of labor in India*, Oxford university press, Delhi, 1993.

⁵⁵ Bayly, Susan, *Cast, and Society and Politic in India: From the Eighteenth Centenary to Modern Age*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁵⁶ Zelliot, Eleanor. *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essay on the Ambedkar Movement*, Manohar. New Delhi, 2001.

year period and the extent to which there are related to changes in the political economy of the district. The author shows that the stakes of both middle and rich peasants influence their responses to the policies of these political parties.⁵⁷

Gail Omvedt analyses the ideology and organization of the movement and its interaction but with the freedom struggle (particularly with Gandhi and Gandhism) and the 'class' struggles of the workers and peasants (and their dominant ideology-Marxism). She provides a historical account of the origin and development of the caste system and analyses the Dalits movement as part of the broader anti-caste movement, which remains a central democratic movement in Indian society. In this process, the Dalits sought to transform the basic structures of the Indian social system while challenging 'Hindu nationalism'. She bases her arguments on a modified historical materialism, which takes into account the realities of caste, class and gender, and also includes a critical analysis of Ambedkar's thought, which is the dominating ideology of the Dalits movement. Her study was based on research material drawn from three linguistic areas - Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.⁵⁸

Omvedt explores and reviews the sensibility, which equates Indian tradition with Hinduism with Brahmanism, which considers the Vedas as the foundational texts of Indian culture and discovers within the Aryan heritage the essence of Indian civilization. She argues that even secular minds remain imprisoned within this Brahminical vision, and the language of secular discourse is often steeped in a Hindu ethos. She highlights the alternative traditions, nurtured within Dalits movements, which have questioned this way

⁵⁷ Hasan, Zoya, *Dominance and Mobilization: Rural Politics in Western Uttar Pradesh (1930-1980)*, Sage, New Delhi, 1989.

⁵⁸ G. Omvedt, *Dalit and the Democratic Revolution: Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in the Colonial India*, Sage, New Delhi, 1994.

of looking at Indian society and its history and understand the visions, which seek to change the world in which Dalits live.⁵⁹

Caste is a central symbol for India, suggesting an area, which is socially and culturally different from other places, as well as expressing its essence. Nicholas B. Dirks argues that caste is in fact neither an unchanged survival of ancient India nor a single system that reflects some core culture. Rather than being an expression of Indian tradition, caste is a relatively modern phenomenon-the product of the encounter between India and British colonial rule. He traces the career of caste through history and examines the rise of caste politics in contemporary India, in particular caste-based movements and their implications for Indian nationhood.⁶⁰

Equality is quintessential to any modern democracy, yet in democratic societies around the world the search for equality has brought bitterness, frustration, and violence. Barbara R. Joshi raises the question: how can nations in which leaders and public policies are chosen by majority vote protect long suppressed minorities from continuing majority oppression? In the context of Indian untouchables, she explores the impact of reform strategies. Can we rely on long-term economic change to ensure equality for minorities that also face social prejudice? She argues that when such minorities seek equality, they must invariably challenge entrenched hierarchies of social privilege and economic power. Further, she finds strong arguments for the value of policies that have guaranteed this

⁵⁹G. Omvedt, *Dalit Visions: The Anti-caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian identity*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2006.

⁶⁰Dirks, Nicholas, B. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Permanent Black, Delhi.2004.

minority at least limited access to the political arena and thus helped to sustain the struggle for equality.⁶¹

Sudha Pai traces the growing nexus between agrarian transformation, class formation and mobilization and electoral in Uttar Pradesh. In the 1989 election, Janata Dal gained the support of the rich peasant class and brought agrarian interest to power there. In 1991 elections Mandir-Masjid and Mandal played a central role. Though two factions of erstwhile Janata Dal performed well in certain pockets but the break-up of the party rendered its agrarian base ineffective and the collages of Congress also made the BJP a strong political force. She concludes that the 1991 elections do not constitute a turning point in UP politics, agrarian issues remain important and revival of agrarian based political groups should emerge again. She provides details about the agrarian perspectives and strategies of mobilization and social and regional base of political parties in Uttar Pradesh.⁶²

In another, work, she examines what the emergence of the BSP has meant for the vast majority of subaltern Dalits, and whether it has contribute to the social deepening of Indian democracy, or merely helped in the upward mobility of the elite sections of the Dalits. She describe the emergence, ideology and programmers', mobilization strategies, electoral progress and political significance of BSP against the backdrop of a strong wave of Dalits assertion of U.P. Based upon extensive fieldwork in western UP, government reports and interviews with Dalits leaders, she explores the reasons for the party's failure to harness the forces of Dalits assertion in UP. The author finds that a party once

⁶¹ Joshi, Barbara R. *Democracy in Search of Equality: Untouchability Politics and Indian Social Change*, Hindustan Publishing Corporation. Delhi, 1982.

⁶² Sudha Pai, *Utter Pradesh; Agrarian Change and Electoral Politics*, Shipra Delhi. 1993.

eulogized as a social movement that would bring about social transformation, later turned into an opportunistic political party, which aims to break the hold of the brahminical elite on the state and then use its power to uplift the Dalits. She claims that a shift towards a more egalitarian society based on empowerment at the grassroots level, Dalits movements anywhere in the country will find it difficult to realize their goals.⁶³

She also traces the historical process that led to the emergence of a Dalit political leadership in Uttar Pradesh, and offers a wealth of insights on that complicated question. She shows that the representation of Dalits interests has come not from a Dalits centric party-the Bhujan Samaj Party (BSP). In fact, the very choice of words to name the former untouchables conveys the status of identity in the political representation process. Pai suggests that identity needs to be constructed and activate, that is, mobilized, in order to become a political resources.⁶⁴

Harish K. Puri asserts that the position of Dalits and their conditions of life are no less shaped by the diverse historical material conditions in different parts of India than by religion and ideology. The regional diversities cover a wide range of differences in the historical evolution of caste hierarchy, social reform movements, the differential impact of socio-economic changes, the affirmative action's and the experiences of collective Dalits resistance and mobilization. Punjab region, having the largest percentage of Dalit population, is known as a 'notable exception' to the widely prevalent Brahminical view of caste and untouchability. Sikh religion made a significant difference in the region. The

⁶³ Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: the Bhujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage, New Delhi, 2002.

⁶⁴ Sudha Pai, *A Quest for Identity through Politics: the Scheduled Cast in Uttar Pradesh*, in Stephanie Tawa Lama –Rewal, ed., *Electoral Reservation, political Representation and social Change in India: A Comparative perspective*, Manohar. New Delhi, 2005.

other notable influences are-the impact of changes in the political resistance and mobilization, Dalits literature and the position of Dalits in the Sikh Community.⁶⁵

S.K. Gupta discusses the multifaceted struggle of the Scheduled castes-the crusade of their transformation from an apolitical, ostracized and indigent mass into a crucial factor in the political structure. He examines the inter-play of the forces, generated by both the British Raj and the changing complexion of the Indian national movements, which helped their emergence as a political power in India. He traces the checked career of the term Scheduled Castes and conducts a province-wise survey of their socio-economic condition. He also examines the manipulation of the Scheduled Castes census in the game of the 'politics of numbers', and highlights the part played by Dr. Ambedkar has also by other prominent leaders, especially, M.C. Rajah, who have hitherto remained ignored.⁶⁶

Kancha Ilaiah looks at the socio-economic and cultural differences between Dalit Bahujan and Hindus in the contexts of childhood, family life, market relations, power relations, Gods and goddesses, death and, not least, Hindustan. Synthesizing many of the ideas of Bahujan, he presents their vision of a more just society. He argues that Dalit Bahujan and their culture is sharply different from Hindu culture.⁶⁷

Ghanshyam Shah examines the many facets of on-going Dalit struggles particularly for identity. He discusses it in the wake of four recent developments in the world of the Dalits. Firstly, equality for Dalits is now increasingly being recognized as a

⁶⁵ Puri, Harish K. *Dalits : In Regional Context*, Rawat, New Delhi,2004.

⁶⁶ S.K. Gupta, *The Scheduled Caste in Modern Indian Politics : Their Emergence as a Political Power*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, New Delhi.

⁶⁷ Ilaiah, Kancha. *Why I am not a Hindu: a Shudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Politically Economy*, Samya, Calcutta.2002.

desirable norm in Indian society. Secondly, capitalist development has begun to weaken the caste system. Thirdly, Dalits are beginning to experience a medium of social mobility due to the policies of positive discrimination, and lastly; there has been an unprecedented rise in political consciousness among Dalits. Providing a perspective from below, he emphasize that though social mobility, economic development and political recognition have benefited a few Dalits, the draw backs of these changes are manifold. In particular, they have created benefited are in constant danger of being co-opted by the traditional upper classes.⁶⁸

He also analyzed 'classic' writings on caste in order to understand democratic politics of India, including those by G.S. Ghurye, Louis Dumont, Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar. He also includes explains various facets of dalit struggle including relation between caste and social transformation.⁶⁹ S.M. Michael explores the social, economic, political and cultural content of the Dalit articulation and its relevance for the nation both today and in the future. The Dalit movement not only rejects the very ideas of pollution, impurity and 'untouchability' but also in the process, it is forging a new vision for Indian society, which is different from that espoused by the higher castes. He maintains that one of the profound changes in contemporary Indian society has been the emergence of a new sense of identity among the Dalits.⁷⁰

G.W. Briggs presents an accurate and complete account of the Chamars of UP. To do so, he included a considerable amount of material which has been with variations, is the common possession of many castes. The basis of his work has been the Chamars of

⁶⁸ Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: the Bhujan Samaj Party in Utter Pradesh*, Sage Publication, New Delhi.2002.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ S.M. Michael, op cit

UP (formerly known as the United Provinces), but the Chamars and leather works of other parts of India have been noted as well. Apart from official census and other ethnographic reports, material from works on anthropology, ethnology, animism and magic have been used as sources for investigations. The author has also interviewed men of all important sub-castes, namely, farmers, tanners, shoemakers, wizards, gurus and servants, those residents in the villages as well as in the towns and cities. He places due emphasis has been given here to the Chamar point of view.⁷¹

Untouchables have, for many centuries, occupied a very low place in Indian society. Even today, they are among the most subordinated and poorest people in the country. But, despite many efforts to ameliorate their conditions, a considerable edifice of discrimination persists.⁷² M.N. Srinivas gives an exhaustive and detailed an ethnographic account of village life and the complexities of inter and intra-caste relations of Rampura, a multi-caste village in south India.⁷³

Badri Narayan studies the burgeoning Dalit politics in north India and shows how Dalit women heroes (viranganas) of the 1857 Rebellion have emerged as symbols of Dalit assertion in Uttar Pradesh and are being used by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) to build the image of its leader, Mayawati. While demonstrating how myths and memories of the role of Dalits in India's freedom struggle are employed for constructing identity, and then reconstructed for political mobilization, he narrates some of the tales used to develop political consciousness at the grassroots levels. He reveals how stories picked up from among the people themselves-are reinterpreted packages and disseminated orally

⁷¹ G.W. Briggs, *The Chamar*, Low Price Publications. New Delhi.1920.

⁷² Mahar, J Michael. *The Untouchables in Contemporary India*, ed., Rawat, Jaipur 1998.

⁷³M.N. Srinivas, *The Remembered Village*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi. 2002.

and via pamphlets. He describes how gods, heroes and other cultural resources of each caste are converted into political capital by giving them a visual image through calendars, statues, posters and memorials. And, shows how the BSP creates and recreates historical material to expand its electoral base. Based on field studies and secondary information, the author outlines the politics of dissent, which used historical and cultural resources as identity markers in political mobilization.⁷⁴

Sukhadeo Throat contends that while affirmative action policies in other countries, have been used both for private and public sector from the very beginning, in India the privatization process concomitant with the withdrawal of the state from many spheres under the liberalization regime, have further narrowed and compressed the little space that the discriminated groups had gained till now. Given the range of economic discrimination against marginalized groups, the reservation policy for the private sector ought to cover not only employment, but also markets, agricultural land, capital, consumer goods, education, housing, government contracts, etc.⁷⁵

Sukhadeo Throat and Paul Attewell examine the prevalence of discrimination in the job application process of private sector enterprises in India. The study is based on a field experiment where authors replied to job advertisements in major English dailies sending their applications to each call-as an upper caste Hindu applicant, as a Dalit and as

⁷⁴ Badri Narayan, *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*, Sage, New Delhi, 2006.

⁷⁵ Throat, Sukhadeo, 2004. 'On Reservation Policy for private sector', Economic and Political Weekly, June

a Muslim. Using statistical analysis, they assess the data discriminatory process operates even at the first stage of the application process.⁷⁶

Sukhadeo Throat and Katherine S. Newman introduce the study of discrimination with particular reference to the caste system. They highlight the ways in which caste persists as a system of inequality that burdens the Indian economy with inefficiencies in allocation of labor and other critical resources, reducing the full development of human capital in society. Far from disappearing as the economy modernizes, discrimination remains a problem, which, for reasons outlined here, is not amenable to self-correction, but rather requires interventionist policies to remedy.⁷⁷

Vivek Kumar attempts to understand Dalits in academic as well as theoretically. He tries to look in to that how Indian sociality has failed to locate Dalits in the Indian society, in general, and the Hindu social order, in particular. Why, even after a century of development of sociology in the country, Dalits occupy a dubious position particularly vis-à-vis the Hindu social order? The 'book view' of caste argues that there are only four Varnas, but many sociologists-Indian, European and others-have portrayed Dalits as the fifth varna of Hindu society without any convincing explanation. But why they have been included in the theoretical scheme of Varna as the fifth Varna of the Hindu social order? He criticizes the usage of politically incorrect terminology by Indian sociologists in their discussions on Dalits. He feels that because of the ambiguous location of Dalits and the

⁷⁶ Throat, Sukhadeo and Paul Attewell, 2007. '*The Legacy of Social Exclusion: A Correspondence Study of job Discrimination in India* ', Economic and Political Weekly, October.13.

⁷⁷ Thorat, Sukhadeo and Katherine, S Newman, 2007.'Caste and Economic Discrimination Causes Consequences and remedies,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, October13, 2007, pp. 34-41.

use of a value-loaded terminology for them, Indian sociologists have not been able to record substantive issues related to Dalits.⁷⁸

Ambedkar had declared that he would make India a Buddhist nation. This reflected his deep concern for making India a society and a nation where the principles of justice, reason and concern for the other would be the guiding principles for organizing social life. In Ambedkarian conception, Buddha's concern was for creating a righteous moral, social order. Such an understanding of Buddha's teachings is assuming increasing relevance today. Ambedkar wrote a volume titled *Buddha and His Dhamma*. Ramesh Kamble attempts to reconstitute Buddhism as a vehicle of social-ethical reconstruction that has implications not only for the recovery of the subjectivity of the oppressed (for instance dalits), but also articulates a vision of a just and human India and the world.⁷⁹

Ananta Kumar Giri looks into the limits of identity politics as a part of rethinking identity, difference, community, culture and multiculturalism. He argues that identity politics, many a time, has taken an involuntary turn in which there has been an assertion on one's identity; but, such an assertion has not been accompanied by a self-critical move to be reflective about one's asserted identity and be dialogical to many others in the creation and living of one's identity. This uncritical, assertive move within identity politics constitutes a danger to self and cultural creativity. It is argued that in face of such challenges, an ethics and politics of identity formation, which is not exclusionary but

⁷⁸ V. Kumar, 'Situating Dalit in Indian Sociobiology', *Sociological Bulletin* Vol. 54(3) September-December, 2005, pp. 29-37.

⁷⁹ Ramesh Kamble, 'Contextualising Ambedkarian Conversion', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 11, 2003, pp. 27-36.

dialogical praxis in which the self and the other are in dialogue, rather than at each other's throats with sharpened knives. This dialogical praxis requires self-development and self-transformation on the part of mobilizes of identities-issues that are conspicuous by their absence in the predominantly political connotation and mobilization of civil society at present.⁸⁰

Context of Study

Dalits indeed constitute significant portion of Indian population and still considered to be languishing for better life. In this context the identity formation process acquired prominence as it facilitates for emergence of confident and healthy Dalit self. Identity formation process in fact took birth in British colonial rule and still continuing. In fact the ascendancy of neo liberal model of development stimulated the identity based politics as a means to carve out active participatory part in development process. It was this context further stimulated the identity formation process among Dalits. Hence a comparative study of historical and contemporary analysis of identify formation process is useful in tracking the continuities and discontinuities in the discourse and practices of Dalit identity formation process in colonial and postcolonial periods of India.

Objectives of study

The various struggles launched by dalits, whether they are for protesting the practice of Untouchablity and prepetition of atrocities, or demanding minimum wages, and land rights, employment, self respect and dignity and political representation, have aimed at

⁸⁰ G. Ananta Kumar, 'Civil Society and the Limits of Identity Politics ', *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 50(2), September, 2001, pp, 56-61.

raising consciousness among Dalits. However, based on this above research question, the present study tries to historically explore the following objective.

- Understand identity politics among dalits through its historically and dialectics.
- Analyze the process of political mobilization and its various strategies.
- Understand the process of political mobilization and the emergence of dalits identity-its geneses, process, linkage and consequences.
- Examine various socio- cultural, political and economic changes among dalits.
- Study new religious identities that have emerged during dalits movement in the post –independence period under.
- Understand the role of the state and civil society organization in improving the status of dalits.
- Analyze the socio-economic background of dalits political discourses.

Hypothesis

-Colonial rule has created a dynamic context for emergence of multiple identities among the marginalized sections of India in general and Dalits in particular.

-Colonial modernity enabled Dalits to articulate their identity based upon the principles of dignity and self respect.

-The identity formation process among Dalits was crafted by politically and socially consciousness intelligentsia in United Provinces.

-It the postcolonial period, Dalit identity formation process has mainly been driven by BASCEF, BSP and Dalit Buddhist movement.

- Dalit identity process is basically an emancipatory project to provide not only respectable identity but also laid down a path for progress of Dalit society. This process is critically associated with identity formation process.

Methodology

This study is basically an historical and contemporary analysis of Dalit identity formation process. To construct this picture we depended upon both primary and secondary sources. So far as secondary sources are concern, we have consulted books and articles related to various themes of Dalit history and politics. Primary sources included archival sources such as census, district gazettters, proceedings of government departments, reports of various committees, publications of BSP, BAMCEF in the form of pamphlets, reports, news items etc. Attempt has also been made to document the popular historical writings and their role in identity formation process of Dalits in Utter Pradesh.

Brief note on Chapterisation

This thesis has been divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduced the thematical aspects of this thesis including review of literature, objectives of study, hypothesis, methodology.

Chapter two entitled Dalit Identity as Evolutionary Discourse in India documents the evolutionary trajectory of Dalit identity formation in different parts of India in the context of colonial rule and various factors that have influenced the process.

Chapter three named Dalit Discourse and Identity: A Study of BAMCEF focus on historical dimension of Dalit identity formation process and its impact upon emergence of BAMCEF and its role in creation of Dalit identity and politics.

Chapter four entitled Bahujan Samaj Party and Dalit Identity explores the role of BSP in creation of congenial conditions of evolution of Dalit identity in Utter Pradesh and its impact upon the political mobilization of Dalits.

Chapter five of their thesis entitled Buddhism and Dalit identity in UP concentrates on the impact of Buddhism particularly impact of Ambedkar's conversion into Buddhism in UP and how it impacted upon the religious and social identity of Dalits in UP.

Chapter six is conclusion which proposes summery of thesis and mentions some of the important findings of the study and at the same time proposes future prospects of the areas of identity politics and Dalits.

CHAPTER- II

DALIT IDENTITY AS EVOLUTIONARY

DISCOURSE IN INDIA

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DALIT IDENTITY AS EVOLUTIONARY DISCOURSE IN INDIA

This chapter traces the roots of Dalit identity formation from pre-colonial to contemporary periods by focusing on evolutionary process of Dalit discourse on identity formation process. By using historical and contemporary model of analysis this chapter explores the evolutionary trajectory of Dalit identity formation process. So far as discourse of Dalit identity in pre-colonial period is concern, the ideas of Kabir, Ravidas and Acchuta Nand have been examined. In case of colonial period attempt has been made to document various movements of Dalits and by Dalits to assert new forms of identity in different parts of India. This chapter also explores the Dalit identity formation in postcolonial India by focusing on some of the famous autobiographies of prominent Dalit personalities. The main argument of this chapter is that intellectuals critically contributed for emergence of identity consciousness among the lower castes of India in the domains of socio-cultural and politics. This chapter also proposes that Dalit identity formation process is immensely facilitated by the intellectuals mentioned above who provided socio-cultural consciousness among masses belong to lower castes.

Intellectual reconstruction of the Dalit identity and their articulation of historical and cultural dimensions of Dalit society have indeed long history. This chapter does not focus on ancient period rather mainly focus on medieval Bhakti movement which created sense of fluid unity among lower castes of India to analyze pre-colonial situation. The main reason for this selection is that in the contemporary discourse of Dalit identity immensely influenced by the ideas of Bhakti saints. Hence this chapter traces the pre-

colonial roots of Dalit identity and its convergence in colonial period in the domain of identity formation from the perspective of mystical spirituality. Celebrated Bhakti saints Kabir, Ravidas and Acchuta Nand made a unique contribution in the form of questioning the validity Brahmanical framework of Indian society. They questioned the religious restrictions on worship prevailed during medieval and early modern period. Even though they operated in the domain of religion their teachings have strong socio-economic and cultural aspects egalitarian ethos forming overarching paradigm. As result of this Bhakti movement became popular among the Sudras and masses belong to lower social strata of Indian society. This chapter explores, by referring to select Dalit autobiographies, the contribution of the Adi-movements, the non-Brahman movements against the Brahmin hegemony, bhakti saints attempts of the intellectual re- construction of the Dalit identity and the identity movements in the contemporary period leading to the culmination of the reconstruction of the Dalit identity.

This chapter finds out the evolutionary trajectory of the Dalit identity in the pre-colonial period for a penetrating understanding of the evolution of the identity formation process among lower sections of Indian society. Identity formation is based on the experience of the Dalits in relation to within their community and with upper caste Hindus. The experience about oneself and the community is a part of the existing socio-economic, political, cultural order. Identity as a concept is based on the experience of one - self in relation to others, similar beliefs and cultural expressions that cause to formulate

the identity. This can as well be applied to the identity formation of the Dalits against the backdrop of various phases of the consciousness building movements.⁸¹

Initially the identity formation of the Dalits critically related to the Bhakti movement, which helped construct an identity in opposition to the Brahminical framework of identity. The mystics who led the Bhakti movement include Ramanand and Raidas in the North, Chaitanya and Chandidasa in the East, Eknath, Choka Mela, Tukaram and Narsinh Mehta in the Western parts and Ramanuja, Nimbaraka and Basava, Veemana and Veerabrahmam in the South. Their contribution to the anti-Brahmin thought lies in opposing caste distinctions and asserting equality before God. M.G. Ranade called the Bhakti movement being unbrahmanical.⁸² However, the saint poets did not advocate detachment from normal worldly life as a prerequisite for the salvation. They advocated normal family life in society. Unlike the Brahmin priests, Bhakti poets disapproved of renunciation, asceticism and celibacy as the means of enlightenment. The significant contribution of the Bhakti poets is that the untouchables identified themselves as anti-brahmanical by which they formed a unique non-Brahmin identity. Medieval Bhakti movement thus an intellectual revolution which not only questioned the established values of Brahmanical society but also envisaged society based upon emancipatory and egalitarian ethos.

⁸¹ Ramnarayan Rawat, 'politics and acchut identity: a study of scheduled castes federations' in Suvir Kaul (ed), *The partition of memory: the after of the division of India*, Indian university, Bloomington, 2002.

⁸² Braj Ranjan Mani, *Debrahmanising History: Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society*, New Delhi, Monohar, 2005, 168-69.

Kabirpanth is a prominent religious reforms movement which spread in most of the northern part of country. it was founded by saint poet Kabir (1398-1494) who lived in Kashi. He preached spiritual as well as social equality .therefore Kabir panth became popular among the untouchable. Kabir who is generally placed in the fifteenth century, emphasized the unity of god whom he calls by several names such as Rama, Hari, Govinda, Allah, Sain, Sahib, etc .He strongly denounced idol worship, pilgrimages, bathing in holly rivers or taking part in formal worship, such as Namaz. Nor did he consider it necessary to abandon the life of normal householder for the sake of sanity life.

Though familiar with yogic practice, he considers neither asceticism nor book knowledge important for true knowledge. As a modern historian, Dr Tara Chand, says that:

The mission of Kabir was to preach a religion of love which would unite all caste and creeds rejected those features of Hinduism and Islam which were against this spirit and which were of no importance for the real spiritual welfare of the individual.”Kabir strongly denounced the caste system, especially the practice of untouchablity, and emphasized the fundamental unity of man .he upheld the fundamental unity of man and was opposed to all kinds of discrimination between human being, whether on the basis of Castes, or religion, race, family or wealth .his sympathies were decidedly with the poor man with whom he identified himself. However he was not a social reformer, his emphasis being reform of the individual under the guidance of a true guru or teacher.⁸³

⁸³ Cited in P.L. Singh, *Kabir Granthwali*, Sateek, Ashok Prakashan, 1969.

Kabir said about himself that he was never touched pen or paper. He was totally uneducated and not scientifically educated but had wise insight and was a revolutionary. His thinking was practical as well as radical. He presented a simple form of bhakti and spirituality which was appealing to the people. Abul Fajal uses the word “Mujahidin” for Kabir which means “Advatavada”. Kabir was deeply involved in Indian society, its traditions, and values struggles, problems. his heart and mind were fully alive to the spiritual, cultural, ideological and behavioral pattern of Indian life. Poetry became an effective tool for Kabir in communicating the mystical experience. In 15th century the society is totally based upon caste, class, social status, profession, language, region and community. The whole society was divided into two religions Hindu and Muslim and there were so many castes belonged to different religion .in Hindustan the Vedic theory is strongly rooted on society. Kabir attacked on the Vedic theory and totally against the Ashram Vyaastha and Vedic theory. Where the four Verna’s were described .the brahamans originate from the mouth of the manu or brahma, the kshatriya originate from the shoulder, vaishya originate from the thies and the shudra from feet. against this theory, he said strongly that.

Haath, pow, mukh, jangh se, jhoot, jano, baat,

Paanch tatva ka doosra raj virajnke boond!

Ek ghate teesra Brahmana, kshatriya, sood’!!⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Kabir was totally against the Varna theory about the Purushukta. He says that shoulder, feet, mouth, thighs all these are wrong views. He believes in five elements and all these castes are made from one element. Kabir criticized on the birth and origin of human being of different caste, Kabir said that if any Brahmin proud of his Brahmin caste origin, then it is not a reason of proud because the process of birth of all humans are same he said again that if there is no difference of milk of the black and white cow similarly how it is possible that our blood are different.

Hamari kase laho tumahari, kasi doodh!,

Tum kase Brahmin hum kase sood.⁸⁵

Kabir refused acknowledge caste distinctions or to recognize the authority of six school of Hindu philosophy. He held that religion without bhakti was no religion at all and that asceticism, fasting and almsgiving had no value if unaccompanied by worship. As Kabir's writing and saying still from the most important part of the scriptures of his followers, they are of interest not merely as ancient literature, but as living religious forces. One of the chief topics of his instruction was the folly of caste, and idolatry and externalism. Kabir insisted that distinctions of birth are of no importance that all men are brothers, is indeed still earnestly maintained so far as the four higher castes are concerned.⁸⁶

Another important Bhakti saint who revolted against caste based distinctions is Ravidas. He created the social revolution by articulating the notion of *sama samaja*. For the first time ever, marginalized people marched through the streets with their head held

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ V. Dharwadkar, *Kabir: The Weaver Songs*, Penguin, New Delhi, 2003.

high in upper-caste areas. For the first time, these marginalized people sang devotional songs that created the Cultural Revolution. Unlike Kabir, he did not stop with mere ideological awakening. Instead he led a social revolution that briefly allowed the rose of Seva humanism to bloom once more in Kashi. The power of this spiritual and ideological revolution has never been equaled in history.⁸⁷

Ravidass was born in Chamar caste, also known as Kutbandhla, one of the Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh. Chamars are known by their profession of leather and tanning. They were oppressed and their touch and sight were considered polluting by the upper castes. Ravidass revolted against this inhuman system of untouchability. He adopted Bhakti as a mode of expression for his revolt. His Bhakti-based method of revolt was very novel and daring. It was novel because of its emphasis on compassion for all. The principle of compassion for all reflected the egalitarian traits of his social philosophy and struggle. His concept of the absolute faith in the formless God showed the apathy of the elites of his times towards the plights of the downtrodden for whose emancipation he had to seek refuge in no one else but God. His method was daring in the sense that he chooses to imitate the Brahmins in order to symbolize his revolt which was not only highly objectionable but was equally deadly for a Shudra of his times. He challenged the tyranny of Brahmins and defied them by wearing Dhoti (cloth wrapped around the waist), Janeue (sacred thread) and Tilak (sacred red mark on forehead) that were forbidden for the untouchables. He continued with his hereditary occupation of making/mending shoes. He, probably, tried to show that while adopting the prohibited dress and symbols of the upper castes, the lower castes could still keep their identity intact. Thus Ravidass

⁸⁷ Taken from [www. Social revolutionary-Ravidas mulniwasi organaiser.com](http://www.Socialrevolutionary-Ravidasmulniwasiorganaiser.com).

provided an alternative model for the emancipation of the Dalits much (six centuries) before the articulation of the concept of sanskritization. What made the image of Ravidass a catalyst in the emergence of Dalit consciousness was his being a Shudra and at the same time a saint of very high repute.⁸⁸

Ravidas says,

“Ravidas ekhi nor sa, jimi upjuyo sansar!

Unch-nee ch kiss vidh bhay, Brahman, sood, chamar”!!⁸⁹

Ravidass also says,

*“Meri jaati kut bandhlaa dhor dhouwanta nithi baanaarasi aas
paasaa*

*Ab bipar pardhan tihi karih danduouti tere naam sarnaai
Ravidass daasaa”*⁹⁰

The process of sanskritization facilitated the ambitious lower castes to improve ‘its position in the local caste hierarchy’ by pretending to look like the higher castes that enjoy ‘great prestige’ in the hierarchically organized Brahminical social order. Since the caste is given and cannot be changed, the lower castes were left with no option but to imitate the culture of the upper castes. What made the emancipation project of Ravidass

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ B.P. Sharma, *Sant Guru, Ravidas –Vani*, Surya Prakashan, Delhi, 1978.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

different from that of the sanskritization was his emphasis on acquiring social respect without crossing over the caste boundaries.⁹¹

He did not want to pretend to appear like an upper caste to ride the bandwagon of social prestige. On the contrary, he exhibited his protest against the social oppression by putting on the prohibited dress and symbols of the upper castes. By imitating the appearance of the upper castes he did not want the lower castes to abandon their caste to climb up the ladder of the caste hierarchy as in the process of sanskritization. The lower castes need not to be assimilated into the fold of higher castes. They had to, rather, assert for their human rights by challenging the caste hierarchy while being firm in their very caste group. He wanted to dismantle the norm of varnashram dharma (fourfold division of Hindu society based on graded rank system in caste hierarchy) by showing that lower castes were not beyond the pale of spiritual knowledge on the one hand and on the other that Brahmins were in fact hollow figures pumped up with false pride and hypocrisy. In fact, he used caste to cut the steel frame of caste based social order – the only way of Dalit emancipation.⁹²

The Bhakti approach of Ravidass was a non-violent struggle for the emancipation and empowerment of the Shudras. Though he combined humility with Bhakti, his concept of formless God reflected an altogether different picture. Ravidass's God was not humble at all in the typical sense of the term. He was graceful. He was not indifferent to the downtrodden. His low caste but high spiritual status posed a challenge to the Brahminical structures of domination. The Brahmins attempted to undermine his

⁹¹ Manish Kumar, *Saint Ravidas*, Prahat Darshan, New Delhi, 2015.

⁹² www.socialrevolutionary.org/raidas-mulniwasi-organiser.html.

low caste profile by appropriating him in the Hindu fold. They concocted stories to project him as a Brahmin in his previous life.

The egalitarian social philosophy of Ravidass expressed in the mode of poetry became the manifesto of the Dalit consciousness in Punjab. The establishment of a large number of Ravidass Deras by the Dalits in Punjab and in other parts of India over the last few years is a case in point. Ravidass became very popular among the Punjabi Dalit Diasporas as well, who have also constructed Ravidass shrines in order to assert their separate caste identity.⁹³

Thus Ravidass gave a new meaning to bhakti by projecting it as a method of social protest that set the stage for a more secular and radical Dalit movement in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He rejected all forms of religious rituals and sectarian formalities. He also commented graphically on the cursed and abject living conditions of millions of fellow downtrodden. Some scholars were of the opinion that though the devotional songs and hymns of Ravidass reflected the sufferings of the downtrodden, they lack the reformatory zeal and the bitter condemnation of Brahminism and the caste system that animated the poetry of Kabir and Tukaram. Though there is a difference in tone between the poetry of Kabir and Ravidass, both convey the same message. The poetry of Ravidass is known to be full of humility and devotion. But at the same time it is equally imbued with reformatory zeal and concern for the downtrodden. Instead of bluntly snubbing the arrogance of higher castes, he undertook to raise the dignity of his own caste and profession, so that the higher castes could come to realize

⁹³ Ibid.

the shallowness of their self-imposed superiority. He advocated self-help for eliminating sufferings of the Dalits. His vision for self-help is clearly reflected in one of the legends about his refusal to make use of a *Paras* (a mythical stone that turns iron into gold) to get rich. He lent purity and respect to *kirat* (manual work), which also found special mention in the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh faith. In fact, Ravidass's life and poetry provided a vision to the downtrodden to struggle for their human rights and civil liberties in a peaceful and non-violent way.⁹⁴

The bhakti approach of Ravidass was a non-violent struggle for the emancipation and empowerment of the socially excluded sections of the society. Though he combined humility with bhakti, his concept of formless God reflected an altogether different picture. Ravidass's God was not humble at all in the typical sense of the term. He was graceful. He was not indifferent to the downtrodden. His God was rather bold who was not afraid of anyone. He elevated and purified the so-called untouchables. '*Aaisee lal tujh binu kaunu karai. Gareeb niwaaju guseea meraa maathai chhatar dharai... neecho uooch karai meraa govind kaahoo te na darai*' [refrain My Beloved, besides you who acts like this? Protector of the poor, my Master. You hold a royal umbrella over my head] (*Adi Granth*: 1106, translated as in Callewaert and Friedlander, 1992:166)⁹⁵. Ravidass further wrote '*Meri jaati kut bandhlaa dhor dhouwanta nithi baanaarasi aas paasaa. Ab bipar pardhan tih karih danduouti tere naam sarnaai Ravidass daasaa*' [My Caste is *Kutabadhala*, I cart carcasses constantly around Benaras. Now Brahmans and headmen

⁹⁴ Ronki Ram, *Untouchability, Dalit Consciousness, and Ad Dharm Movement in Punjab, Contributions to Indian Sociology*, October 2004, vol.38, no.3, pp. 323-349.

⁹⁵ Henceforth translations of the quotations from the poetry of Ravidass are taken from Callewaert and Friedlander (1992) and the Panjabi couplets (romanized) of his poetry with the page numbers of the *Adi Granth* are taken from Jassi and Suman (2001).

bow down before me, Ravidas the servant has taken refuge in Your Name (Adi Granth: 1293).⁹⁶ It is in this context that his non-violent struggle based on bhakti assumed special importance for the emancipation of the Dalits. He did not only adopt nonviolence in his struggle against social oppression, but also motivated the oppressors to abandon the path of violence. In fact, there is no place at all for violence in the teachings and struggles of Guru Ravidass.

Ravidass's low caste but high spiritual status, however, posed a serious challenge to the oppressive Brahminical structures of domination. The traditional Brahminical institution of *varnashrama dharma* failed to confront Ravidass's pragmatic and revolutionary reasoning based on equality, dignity and fraternity. Instead, the Brahmins attempted to undermine his low caste profile by appropriating him in the Hindu fold. They concocted stories to project him as a Brahmin in his previous life. Thus challenged by the surging popularity of Ravidass, among the lower and upper castes alike, Brahmins knitted layers of mythological narratives about his mythical high caste in his previous life. This was done, probably, to preclude the lower castes from rallying around his name (conversation with Karam Singh Raju, a prolific writer and devotee of Ravidass, Chandigarh, 9 February 2004). Yet another device adopted by the twice born to diminish his popularity was to present him as a Guru of the Chamars only. "This was the final masterstroke to minimize his influence on the society as a whole". Significantly, though Ravidass was himself a Chamar, his egalitarian social philosophy has historically won him many disciples among the upper castes too. Jhali, Queen of Chittor; Mirabai, Rajput princess and daughter-in-law of King of Mewar, Sangram Singh; Prince Veer Singh Dev

⁹⁶ This hymn seems to testify one of the legends in which the bewildered Brahmins were shown prostrating before him after they found his bodily image appear between each and every one of them during a feast thrown by Queen Jhali at Chittorgarh.

Vaghela of Rewa of Madhya Pradesh; and Prince of Kanshi have been among the most prominent ones.

Of all the major contributions made by Dera Ballan, the construction of a mammoth Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir (Temple of Shri Guru Ravidass's Birthplace) at Seer Goverdhanpur, a locality in the city of Varanasi is the most significant. The Sants of Ballan traced the birthplace of Ravidass to a location in the village Seer Goverdhanpur, on the outskirts of Varanasi, near the Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Sant Hari Dass of Dera Ballan had laid the foundation stone of the temple on June 14, 1965. Dalits from India and abroad contributed enormously towards the construction of the temple. Giani Zail Singh, the President of India (July 25 1982-July 25, 1987), visited the Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Temple Seer Govardhanpur on May 25, 1984 (*Sachhi Kahani*, 2007:11-12). The construction of the temple was completed in 1994. Kanshi Ram, the BSP supreme, performed the ceremonial installation of the golden dome atop the temple. KR Narayanan, the then President of India, performed the opening ceremony of the huge monumental entry gate to the temple, on July 16, 1998.

Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir at Seer Goverdhanpur has acquired perhaps the same importance for Dalits as the Mecca for Muslims and the Golden Temple for Sikhs (based on conversations at Deras). Every year during birth anniversary of Guru Ravidass, the Mandir attracts millions of devotees from India and abroad. The Dera Sachkhand Ballan made special arrangements for the pilgrimage of Ravidass devotees to their *Mecca* at Seer Goverdhanpur (Varanasi). Special trains were arranged from Jalandhar city in Punjab to Varanasi especially to participate in the celebrations of the

birth anniversary of Ravidass. This temple serves an important purpose in reminding Dalits of the silent 'social revolution' led by Ravidass in Varanasi, the headquarters of Hindu religiosity. Its unique contribution lies in symbolizing a vision for the future and the forgotten history of the Dalit struggle for equality and dignity in medieval India. Amidst the erstwhile headquarters of the oppressive Hindu social order, Temple of Shri Guru Ravidass's Birthplace has become an important cultural and religious site for the assertion of distinct identity where the ex-untouchables can move around with their heads held high and without the fear of being measured on the scale of caste hierarchy – in a way *Begumpura* in the making. In fact, this temple has turned out to be a repository of separate Dalit identity.⁹⁷

While Bhakti movement created background for fostering identity formation among lower sections of India in pre-colonial period, Adi (indigenous) movement in colonial India is transformation of the former into a socio-political identity in colonial period. The Adi movements indeed played significant role in formation of the Dalit identity all over India. Gail Omvedt argues that "The mobilization of the oppressed and exploited sections of society, the peasants, Dalit, women and low castes that Phule had spoken of as shudras and ati-shudras occurred on a large scale in the 1920s and 1930s, under varying leaderships and with varying ideologies."⁹⁸ Adi movements thus essentially a cultural project aimed at unifying by the way of injecting new confidence among Dalits of India.

⁹⁷ Ronki Ram, 'Untouchability in India with Difference: Ad Dharm, Dalit Assertion and Caste Conflicts in Punjab', *Asian Survey*, Vol.44, No.6, No.Dec, 2004, pp.895-912.

⁹⁸ Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Visions: The Anti-Caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian Identity*, New Delhi : Orient Longman, 2006, p. 34.

To understand the context of identity formation process among Dalits it is useful to track certain changes ushered by British colonial rule and their impact upon lower sections of Indian society in general and Dalits in particular. Economic historians propose that British rule besides its exploitative characters it also created certain new avenues which created opportunities for Dalits. In case of rural economy, the British have promoted unprecedented expansion of agriculture by the way of streamlining land settlements in all over India. Expansion of agriculture, particularly for commercial crops such as sugar, tobacco, plantations, cotton etc necessitated massive quantum of labor. This labor was mainly drawn from Dalits.⁹⁹ At the same time in the urban sphere new professions were opened up for Dalits such as workers in residencies of Europeans, sweepers, and other professions too offered avenues to Dalits to work under less oppressive conditions than in rural areas.¹⁰⁰ Gail Omvedt argues that colonial conditions indeed provided new dynamism to Dalit society to strive for better life. Particularly introduction of western education was main stimulator for measuring the traditional oppressive conditions with more emancipator and rational concepts flown from western civilization. The combination of these factors resulted in assertion of Dalit intelligentsia for better life and mobilization of fellow Dalits to gain benefits from colonial rule. Identity based socio-political movements among Dalits in different parts of India was manifestation of this process.¹⁰¹

The dimension of critique of Brahminical values and propagation of humanistic values could explicitly be seen in case of non-Aryan or the non-brahmin movements in

⁹⁹ Peter Robb, (ed), *Dalit Movement and Meaning of Labor in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.

¹⁰⁰ Tirthankar Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

¹⁰¹ Gail Omvedt, *Dalit and Democratic Revolution: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dalit Movement in Colonial India*, Sage, New Delhi, 1996.

Maharashtra and Tamilnadu, the Adi dharm movements in Panjab and Karnataka which vehemently refute the Brahman centric socio-cultural values. These movements, being aimed at the argument of the original inhabitants, have a common tag 'Adi' which means original inhabitant. Most of the Dalit movements like, "Adi-Dharma" in Punjab, "Adi-Hindu" in UP and Hyderabad, Adi- Dravida, "Adi-Andhra" and "Adi-Karnataka" in South India have a common claim of the Dalits and Sudras being the original habitants of India. These movements articulated the discourse of sons of soil and authors of original Indian civilization.

It was in the 1920s, however, that Dalits began to organize strongly and independently through-out many regions of India. The most important of the early Dalit movements were the Adi-Dharm movement in the Punjab (organized 1926); the movement under Ambedkar in Maharashtra, mainly based among Mahars which had its organizational beginnings in 1924; the Namashudra movement in Bengal; the Adi-Dravida movement in Tamilnadu; the Adi- Karnataka movement; the Adi-Hindu movement mainly centered around Kanpur in U.P; and the organizing of the pulayas and Cherumans in Kerala have been some notable examples.¹⁰² These movements aspired to provide new respectable identity to upcoming Dalit castes in the context of colonial rule. On this trend the observation of Sekhar Bandyopadhyay on the Namasudhra movement presents interesting dimension: "The Namasudhra movement in Bengal is the story of an antyaja or untouchable caste, transforming itself from an amphibious peripheral multitude into a settled agricultural community, protesting against the age-old social disabilities and

¹⁰² Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, *The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period*, Critical Quest, New Delhi: 2007, 13.

economic exploitation it suffered from, entering the vortex of institutional politics and trying to derive benefit out of it through an essentially loyalist political strategy'.¹⁰³

History of the Namashudras reveal the transformative process among lower castes of India during British colonial rule. They were traditionally known as chandals, lived mainly in the low lying swamp areas of Eastern Bengal. The Namasudras or chandals, who are considered untouchables, are originally a tribal community living in the Eastern Bengal even before the formation of the Brahmanical social order. The Namasudra movement protested against the oppressive domination of the high castes showing allegiance to the patronizing colonial elite. This resulted in the emergence of backward class politics in Bengal. The Namasudras embraced Islam or Christianity to avoid the stigma of untouchability in the early twentieth century. Chandal Movement of 1872-73 led to the formation of the Namasudra identity. Led by Harichand Thakur of Faridpur and his son in the subsequent period, the movement believed in education and self-respect as essential conditions for development of Dalits. This movement has great appeal in Bengal and a strong identity based movement among Dalits emerged.¹⁰⁴

Next to Namasudra movement, Ad-Dharm movement, led by Mangoo Ram in Punjab, made a substantial contribution to the social and political life of Dalits in Punjab. He was influenced by the Ghadar movement, a radical organization in California aimed at liberating India from British rule through armed insurrection. He opened a school for the lower caste children in the village, where the Adi-Dharm movement was launched in 1926. The movement however was split into two groups, the other influenced by Arya

¹⁰³ Sekhar Bandyopadlay, *The Namasudra Movement*, New Delhi, Critical Quest, 2005, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

Samaj while the Arya Samaj was making frantic to bring Shudras who had converted to Islam, Christianity and Sikhism back into the Hindu fold, Mangoo Ram thought it appropriate to intervene at this juncture to espouse the Dalit cause and carve out a separate Dalit identity.¹⁰⁵ The ideology and principles of the Ad-Dharm movement greatly influenced the Dalits of the Doaba region decisively contributing to the formation of the Dalit identity. This movement articulates the discourse of Dalits being original authors of Indian civilization and they should feel proud of their identity.¹⁰⁶

The Adi-Hindu movement, under the leadership of Swami Acchutanand, in Uttar Pradesh is another significant movement that contributed to the construction of the Dalit identity in the 1920s. Though Arya Samaj promised to facilitate the social uplift of lower castes, its intention of enslaving untouchables to Hinduism is criticized by the Adi-Hindu leaders. Swami Acchutanand claimed in a speech, “The Samaj aimed to make all Hindus slaves of the Vedas and the Brahmins.”¹⁰⁷

Achutanand and Ram Charan constructed an identity which traces out the history of the original inhabitants of India. They outlined an idealized vision of social equality and of past power and glory of the untouchables. Self-assertion was an important principle of Adi-Hindu movement. Exploring the identities of self-assertion and empowerment that Adi movements espoused, Nandini Goopta states that by asserting that the untouchables were the true masters of the land, the Adi-Hindu preachers cultivated a sense of entitlement to rights and power at the same time as they heightened an

¹⁰⁵ Ronki Ram Mangoo Ram, *Ad Dharm and The Dalit Movement in Punjab*, Critical Quest, New Delhi : 2008, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Jugernsmyer, *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*, Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, 1989.

¹⁰⁷ Nandini Goopt, *Swami Acchutanand and The Adi-Hindu Movement*, Critical Quest, New Delhi: 2006, 13.

awareness of historical deprivation. The stress on *atmagyan* (self-knowledge) and introspection as the source of independent knowledge without higher caste impositions also enabled the exposition of a distinction, autonomous, proud and even defiant self-identity of the untouchables.¹⁰⁸

The Adi-Hindu movement provided not only an ideology of radical equality and a strategy for doing better in everyday life, but also a political culture for civil rights and organized protest.¹⁰⁹ Though the Arya Samaj and Congress have caused to split the Adi-Hindu movement in 1930s, the Adi-Hinduism, on the whole, formed the dominant and sustained form of its political expression and a constructive identity. The Adi Hindu movement thus provided ideological based for emergence of strong Dalit identity however within the matrix of Hindu civilization however with different tone and discourse.

Similar to the Adi movements in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and the Namasudra movement in Bengal, the Adi movements in South India had their resonance in constructing Dalit identity. The untouchable movements in Nagpur, Adi-Dravida movement in Tamilnadu, Adi- Karnataka movement in Mysore, Adi-Andhra movement in Andhra Pradesh under Madras Presidency and Adi- Hindu movement under the Nizam reign had paved the way for constructing the Dalit identity in South India also strongly represent the attempt being made by Dalits to carve out new respectable identity.

¹⁰⁸ Nandini Goopt, p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ R..S. Khare, *the Untouchable as Himself: Ideology, Identity and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984..

In Nagpur, a relatively strong and independent Dalit movement evolved and Kisan Faguji Bansode (1870-1946) was the leader of the Dalits in Nagpur. In 1903, he founded the first organization in Mohapa, his village and many educational institutions including a school for girls in 1907. Bansode wrote several books and started several papers. Later, many leaders especially Vithoba Ravji Moonpandit (1860-1924) and Ganesh Akkaji Gavai (1888-1974) came into light as the untouchable leaders. Gannesh Akkaji Gavai founded a Mahar Library and Mahar Sudharak Mandal in his village. Kalicharan Nandagawali (1886-1962) founded the first girls'

Schools and also became a member of the legislative council. These attempts show that there were several serious attempts made by Dalit intellectuals to transform their society for better life.¹¹⁰

Like Acchutanand in UP and Mangoo Ram in Punjab, E.V.Rama Swamy (1879-1973) popularly known as Periyar led the self-respect movement in Tamilnadu. As one of the greatest anti-Brahman movements in India, the self-respect movement targeted the Brahmin dominance criticizing the idol worship. Aloysius comments on Periyar: "His focus was not God and religion in general or in the philosophical sense but religion in particular – the Brahminical religion – taken in its practical – social dimension of buttressing up social iniquity and in humanity."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Lata Mungerkar, *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological Appraisal*, Popular Publication, Mumbai, 1991.

¹¹¹ G. Aloysius, *Periyar on Islam*, Critical Quest, New Delhi, 2004, p.4.

All the religions, being historical creations, tend to accumulate beliefs and practices that become anachronistic and anti-social. On this process Periyar clarifies that:

The self-respect movement was started with the objective of instilling a sense of self-respect in the people of this country and to unify them. The self-respect movement really endeavors in transparency, to explain why and how the people of our country had lost their self-pride, to assert that the obstacles in their way should be abolished and indeed to abolish such obstacles.¹¹²

Periyar educated the Dravidians and Adi-Dravidians to bring about a cultural revolt with an aim of making society casteless and egalitarian. For Periyar the main culprit caste based oppression in India is Brahmanical ideology. He wanted to educate lower castes to know the roots of oppression and revolt against such forces. On the contribution of Periyar Braj Ranjan Mani observes that:

Stressing egalitarian social relations across caste, community and gender lines, Periyar advocated the overthrow of caste and instituted non-Brahmanic forms of marriage celebrating the equality of women and her right to choose life-partner and other such practices designed to give a death blow to the Brahmanical order. Presenting a radical critique of the religious beliefs and practices in a variety of ways, Periyar wanted to demolish the whole Brahmanic structure of society which he saw as the root cause of the degradation and subordination of Women and the non-brahman populace.¹¹³

¹¹² Ibid, p.5.

¹¹³ Braj Ranjan Mani, *Debrahmanising History: Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 324-25.

Periyar joined the congress in 1919 and became a prominent figure in Tamil Congress. But soon he saw it a Brahman Tamil Congress and left it to organize the self-respect movement. Periyar also disagreed with Gandhi on issues like caste, culture and nationalism. Periyar was thus a pioneer of rationalism, humanism and anti-oppressive ideology.

Another prominent identity based social movement in Tamilnadu was led by Jyothee Thass, who campaigned for education among the untouchables. He set up several schools for Dalits and his writings are remarkably modern for espousing the cause of social emancipating, Buddhism, rationalism and the new egalitarian Dravidian identity.¹¹⁴ He considered the Brahmins mentally, morally and culturally depressed as they clinged on to anachronistic beliefs and obscurantist practices. He tried to project Dalits as original authors of Indian civilization and Buddhism.

Another significant movement of identity took place in Kerala. The movements led by Ayyankali, Pokayil Yohannan and Pamapady John Joseph had a polemical role to enlighten the Dalits of Kerala. Sri Narayana Guru (1856-1928) was a religious reformer for nearly four decades during the most critical period of Kerala's history. He believed in the message of one god, one religion and one caste, which developed a new consciousness among the Dalits. The backward caste movements in Kerala differed from other movements like that of Jotirao Phule, whose movement consisted of Shudras and ati-Shudras (the untouchable) and women. But such an attempt was absent in Kerala

¹¹⁴ Braj Ranjan Mani, p. 314.

and the movement lead by Sree Narayana Guru remained mostly the movement for the upliftment and empowerment of the Izhavas.

Among the Dalit movements in Kerala, the movement by Ayyankali was of great success in constructing Dalit identity. Ayyankali, an illiterate Dalit, unlike Sree Narayana Garu, was not philosophical. His movement was humanistic and democratic. To him socio-cultural issues were more important than the economic issues. Ayyankali fought for the rights of his people to use public space, education and other public amenities to Dalit. By doing so, Ayyankali successfully contributed to the formation of the Dalit identity in Karala based upon self respect and pride.

Ayyankali established open school in Vengannoor in 1904 but faced severe resistance from the caste Hindus. He gathered the scheduled castes to go on strike and continued it for one full year. To protect the strikers against criminal elements recruited by landlords, a small group of youth known as “Ayyankali Pada” was formed under his organization. Another element that Ayyankali movement concentrated on was performing folk arts. Ayyankali collected small band of youth belonging to his caste and trained them in martial and folk arts like Pattukachery, Parijakali, Kolkali, Kurathiattom, Kakkarassi drama and Valli drama. This was indeed a systematic attempt to construct identity by using cultural and power relations in society.

Formation of Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (SJPS) was another significant form of identity formation in the Ayyankali movement. It was democratic in character and gender sensitive. Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha by TT Kesava Shashtri, son-in-law of Ayyankali, obtained the four basic rights for the Dalits: right to appear in public places decently dressed, right to education, cultural rights and the right to be represented in the government. These were the subtle forms of the assertion of the Dalit identity.¹¹⁵

The Dalit movements and literature in Andhra Pradesh began as early as 1900. The Adi-Hindu movements in Hyderabad and Adi-Dravida movement in Andhra region played significant roles in constructing the Dalit identity in the pre- independence period. The Adi-Hindu movement under Nizam rule was led by Bagya Reddy Varma (1888-1939), who organized Jagan Mitra Mandali in 1906, found Many Samngam in 1911 and the Adi-Hindu organization in the same year. Bagya Reddy Varma and his followers strongly fought for the compulsory education to the Dalit children and severely opposed the practices like child marriages, eating meet and using drink in marriages and also against the barbaric practices such as Jogini, Murti and Basivi through which young and uneducated untouchable girls were devoted to gods and goddesses. Between 1906 and 1916, Bagya Reddy Varma's concentration was particularly on educating Dalits through folk songs and street plays. He went across the entire Telangana region and gave the message of revolution to the Dalits. Ariga Ramaswami and B. Syam Sundhar were other

¹¹⁵ The regional survey committee Kerala state (compiled), the History Freedom Movement of Kerala, vol.1 (1600-1885). Government Press, Trivendrum, 1970.

contemporaries of Bagya Reddy Varma who contributed to the construction of Dalit identity in Hyderabad state.

The Adi-Andhra Movement took place in the coastal parts of Andhra Pradesh in Madras Presidency. The common interface between the Adi-Hindu movement in Hyderabad and the Adi-Andhra Movement in Andhra was that both the movements were led by Bagya Reddy Varma in both the regions. The Adi-Andhra movement took place in 1917 by the way of conducting first Provincial Panchama Mahajana Sabha in Vijayawada. Bagya Reddy Varma opposed the use of the term *panchamas*. Some of the significant resolutions were:

-Providing education to Dalit children.

-Forming separate schools for Dalit children.

-Allowing Dalits to use government wells, schools and public shelter, among others.

-The Adi-Andhra Conferences were held every year.¹¹⁶

The Adi-Andhra movement became a platform for political mobilization. Boyi Bhimanna, Kusuma Dharmanna and Jala Rangaswamy wrote against caste oppression, untouchability and discrimination stressing that that the Dalits were the original inhabitants of the Telugu region. Gurram Jashuv's *Piradousi* (1932) *Gabbilam* (The Bat); Kusuma Dharmanna's *Nalla Dhoratham* (1933), *Harijana*

¹¹⁶ Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and Democratic Revolution*, p. 118.

Chathakam (1933) *Madhyapana* *Nishedham* (1930); Boyi Bhimanna's *Paleru* (1940), *Cooliraju* (1947) and *Jana Padhuni Jabhulu* (1940); Jala Rangaswami's *Mala Shuddi* (1930); Nakka China Venkataiah's *Harijana Keerthanalu* (1935); Nuthakki Abraham and Premaiah were among those who wrote about the Dalit identity.

Following the mystics" and the social activists" attempts to crystallize the Dalit identity, Ambedkar (1891-1956) provided intellectual basis to the formation of the Dalit identity at all India level. Following the early Dalit movement, Ambedkar, organized Dalits socially, politically and intellectually through the process of which, the formation of the Dalit identity assumed a definitive form. Ambedkar launched many struggles during the 50 years of his socio-political life. Ambedka's Mahad struggle for the untouchables' access to public water in 1927 was successful as a civil rights issue. Later on he became the champion of human rights. Subsequently, Ambedkar fought for separate electorates. Ambedkar educated the Dalits that their identity is different from that of the Hindus. He even asked the Dalits to have their dwellings away from the Hindu Society. As the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee and the first Law Minister, Ambedkar contributed immeasurably to the socio-cultural assertion of the Dalit identity. With the embracing of Buddhism with many of his followers and in proclaiming Buddhism as the alternative to the irrational Hinduism, Ambedkar provided spiritual basis to the Dalit identity. Jyothiba Phules women liberation movement inspired Ambedkar very much. Liberation of the women was taken up by him as the main part of renaissance. In addition to the Hindu reformist programmes of the widow marriages and annihilation of the *sati* system, he concentrated on education and rights for women. He

struggled hard to liberate women from the age old slavery and to create a share in all the spheres of life.

While Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj kept women in dark, Ambedkar demolished these dens and opened up new horizons of freedom and equality for women. Instead of proposing reformations for women, he put forward total liberation for women. While *Manusmruthi* enslaved women, Ambedkar awakened their mind, ignited their heart, strengthened their energies and resurrected them as powerful human beings. He fought against the state and society to realize justice for women.

The services rendered by Ambedkar to the liberation of women as a Bombay Legislature member, Law and Labour member in Viceroy's Executive Council, Indian Constitution Drafting Committee Chairman and Law Minister played an important role in the enactment of laws. His relentless fight for bringing out revolutionary changes in the social and economic life of women in the form of introducing the Hindu Code Bill is important. On marriage, divorce and succession of parental properties, he proposed the abolition of polygamy and also the right of divorce to Hindu women and a share in the husband's and father's property. However, the Dalit movement in India was split into groups after Ambedkar passed away. In the subsequent period, two Dalitwriter-activists Namder Dhasal and J.V. Pawar took initiative in forming the Dalit Panthers movement in Bombay in 1972. Dalit poetry, Dalit theatre (Street Plays) and Dalit autobiographies remained the direct means to address and educate the Dalits. The Dalits

in India struggled for human rights. Self-assertion, self-respect and Dalit empowerment are the major themes of the movement and it imparted the proletarian radical class identity to Dalits and also linked their struggle of all oppressed people over the globe.¹¹⁷

The Dalit movements from 1980s onwards aimed at fighting for Dalit assertion and concrete political action. The exploitation and discrimination of the Dalits on one hand and their protest and revolt on the other hand initiated the questions of self-assertion and consciousness among the Dalits. Through their revolt, Dalits provided a new identity for them. This identity strengthened its resolve to fight every form of discrimination and determine the path for liberation. Asserting themselves, the Dalits challenged the very foundation on which the Indian society and polity are based.

Taking the lead from Ambedkar's theoretical basis of the Dalit identity, literary writers and activists began to narrate the Dalit experiences in different parts of India. Dalit writers and activists brought awareness among the Dalits. The concerns of the writers include denial of access to resources, participation in political processes, exclusion from social institutions, construction of Dalit identity, demanding equal share in resource, among others. Their writings are aimed at building awareness among Dalits for realizing their rights for better life. Gopal Guru identifies that the Dalit literature is classified into literature of Dalit cities and that of mud house writes. To him, mud house

¹¹⁷Anand Teltumde, *Ambedkar for the Post-Ambedkar Dalit Movement*, Sugawa Prakashan, Pune, 1997, p. 16.

Dalit literature means writing about oral traditions of the Dalits which is ignored by the elite Dalit writers.

As Dalit writers themselves being the victims, they use literature as a vehicle to propagate the Ambedkarite ideology. The Dalit literature, that includes all the genres like short stories, novels, poetry, critical essays, plays and autobiographies, provides critical insights into the question of the Dalit identity. The teachings of Ambedkar sharpened their sensitivities, and made them outward-looking, articulate and assertive in their expression. The Dalit writings are used to educate the Dalits. The prose narratives, especially mediated between Dalit writers and the Dalits to form the modes of social protest. The Dalit narratives are used to raise awareness that caste is the root cause of social discrimination and proposed several strategies to overcome caste based discrimination. The Dalit narratives capture the local idiom in order to find space in globalised world. Subverting the conventional epistemology, Dalit writers challenge the Brahmanism through their writings.

The modern Dalit writing became visible with the publication of Arjun Dangle's *The Poisoned Bread* (1992) followed by Waman Nimbalkar's *Dalit Literature: Nature and Role* (2006), Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (2004), Omprakash Valmiki's *Dalit Sahityaka Saundary shastra* (2001). In fact several other studies underline the representative character of Dalit literature and claims that it had put forwarded.

Though Dalit writings consist of all literary forms like poetry, short stories, songs (folklore), plays, and novels, the Dalit autobiographies seek to unveil the wretchedness and miseries which were a part of Dalit life and experience. P. Ajay Kumar, Scholar critic on Dalit studies opines that autobiographies have always been a popular form of writing because the unique experience of an individual have instructing values. He further states that the entire Dalit literature pretends to be autobiographical because Dalit writings refuse to soar high in the wings of imagination. The Dalit autobiography is understood as a genre because it adds to the growth and development of Dalit literature as a whole. The personal narratives of the Dalits speak about the heroic journey of the entire community in the process of self-assertion, liberty, self-respect and empowerment. And the same journey gives them a unique identity which is nothing but exploring the experiences of an entire people's history through narratives. Laxman Mane's *Upura* (1997), Laxman Gaikwad's *The Branded* (1998), Vasanth Moon's *Growing up Untouchable in India* (2001), Narendra Jadav's *Outcaste* (2003), Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* (2003), Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (2003), Joseph Mackwans *The Stepchild* (2004), Aravind Malgathi's *Government Brahmana* (2007), and of women writers Bama's *Karukku* (2000), Viramma Josiane Racine Jean Luc Racin's *Viramma: Life of a Dalit* (1997), Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* (2009) and Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) are some of notable Dalit autobiographies in which the protagonists trace out the genesis of Dalit identity and celebrate the self of their community.

Dalits' search for respectable identity brought out a new consciousness in modern India. The Dalit identity does not merely mean identify oneself with the Dalit self, but to bring awareness among the fellow Dalits. When a Dalit narrates about himself, one does not narrate one's personal history; what one narrates is the history of his community. It is comparable to the native movements in America, native-Canadian Movement, aboriginal movements in Australia and Maori movement in New Zealand. The Durban conference on racism was an attempt at tracing out the validity of the Dalit identity in the postmodern context. However, the mainstream writers and the media belonging to the upper castes were quite indifferent. On this predicament Raj Kumar commented that: "The main stream discourse has focused by and larger on the accommodation and segregation of Dalit people into a Caste Hindu world of culture and living, a world where Dalit identity is absorbed."¹¹⁸ The mainstream public discourse is focused on the division of the Dalits into Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Sharankumar Limbale depicts the resonance and interface between the Dalit movements in India and the native movements in America. On this issue he commented that:

African American and Dalit movements have proceeded along different paths and taken different turnings, But both movements are struggles for human rights and against exploitation...Despite differences of country, region, conditions, society and language, the similarity is the life experience of the two communities derives from the fact that both were targets of excess, injustice and slavery – their experience of pain is of a world

¹¹⁸ Rajesh Kumar, *Contestation and Negotiation of Dalit Identities: A Perspective from Below*, from (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi7018/is_1_33/ai_n28438652)

scale...Because of these similarities, Dalit writers see the pain of African American writers as their own. African Americans have expressed their sorrow and pain through blues, ballads, stories, novels, dances and songs. Dalit writers have also communicated their pain through literature.¹¹⁹

Some of the African writings that inspired oppressed natives of Africa are: Malcom X's *The Autobiography of Malcom X* (1965), Haarrriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967), Ngugiwa Thiongo's *A grain of Wheat* (1967), are instrumental in legitimating the Black literature and identity in the West. Their counterparts in India include Phule's *Slavery*, Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste, the Riddles of Rama and Krishna* and several of his writings and speeches awakened the Dalit consciousness. They are the prime resources to understand and contest the caste issues in Indian literature.

Influenced by Phule and Ambedkar many Dalit writers, who experienced the travails of caste oppression, narrated their experiences in their works. The Dalit autobiographies are found suitable for narrating their experiences. Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* (2003), Narendra Jadav's *Outcaste* (2003), Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (2003) and Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) have been inspirational for construction of the Dalit identity.

¹¹⁹ Sharankumar Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007, pp. 86-87.

Identity in Dalit perspective is the similarity in terms of culture and living experiences. The experiences of caste discrimination, economic exploitation, denial of knowledge and gender dominance are common among the Dalits. The personal narratives of the Dalits deal with the problems of caste, class and gender. In this context, the language and culture of the Dalits play key role in depicting the Dalit identity. The Dalit autobiographies are written in Dalit idiom intended to inspire generation of Dalits. While introducing and addressing the characters in their personal narratives, the Dalit writers use such vocabulary different from the one used by the mainstream writers. They use the pronouns “I”, “we” and “our” for representing Dalits and “you”, “yours”, “they” and “their” for addressing the non-Dalits especially the so called upper caste Hindu elites. The attempt to acadamize the Dalit life-world could explicitly be seen in the works of Kancha Illiah.¹²⁰

One of the significant characteristics of the Dalit autobiographies is that the Dalit writers never find themselves away from their community. They identify themselves within their community. Ghanshyam Shah writes in this regard that: ‘Identity is concerned with the self – esteem and self-image of a community – real or imaginary – dealing with the existence and role: who are we? What position we do have in society Vis-a- vas other communities? How are we related to others? Nothing standing differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity, there has been

¹²⁰Ilaiiah, Kancha, *Why I am not Hindu :a Sudra critique of Hindutva philosophy, culture and political economy*, Calcutta, Samya, 2002

a common quest – the quest for equality, self – dignity and eradication of untouchability’’.¹²¹

The self-esteem and self-image are the two key aspects of the autobiographies that have written by prominent Dalit intellectuals in India. Sharan Kumar Limbale’s *The Outcaste*, Narendra Jadav’s *Outcaste*, Omprakash Valmiki’s *Joothan* and Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke*. These autobiographies depict the lives of the narrators and their people. The narrators Dalit autobiographies find their community as the protagonist of their narratives. They agree that their association with their community is inseparable and they do not dissociate themselves with their community. Sharan Kumar Limbale writes in *The Outcaste* that: ‘My history is my mother’s life, at the most my grandmother’s. My ancestry doesn’t go back go back any further. My mother is an untouchable, while my father is a high caste from one of the privileged classes of India. Mother lives in a hut, father lives in a mansion, Father is a land lord; mother, landless. I am a *kkarmashi* (half- caste). I am condemned, branded illegitimate’. (Limbale, IX)¹²²

Limbale raises the question of identity. He states that he was a half-breed of an upper-caste father and a Mahar mother. He deplors that his upper caste father never dares to accept Limbale as his son. Limbale states about the helpless condition of his mother who became a victim in the hands of an upper caste man. The plight of Limbale’s mother is indicative of the plight of umpteen number of the Dalit women all over the

¹²¹ Ghanshyam Shah, *Dalit Identity and Politics*, Delhi, Sage, 195.

¹²² Sharankumar Limbale, *The Outcaste*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2003, p. ix.

country. By narrating the plight of his mother, Limbale projected a unique identity for Dalit women. G.N. Devy views: ‘Limbale presents his own mother who has been cheated again and again, exploited most blatantly in every relationship she strikes, burdened with a roll call of children and upbringing. The author however shows a remarkable understanding of their situation. There is no cursing or blaming them in his narrative, there is not even a tone of pity for them in it.’¹²³

Limbale identifies himself with the Mahar community. He writes that: ‘The umbilical cord between our locality and the village has snapped, as if the village, torn asunder, has thrown us out of it. We had grown up like aliens since our infancy. This sense of alienation increased over the years and to this day my childhood haunts me.’¹²⁴ Limbale mentions about the division between the Maharwada and the village, where the Patils and other upper caste people live.

Caste discrimination and constant battle with hunger are the major themes of Limbale’s autobiography. The question of identity is equally an integral part of his life story. The impossible hurdle that the author suffered his entire life was the fact that he had no identity, no home or place of belonging. His mother had once been properly married, but her husband had left her and taken their two sons. She began sleeping with the high caste men of the village. Limbale was born with a Dalit mother and a father who

¹²³ Sharankumar Limbale, XXV-VI.

¹²⁴ Sharankumar Limbale, *The Outcaste*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003, ix. (Subsequent references to this addition with page numbers are given in parenthesis).

was the chief of a village. He could not get certain papers signed for school because he could not properly identify his caste by his mother or father, and they would not accept his grandmother as his guardian because she lived with a Muslim. When it was the time of his marriage, he could not even get married to an outcaste girl because his blood was not pure. He realized that he was not wanted anywhere. Eventually, a drunkard who had offered Limbale his daughter would not allow her to leave after the wedding because of Limbale's background. The clouds of doubt and identity hung over this poor outcaste boy throughout his life. However, in several acts of incredible strength and bravery, he did not allow these socially constructed obstacles to stop him from being educated. He realized the depth of division caused by the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Limbale states that the influence of Ambedkar and his involvement in the Dalit Panthers movement changed his life.

Limbale's autobiography is a good quick read that would interest any students taking a course on modern India. It is an objective work that shows little bitterness or remorse. The author includes an excellent introduction that introduces the caste system to the Western reader. We can experience the humiliation of the Dalit community at the hands of an unthinking privileged class and the hopelessness of the situation of people born in lower castes.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Thromila Wheat, 2, (<http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi7066/is27/ai n28320861>).

Narendra Jadav identifies himself with the people to whom he belongs to in his *Outcaste* (2003). Irrespective of the qualification he acquired and the position he reached, he could not stop himself finding among his community people. Jadav writes: ‘These people, raw, down-to-earth, unpolished are the ones to whom I belong, I thought. Born in the confines of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance they were at different stages of struggles in life. But they are my people, I thought, with a sense of belonging, as they looked at me with awe. In their eyes, I had managed, through hard work and perseverance to climb out of the morass of untouchability, illiteracy and backwardness.’¹²⁶

Jadav states that no matter what he did, where he went, or what success he achieved, he would always be looked upon as a Mahar, an untouchable. Jadav’s argument is suggestive of the caste identity irrespective of the place, position and success. Jadav writes further: “It is unfortunate truth of our society that whatever height a man might scale, his caste is never cast off; it remains an inseparable part of his identity. His caste always remains a cause for scorn or contempt. Only the type of humiliation changes.”

Om Prakash Valmiki depicts in *Joothan* (2003) the identity of the Dalits based on caste. He shows the difference between the Chuhras to whom Valmiki belongs and that of the Tagas, the upper caste people. *Joothan* begins with the discrimination of Barla village: ‘Our House was adjacent to Chandrabhan Taga’s gher or cowshed. Next to it

¹²⁶ Narendra Jadav, *Out Caste*, New Delhi, Viking, 2003, p. 206. (Subsequent references to this addition with page numbers are given in parenthesis).

lived the families of Muslim weavers. Right in front of Chandrabhan Taga gher was a little johri, a pond, which had created a sort of partition between the Chuhras dwelling and the village ... on one side of the pit were the high walls of the brick homes of the tagas...on the edges of the pond were the homes of the Chuhras...(Valmiki, 1)¹²⁷ This narration suggests that pitiable conditions under which Dalits ought to live and thrive. These narratives indeed acted as inspirational sources for upcoming Dalits of modern times.

Similar to Sharan Kumar Limbale's autobiography, Valmiki's autobiography also had identical line of caste divisions in the villages between the upper caste and the Dalits. Valmiki writes that "the pigs wandering in narrow lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood." Valmiki's argument is a critique of Gandhian notion of the village and the *Gram Swarajyam*. The Chuhras have to work without pay. Valmiki writes: 'We did all sorts of work for the Tagas, including cleaning, agricultural work and general labor. We would often have to work without pay. Nobody dared to refuse this unpaid work for which we got neither money nor grain. Instead, we got sworn at and abused',¹²⁸ .

The untouchables in villages were forced to undertake unpaid work. In this context, Valmiki identifies himself with his cast people. Regarding the identity of the

¹²⁷ Omprakash Valmiki, *Joothan- A Dalit's Life*, Kolkatta: Samya, 2003,1. (Subsequent references to this addition with page numbers are given in parenthesis).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Dalits by names, he writes: “They did not call us by our names. If a person were older, then he would be called “Oe Chuhre.” If the person was younger or of the same age, then „ Abey Chuhre was used.” Valmiki is equally concerned about the Dalit issues. Substantiating the contribution of Valmiki in representing the Chuhra community, Raj Kumar writes that: “He is convinced that only by raising caste-related issues he will be able to start a discussion on the plight of Dalits at a national level. The publication of *Joothan* in English in the meantime has generated a lot of discussion related to Dalits. Valmiki announces that the main issue of his autobiography is about identity concerning caste.¹²⁹ Though the title *Joothan – A Dalit’s Life* indicates that it is about the life story of an individual, it speaks about the history of the entire Chuhra community. The Chuhra community has been subjected to the caste based discrimination for ages. Valmiki describes how his entire community depends on the leftover food thrown out by the upper castes in return for their hard but unpaid work. The entire community had to depend on the mercy of the upper castes who, instead of paying labour, exploit them.

Valmiki dispensed with the practice of begging *Salam*, a begging tradition of the Chuhras even at an early age. Though Valmiki faced humiliation and insults from both upper caste teachers and students in school and college life, he never suppressed his desire to continue with his studies. Due to his hard work and determination, he became the first graduate in his community. He inspired his caste people to join their children in schools. Valmiki developed the Dalit consciousness among his people. He could do so

¹²⁹ Raj Kumar, *Dalit Personal Narratives: Reading Caste, Nation and Identity*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2010, p.197.

because of his understanding of the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar. Raj Kumar writes: ‘He is pained to see his fellow community members doing the same traditional duties without any protest. By writing his autobiography Valmiki thus renders a great service to his community. Along with his life-history he also narrates the painful experiences of his community life. It is in this sense that Valmiki’s life-story is also the story of his community’.¹³⁰

Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) is a Dalit woman’s autobiography. Though written by a woman, it deals with the identity of the Dalit Community in general. Kamble states in an interview: ‘Well, I wrote about what my community experienced. The suffering of my people became my own suffering. Their experiences become mine. So I really find it very difficult to think of myself outside of my community’.(Kamble, 205).¹³¹

Kamble’s determination to identify herself with her community is worth commending. She writes about the poor and the helpless conditions of her people. She writes that the Dalits were treated like animals and reduced to a condition worse than that of the bullocks kept in the courtyards of the high castes. She further writes that: ‘The bullocks were at least given some dry grass to eat. The bullocks ate the grass and slogged for their masters. But we were merely given leftovers. We ate the leftovers without complaining and laboured for others. The only difference, however, was that the beasts could eat a bellyful and they could stay in their masters courtyards. But our condition was

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 197.

¹³¹ Baby Kamble, *The Prisons We Broke*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2008, 136. (Subsequent references to this addition with page numbers are given in parenthesis).

far worse our place was in the garbage pits outside the village, where everyone threw away their waste. That was where we lived in our poor huts, amidst all the filth.¹³²

Kamble's autobiography deals with three major problems of the society: firstly, the oppression and exploitation of the Dalit by the upper class: secondly, the discrimination towards women in a patriarchal society and finally the influence of Dr. Ambedkar on the narrator. Poverty was an unresolved problem among the Mahars and the condition of the Mahar women was miserable. The Dalits are denied access to public space and resources. Though the narrator was discriminated against by the upper caste teachers and students, she was resilient in facing them. She says that she could do so because of the influence of Ambedkar on her. According to her, Ambedkar was the light of Dalits life. He asked the Mahars to educate their children, and inspired them to fight against the atrocities. He asked them not to give offerings to the gods who never cared about them. And he also asked them not to eat the meat of the dead animals.¹³³

The Dalit autobiographer in general identifies himself/herself with in the community. Besides, the aspects of self-assertion, self-respect and building Dalit consciousness are the central concerns of a Dalit autobiography. Political consciousness among the Dalits is another major concern of the texts. Though the authors of the Dalit autobiographies suffer from unique problems, the philosophy of Ambedkar is considered the appropriate remedy for the liberation of the Dalits. In other words, the life and philosophy has been the basis of the formation and construction of the Dalit identity. Therefore the protagonists of the autobiographies use education as the true weapon for the emancipation of the Dalits.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ <http://out-caste.blogspot.com/2008/03/prisons-we-broke-baby-kamble.html>.

Badri Narayan opines that the Dalit narratives are the narratives of identity and self-respect. He further comments that: “The new narratives of the Dalit politics, which appear as cultural narratives of identity and self-respect are filled with memories of dissent against dominance and oppression.”¹³⁴ The Dalit narratives are written in the respective Dalit idiom. The construction of the Dalit narratives is based on a sense of self-respect. Badrinarayan writes that: ‘Dalits, for acquiring social respect, use their personal narratives through which they glorify their community. The identity created through their narratives of the past by the Dalits renders instable the canons determined by Brahmanism for granting status in society, such as purity- pollution beliefs, birth-based ascription, specific caste characterization and caste hierarchy, and status ascription’.¹³⁵

Dalit consciousness refers to the Dalit politics and identity in terms of political awareness and the notion of collective identity among the diverse Dalit communities. These two uses are fundamentally the same in their emphasis on the need to be aware of the exploitation based on caste. Narendra Jadav’s *Out Caste* is about the journey of a Dalit family from a small village, Ozar to a big city Mumbai, and then to far off places like the USA. It presents the story of a Dalit family in search of Dalit dignity. It depicts the oppressive and exploitative village life as well as the successes of the three generations of this family. The central narrative follows the transformation of this family. It was the great transformation of Jadav’s family into a very successful family of eminent scholars and officers.

¹³⁴ Badri Narayan, *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India*, New Delhi, Sage, 2006, p.40.

¹³⁵ Badri Narayan, p. 95.

In the foregoing discussion, an attempt has been made to delineate the various identity based movements in historical outline. The non-Brahmin movements in India, beginning from the Bakhti period to the contemporary period, contributed to the process of constructing alternative history against the caste Hindus. It has been argued in the chapter that the construction of the Dalit identity is not a contemporary feature. The attempts of the identity movements of the early period have been obliterated. The Dalit autobiographies selected for the study have been interpreted as the attempts of relocating, reforming and reconstructing the Dalit identity as a challenge to the Brahminical oppressive social order.

The argument this chapter presents is that discourse and practice of Dalits in the form of movements and activities essentially aimed at three aspects: firstly, depiction of caste based discrimination and its impact upon miserable livelihoods of millions of Dalits: articulation of respectable identity based upon the notions of equality, self respect, self esteem and dignity and finally Dalit discourse on identity is mainly a quest of Dalit community for better future in the form of socio-economic and political progress. Identity formation process thus perceived as means to achieve better life by Dalits. This paradigm took place in all over India. The next chapter focuses on Dalit identity formation process in Utter Pradesh and role of political organizations in it.

CHAPTER-III

DALIT DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY: A

STUDY OF BAMCEF

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“Capture the temple of the political power into your hands to secure your political rights”

Dr. B R Ambedkar.

This chapter deals with identity formation process undertaken by Dalits in the domain of politics. British colonial period provided congenial atmosphere for emergence of Dalit intelligentsia culminated with prominence of Dr. Ambedkar. This assertive process for respectable identity continued in independent India. In fact this process rapidly augmented by emergence of new social forces within Dalit society. On account of implementation of positive discrimination policy in public sector, gradually there emerged a new class of government employees. It was this class strived for respectable identity as necessary condition for upward mobility. This chapter concentrates on articulation of Dalit identity under the umbrella of socio-political association of Dalit popularly known as BAMCEF and its impact upon mobilization pattern of Dalit society. The main argument of this chapter is that emergence of new dynamic social forces influenced Dalit identity particularly in the domain of politics.

While Dalit Panther Movement was essentially a radical movement driven by literature and transformative zeal, BAMCEF is mainly a political assertion of Dalits for transformative process. BAMCEF is originally known as Mulnivasi Bahujan Samaj, an organization of the educated employees from the Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes, other Backward Classes and the Converted Minority communities. BAMCEF word is an

abbreviated name of the organization. The various letters in the abbreviation stand for different words like: **B** stands for Backward which includes S.C., ST. and O.B.C; **A**- stands for And; **M**- stands for Minority; **C** stands for Communities; **E**- stands for Employees and **F**- stands for Federation i.e. Backward And Minority Communities Employees Federation. Thus BAMCEF derives its meaningful name from the long form – The All India Backward (S.C., ST., and O.B.C.) and Minority Communities Employees Federation¹³⁶.

Emergence of BAMCEF represents an interesting phase of Dalit politics. The organizational structure of BAMCEF was certainly influenced by class framework rooted in Marxist notion of class. The notion of backwardness was the overarching structural principle that guided the thoughts and acts of BAMCEF. Interesting features of this process is that it was Dalits who took up the vanguard position for emancipation of all backward communities. Being a vanguard of movement there emerged a critical requirement for construction of dynamic and respectable identity for Dalits.

So far as linguistic structure of BAMCEF concern it reflects the core philosophy of organization. The term Backward has reference in the article 16(4) of the Constitution of India. The S.C., ST. and O.B.C. have been jointly referred to as Backwards because all the castes, falling in these categories, are backward. But the degree of backwardness varies. This is due to the doctrine of graded inequality, professed by Brahmanism. The Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and Other Backward Class people are well aware that they all are suffering due to caste discrimination and exploitative social relationship created and nurtured by traditional Brahmanism.

¹³⁶*Bamcef Pumplate*, 4765/46 (Third Flore) Ragpura, Kroolbagh central unit, New Delhi.

As far as the term Minority is concerned, it refers to the religious minorities. Historians demonstrated that during the course of history some of the Mulnivasi (indigenous people) of India i.e. the present day S.C., ST. and O.B.C. got converted to different religions at different point of time. These mainly include Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists. The main idea is that marginalized communities converted into different religions to acquire respectable socio-cultural status. BAMCEF wanted to unite these communities to put forward united fight against oppression. With the broad objective of providing an umbrella organization for oppressed BAMCEF was established in 1987 with the Registrar of Societies, Delhi under registration no. S-17809.¹³⁷

Indian Constitution divides the oppressed and exploited sections of Indian society into three main categories on the basis of the nature of their backwardness. i.e. (1) The Scheduled Castes (2) the Scheduled tribes and (3) The Other Backward classes which have specifically been enumerated by the Commission headed by Kaka Sahib Kalelker and finally by B.P. Manual during 1953-55 and 1977-80 respectively. It is a known fact that religious minorities such as Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists etc. converted from the oppressed and exploited communities also suffer from the same stigma and exploitation as do the people of their earlier faith. Thus they are also included under the basic meaning of the term “Minority Communities” The term Employees’ includes all such educated Employoys’ belonging to these communities working in central, state or local self-governments or their undertakings. Private sectors and those who are even self-employed but gainfully in their own individual professions.¹³⁸

¹³⁷Bamcef.wordpress.com/Bamcef-introduction/pp no 12

¹³⁸Mool Chand, *The Bahujan and their movement*, bahunjan publication trust .New Delhi,1992. P.12

Kanshi Ram and D.K Khaparde young Dalit activists together began to formulate ideas for an organization to be built by educated employees from scheduled and backward castes. Such an organization would work against harassment and oppression by high caste officers, and also enable the often inward looking occupants of reserved position to give something back to their own communities. Therefore Kanshi Ram and D K Khaparde began to contact likely recruits in Poona pact. Kanshi Ram abandoned any thought of marriage, largely because it did not fit into a life and decided to dedicate to public concerns. He had also quit lost interest in his career, though he continued in the job until about 1971. He finally left service after conflict over the non-appointment of a qualified schedule caste young woman by higher authorities. During this conflict he had gone so far as to strike a senior official, and he did not even bother attending most of the ensuring disciplinary proceeding. He had already made up his mind to become a full time activist.¹³⁹

In 1971 Kashi Ram and his colleagues established the scheduled casts, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes and minorities employees' welfare association, which was registered under the Poona charity commissioner. Their primary object was to focus on problems and Dalits in general and educated employees in particular.

Despite the associations inclusive reach its aggressively Ambedkarite stance ensured that most of its member were Mahar Buddhists. Within a year of its establishment there was more than one thousand member and it was able to open an office in Poona. Many of the members from the defense, postal and telegraph

¹³⁹ Sudha, Pai. *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: the Bhujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage, New Delhi, 2002.

departments attended their first annual conference which was addressed by the defense minister Jagjivan Ram. Kanshi Ram's organizational step was to create the basis of a national level association of schedule caste government servants as early as 1973. He and his collegians established the all India backward and minority employee's federation and a functioning office was established in Delhi in 1976. BAMCEF was launched with greater fanfare on 6 December 1978, the Ambedkar death Anniversary with two thousands delegates joining a procession to the boat club lawns in New Delhi.¹⁴⁰

Establishment of BAMCEF was indeed a significant movement in the history of Dalit politics and identity formation. In fact it was culmination of the quest of Dalits to have an all India level umbrella association for taking up the problems of Dalit in general and Dalit employees in particular. This process laid down foundation of future political assertion of Dalits.

Objectives of BAMCEF

The main objective of BAMCEF is that “change of social system.” From its inception, BAMCEF has continuously been putting effort to organize the Dalit intelligentsia for overall development of Dalit and other marginalized sections of Indian society. The broad objectives of BAMCEF as follows:

1. To provide hope and help to downtrodden society which has been made to feel as hopeless and helpless through the centuries old tyrannies committed on it by the exploiters and oppressors in India.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Ku Mayawati, ” *Mere Sangarshmai Jeevan Evam Bahujan Movement Ka Safernama*” central unit New Delhi,1995. pp. no. 257.

¹⁴¹Mool Chand,, op cit, p. 94

2. To build and strengthen the non-political roots of the oppressed and exploited society in the fields of social economic, educational, cultural, trade, commerce and industry which have been completely destroyed by the tyrant class.¹⁴²
3. To become a perennial source of inspiration for the oppressed and exploited society by the way of developing moral values for self and by exhibiting those values to the society as a model.
4. To create capable, committed and genuine leadership for development of backward and underdeveloped communities in India.
5. To generate, develop and operate direction centers to guide the oppressed and exploited society.
6. To develop and provide resources and skills to the Dalit society for its amelioration.
7. To inculcate the feeling of “paying back of social obligation” among the intellectual class.¹⁴³
8. To strengthened the non-political roots in the Mulnivasi Bhujan Samaj.
9. To spread and propagate the ideology of Rashtrapita Jyotibharao Phuley, Jana Nayak Birsa Munda, Periyar Ramaswamy, Shauji Maharaja, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and another forefather of social movement.¹⁴⁴
10. To create full-time activists dedicated to the objective, ideology, values and principle of the organization and involve them in the propagation of the ideology¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 94

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Bamcef.wordpress.com/bamcef-introduction/p. 10

These ten points of BAMCEF shows the revolutionary vision of the organization in the domain of Indian society. It want the intellectual class of Dalit and other backward communities should take the lead in creating congenial atmosphere for fellow Dalits to educate and develop. Strong communitarian sentiments were articulated as necessary component for overall development of marginalized communities of Indian society.

Mission of BAMCEF

BAMCEF derives an inspiration from the life and mission of some of the dedicated individuals who devoted lives for emancipation of marginalized sections of Indian society such as Shahuji Maharaja, Jyotibharao Phuley, Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy, and Jana Nyack Birsa Munda. The thoughts and activities of these individuals were incorporated into the core philosophy of BAMCEF to evolve a coherent mission for its work. The main critical objective is to uproot Brahmanical hegemony and infuse the spirit of equality in Indian society and to establish and preserve a new social system based on humanism and the principles of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice. The slogan of ‘Self-help and self-respect’ was the slogan of this movement. The change of social system is the long term objective of BAMCEF. It has planned to achieve this objective in stages and therefore designed some short term objectives. In order to achieve the objective, BAMCEF is determined to strengthen the sense of social responsibility towards their brethren amongst Mulnivasi Bhujan Samaj.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵Ibid. p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Mayawati, *Mere Sangarshmai Jeevan Evam Bahujan Movement Ka Safernama*” Central unit New Delhi.1995.

BAMCEF does not believe in the welfare of few individuals but wanted to raise the level of Mulnivasi Bhujan Samaj as a whole. It is worthwhile to mention here that once Dr. Badasaheb Ambedkar wrote to Mr. Dadasaheb Gaikwad that there are two views of looking at the oppressed and exploited society. First is to develop individuals merit as some social thinkers are of the view that individual misdeeds and behavior is responsible for his oppression, exploitation and poverty. Such social thinkers then undertake to work for the personality development such as de-addiction from alcohol, health care programs, blood donation camp, and co-operative movements, establish libraries and other programs to develop virtues in the individual person. Another view is to raise the social level of the oppressed and exploited society as a whole. The circumstances and limitation surrounding individual in which he leads his life, is responsible for the sorrow and poverty of the individual. Dr. Ambedkar stated that if both the views are compared and analyzed carefully, it is the second view which appears to be more correct and justifiable. In the first case the status of few individuals may improve in the society but status of society as a whole shall not be raised and our objective is not to improve the status of few individuals but to raise the status of the entire society. BAMCEF is committed to the view taken by Dr. Ambedkar and does not want to use its energy for the improvement of few individuals.¹⁴⁷

The emancipatory ideas of BAMCEF were borrowed from non-Brahman thinkers of Jyotirao Phuley, E. V. Ramaswamy and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for unleashing social revolution for equality and dignity. Serious effort has been put into practice to

¹⁴⁷ Dubey, Abhay Kumar, 'Anatomy of Dalit Power Player: A Study of Kanshi Ram', in G. Shah, (eds) *Dalit identity and Politics*, "Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge, Volume 2. Sage, New Delhi, 1996.

achieve. This is the reason why BAMCEF is not engaged in the welfare activities and charitable work. It remained to be an organization which inspire Dalits in general and educated Dalits in particular. However it may use these activities as a tool to accomplish objective if need.

The objective of social revolution is the most gigantic and tedious task. The phenomenological meaning of social revolution for BAMCEF represents the synthesized version of most of non-Brahman thinkers which means a process to be unleashed for making Dalit self as confident, capable and in fact more confident than upper strata of Indian society. It is this revolution what Jefforlot terms as 'salient revolution'.¹⁴⁸ The mission of BAMCEF therefore is to make Dalit aware of their rights and make them capable of handling oppressive social relations in India.

The mission of BAMCEF is to bring social and Cultural Revolution in India which has been the land of disparity. It is through its objectives that BAMCEF foresees the accomplishment of such a revolution. It has got its root in the concept of payback to the society. If we go deep into the past heritage of the oppressed and exploited society and the struggles fought by its people to put an end to their sufferings, it looks evident that the class of educated employees is one of the major beneficiaries of the product of such struggle. BAMCEF thus argues that it becomes obligatory on their part of educated employs belongs to Dalit society to see that their brethren benefits fruits. This is the mission of BAMCEF in a nutshell.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Christophe Jeffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of Lower Castes in North Indian Politics*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2003.

¹⁴⁹ Mool Chand, *op cit*, p. 94.

It is necessary for us to see the socio-economic context in UP that could facilitate emergence of Dalit consciousness for identity. Since the 1960s, the Green Revolution and an increased availability of non-agricultural occupations for labors have, in many parts of UP, led to a partial breakdown of patron-client based labor relations in rural areas. A certain degree of economic and social delinking at village level between the dominant land-owning groups and their erstwhile workers took place, loosening the laborer's extreme economic and dependence on their employers and hence transforming the social and economic basis for the patron-client ideology among SCs. These economic changes initially affected only western UP, but from the mid-1970s onwards, east and central UP has experienced similar developments, albeit from a lower level. This may be an important reason why low-caste politicization originally (in the 1960s) was limited to west UP but in the late 1990s the electoral support of the BSP was roughly equal in east and west.¹⁵⁰

Apart from it, there was a slight improvement in literacy rate among Dalits. In addition to these developments many studies point to improvements in the socio economic conditions of Dalits in the state from the late 1970s. These improvements provided the economic potential to question upper-caste domination. Studies show that for the first time, land was no longer the only source of income, power and prestige. Urbanization increased employment opportunities on farms, brick kilns, construction activities and rickshaw-pulling in the cities. As a result, the absolute dependence on landowners and old patron- client relations disappeared. Less prepared to suffer indignities, the Dalits gave up carrying and skinning of dead animals and adopted

¹⁵⁰Paul Brass, '*General Election 1996 in UP; Division Struggles Influence outcome.*' Economic and political Weekly, xxxii, no 38 20 September: pp. 2403-21.

‘sanskritisation.’¹⁵¹ These economic changes provided congenial atmosphere emergence of dynamic Dalits identity under the overall ideological guidance of BAMCEF.

The noticeable fact however is that Dalit mobilization and assertion in the matrix of BAMCEF needs to be seen in the context of emerging Dalit assertion and mobilization in different parts of India in general and UP in particular. The roots of the BSP, its ideology, leadership and organization are different from the other Dalits movement/parties in the country formed in the early 1970s, such as the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra and the Dalit Sangharsha Sammittee in Karnataka.¹⁵² What happened in UP was that instead of militant protest, strategic mobilization Dalit castes took place and it was this process which made Dalit politics as vibrant in UP.

Discussion on BAMCEF is useful in capturing the roots and nature of Dalit assertion at all India level in general and Uttar Pradesh in particular. The most vibrant form of Dalit assertion in the domain of Bahujan Samaj Party indeed had its roots in pre- and post BAMCEF politics. Particularly the revolutionary struggles or movement in the form of middle class based ‘trade union’ organization of government employee formed in 1976 by Kanshi Ram which took shape as organized from under the name of BAMCEF. This strong root of Dalit assertion was broadened and strengthened by Dalit Shosit Sangharsha Samiti, popularly known as DS-4. As the result, the BSP is not a movement emerging from civil society against the state rather it has strong roots in mobilization and strategies of emerging Dalit middle class in independent India in general and UP in

¹⁵¹Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution : the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage, New Delhi, 2002.

¹⁵²G. Omvedt, 'Kanshi Ram and BSP', in L K Sharma (ed.), *Cast and Cclass in India*. Rawat, Jaipur, 1994.

particular. It believes in providing social justice and uplift to the Dalits from above using the power of the state, rather than a revolution from below.¹⁵³

A slightly different version of the origin of BAMCEF holds that it was already in existence as a small organization in Delhi, when Kanshi Ram decided to mobilize educated Dalit employees and required a forum to do so. This attempt was initiated by Shiva Dayal Chaurasia, a Rajaya Sabah member and earlier member of the Kaka Kalelkar commission in 1974, as an organization to help SC employees in gaining employment in the government promotion, transfer, etc. The late 1970s were period for new organization among the lower castes, due to the defeat of the Indian National Congress, so far considered invincible in the 1977 Lok Shaba election and the formation of the Junta Party. In December 1979 parliamentary election, a number of young SC MPs emerged, who were instrumental in helping Kanshi Ram in making the BAMCEF a powerful organization in north India.¹⁵⁴ Emergence of new political forces thus favorably helped Dalit politics in India by the way of providing a space in political assertion.

The question of how political ideas were diffused among masses? What are the strategies that are being adopted? These questions are very much pertinent in case of BAMCEF and its activity. The movement's appeal was broadened with the formation of an agitational wing known as the Dalit Shosit Sangharsha Smite (DS-4), on 24th September 1982. The main objective of this wing was to utilize the political energy created by political activism of BAMCEF, a quasi- political party. Gradually it had acquired greater presence in rural areas and mobilized Dalits with the emancipatory

¹⁵³Sudha, Pai , *Dalit Assertion*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

ideas of Dalit intellectuals in general and Kanshi Ram in particular. This organization took the message of power to Dalits proposed by Dr. Ambedkar in the following words: 'What makes one interests dominant over another is power. That being so, power is needed to destroy power...no question that without power on one side it is not possible to destroy power on the other side...the Untouchable is therefore is under an absolute necessity of acquiring political power as much as possible'.¹⁵⁵ Need of political power is recognized by Dalit intelligentsia as a means to achieve overall development of Dalits in India.

With the success of DS-4 in reaching out to the Dalits, Kanshi Ram moved towards active politics more rapidly. Formation of BSP was the political expression of this social action movement of Dalits. With this the change from a social worker for the Dalits to a political leader, on the part of Kanshi Ram, was completed. Thus BSP emerged as a party headed, run and vote in by lowest castes against the hegemony of the high castes for the emancipation and rule of the Dalits. It gained prominence when it formed part of a winning coalition with the Samajwadi party (SP). Based on low and middle caste support in 1993, this had a direct impact on social processes in up from 1993 to 1997. Some of the dominant features of the movement are social protests against atrocities of dominant land owning-castes.¹⁵⁶

Since 1993, the BSP has been able to see its own charismatic leader, Mayawati, a woman from the Chamar caste, occupying the position of chief minister four times. In 1995, it formed a minority government, supported by Congress and BJP, which lasted

¹⁵⁵ Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, vol. 5, Ambedkar Foundation, New Delhi, 2014, p.399.

¹⁵⁶ Lerch, R. Jens, 'Hamlet, Village and Region: cast and class differences between low cast mobilisation in East and West UP,' in Roger Jeffery & Lerch, (eds), Social and Political Change in Uttar Pradesh: European Perspective, New Delhi. Manohar, 2003.

four and a half months. In 1997, it entered a formal power sharing arrangement with BJP. This meant it held the chief minister's post for six months. Thereafter the arrangement broke down and the BJP took over the government. In 1997 Mayawati government, in particular, challenged the existing high – caste bias within the state apparatus by interfering politically with the civil services, extensively sidelining upper- caste officials and placing SC employees in as many powerful positions as possible.

Kanshi Ram was not widely known when he was running BAMCEF and DS-4. His propaganda style of cycle yatras (tours) was considered a joke in the mainstream political circle until his incarnation as the leader of potent pressure group was completed through the Bijnore, Hardwar, Allahabad and Amethi election. It was a well – planned effort. Basically Kanshi Ram confronted two problems: the transition from a semi-political social movement faced with ideology to electoral politics where exploitation of opportunities by hook and crook was everything and the other problems was the outcome of electoral politics which started with the grand alliance of Bhujan Samaj but which soon reduced Kanshi Ram to mere leader of Dalits. To “Pay Back to society” was the main thrust of BAMCEF, so as to maintain an organic relationship between Dalits bureaucracy and the masses. Thus it continuously generated brains, talents and funds for the struggle of the downtrodden.¹⁵⁷

Kanshi Ram attempts to take Dalit assertion further continued. He felt a need to create a systematic all India level organizational structure for articulation and promotion of Dalit interests. The fact is that one needs to be aware that the structural process and material conditions create conditions for emergence of movements and leaders. It was the

¹⁵⁷G. Shah, Ghanshyam, op cit, p. 298

century long quest of Dalits to achieve respectable socio-economic status in Indian society always inspired and Kanshi Ram was aiding the process further with his remarkable organizational skills. It was this context BAMCEF was launched with greater fanfare on 6 December, 1978 on the death anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar with claims of two thousands delegate joining procession to the boat club lawns in New Delhi.¹⁵⁸

BAMCEF motto, “Educate; Organize and Agitate were adopted from Ambedkar, and its activities were formally divided into a number of welfare and proselytizing object. But increasingly Kanshi Ram’s agitational activities were leading him into politics by the late 70s. He was no longer content with being the leader of reserved office holder, a class for whom he had less respect. Kanshi Ram’s first attempt was to create a radical political vehicle capable of mobilizing the larger body of Dalits.¹⁵⁹

Kanshi Ram was an organizer, political strategists, innovative thinker and charismatic public speaker. While his Ambedkerite ideology has remained constant and lacking in any innovation there has been a progressive sharpening of his rhetoric. The early issue of BAMCEFs monthly magazine, *The Oppressed Indian*, was full of his reconstructed versions of Ambedkar views on Indian society and their relevance. These have now given way to simpler formulations, repeated in numerous accounts in both public and private speech. The central position is that Indian society is characterized by the self-interested rule of low percent over the 90 percent (the Bhujan Samaj or common people). Although the ruling percent is composed of several castes they derive their legitimacy and ruling ideology from Brahmanism. All the institutions of society reflect

¹⁵⁸P.S. Bains, “Socio Economic Problems and Right of Schedule Cast/ Schedule Tribe & Other Backward Classes” Raj, Dehradun, 1990, pp. 112-113. .

¹⁵⁹*Roundtableindia.co.in/index.php.* ”Round Table India- Kanshi Ram: From BAMCEF to the Bahujan Samaj Party” p. 2.

this ruling ideology and distortion, including the press. These intuitions can therefore be termed Manuwadi.

Even though the Dalit assertion process has been main epicenter of BAMCEF activities, proper care has been devoted to evolve counter hegemony ideology. It means attempt has been made to develop a critique of Brahmanical social formation and propagation of alternative social formation of Indian society by placating marginalized sections of Indian society at the top. A slogan coined after the formation of DS-4 (Dalit Shosit Sangharsha Samitee) was 'Brahmin, Bania, Thakur Chor, and Baki Sab Hai DS-4'.¹⁶⁰ Loosely translated this rhyme states that Brahmins, Bania and Raj put are thieves, while the rest of society is their victims. The epithets reached their height during the election campaign for the UP assembly in 1993, the most notorious being: 'Tilak, Taraju, Talwar, Marro Unko Joote Char'.¹⁶¹ This slogans, with its insistent rhythm in Hindi advocates the Brahmin, Bania and Raj put, each identity by a slighting term be beaten four times with a shoe a traditionally demanding form of punishment because of the ritual impurity of leather. While Kanshi Ram and Mayawati denied authorship of such slogans, they served as a simple and dramatically offensive marker of the party's ideological position.

BAMCEF is a unique experimental theme by Dalits in independent India. Attempt was made to make Dalits at the helm for mobilization of lower sections of Indian society. The vision of this design is that Indian society needs to be reformulated by making marginalized sections at the center in which Dalits takes a leading role. While BAMCEF

¹⁶⁰V. Kumar and U. Sinha, *Dalit Assertion & Bahujan Samaj Party: A Perspective from below*. Bahujan Ssahitya Sansthan . Luc know, 2001. P. 62.

¹⁶¹G. Shah, op cit, p. 297

had Dalits (scheduled caste) as its strongest base there was a concerted effort from the beginning to include all backward and minorities. The “Scheduled caste” does not even appear in the name of organization, while the scheduled caste probably have the majority among the claimed two lakes educated employees including 3000 holders of MBBS /MD degree,15,000 Scientists members of BAMCEF. It remains true that all public function of BAMCEF have sought to include of various backward caste and minority communities.¹⁶²

The basic objective of this organization which consists of educated Dalits who have been able to make use of the fruit of government polices was and remains “to pay back” or help the more oppressed and exploited section of the society to which they belong. The member of BAMCEF point out that despite being educated and aware of the problems faced by Dalits individually they find it difficult to introduce change in a society marked by inequalities and oppression. Hence collectively they try to be the torch bearers to show the path to the victims of the system.

The BAMCEF (BAMCEF is an organization “of” the educated employees, “by” the educated employees but “not for” the educated¹⁶³) is a completely informal non-religious, non-political and non-agitation organization. Bulk of its members is government employees in the central and state government and public school organization. Whose service rules expect them to be politically neutral? But the organization also has member in the private sector, self-employed in universities or other professional organization. All members whether officers or lower level employees, are

¹⁶²P.S. Bains, op cit, pp. 65-66.

¹⁶³ Mayawati, op cit, p.260

deemed equal in the organization, all those earning above Rs 1, 000 pay Rs12 as membership fee. Other pay Rs 6 in time of need such as an approaching election the member of BAMCEF make an attempt to collect extra funds for BSP.¹⁶⁴

The main purpose of BAMCEF is twofold in character. The first purpose is the uplift of oppressed section (the Bahujan) by means of education, setting up business, trade and inculcation of moral values and providing 'direction centers' in the fight against the oppressors (upper castes /classes) in society second the BAMCEF serves as a training ground for genuine and committed leaders and workers for the party. In the political field the main function of the BAMCEF is supplying funds and dedicated cadre of workers regularly to the BSP. Many of BSP members attribute the electoral success of the BSP to their hard work. Its member being government employees cannot campaign for the BSP but they perform job such as running the election office maintaining accounts of expenditure and at times even preparing the party manifesto.

Structure of BAMCEF

BAMCEF is an organization engaged with missionary work of Dalit emancipation with respectable identity. It asserts that one need to go beyond the traditional way of working of many existing organizations which run on the stereo type pattern of happiness, benefit and satisfaction of their members. The organization of BAMCEF envisages no difficulties and failures due to mass ignorance etc, does envisage such difficulties but only due to our refusal to admit the virtues of efficient working. In the traditional organizations, we assume that people work best if organized like a machine

¹⁶⁴P.S. Bains, op cit, pp 66-67.

that is if linked in series. But in a missionary organization people work well in two ways either alone as individual or as a team. Thus it involves organizing men and also putting them on the job they will do the best. They should not do it out of fear but with an internal self-motivation for performance. Thus responsibility is the only thing that will serve. It does not matter whether the activists want responsibility or not. The organization must demand it of them because organization needs performance. Such organization can no longer use the tact of fears, it can get it only by encouraging, by inducing, if need be, by punishing the activists is not assuming responsibilities. BAMCEF follows following strategies to extract best work from its activists:

1. Their careful placement in the hierarchy of the Organization.
2. By crating high standards of performance for them.
3. Providing them with the information needed to control them.
4. Providing opportunities for participation that will give them a vision so that they must feel like organizers' themselves¹⁶⁵.

This will give the activists minimum of disruption and maximum of effectiveness in their area of field work. But their performance and effectiveness indeed depends upon proper organizational structure. We must also understand that organization is not an end in itself, but a mean to the end of missionary performance and its results. Thus organizational structure is an indispensable mean and its wrong structure will impair performance and may even destroy the mission. Therefore depending upon the objectives of organizational mission, the structure of BAMCEF has been designed to make it possible the attainment of its objectives today and even after 10-15 years also. As regards

¹⁶⁵Ibid. p. 97.

the analysis of activities, decisions and relations, BAMCEF has to activate at various levels. The following structure is existing in the organization to make it most effective.¹⁶⁶

Frame Work of BAMCEF

The basic frame work of BAMCEF is designed in a way to see that its volume is sufficiently enough to accomplish the desired goal and at the same time to ensure that it is not too big to collapse under its own weight. To make it more efficient, more direct and still simple, the speed and direction of individual activities are designed to result in an overall effective performance. Care has also been taken to see that structure contains least possible number of levels and forge the shortest possible chain of command. Care has also been taken to make possible the training and testing of functionaries at various levels to measure their responsibility in an autonomous position to acquire new experience. Each functionary is also being tested in his/her capacity long before he gets on to the next higher level or the top. While framing the constitution, care has been taken to remove a person who does not exhibit missionary performance towards the responsibilities entrusted to him, howsoever big he may be in to organization.¹⁶⁷

Mass Based Activities

There is a mammoth target before BAMCEF. A small organization will not be in a position to perform the task. A massive strength of manpower with their meager resources in the form of talent, time, skills and funds etc, when pooled into a system is only supposed to be effective to discharge such a responsibility. To be specific the

¹⁶⁶Ibid. p.97

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. pp. 97-98

numerical value of one lakh educated employees is sufficient enough to move in the direction of achievement of the laid objectives without much difficulty.

Broad Based

The problems and difficulties of the oppressed and exploited society, their sufferings and social stigma from which they suffer is not only different but also more in rural areas than in the urban India. Thus the institution of BAMCEF has realized that its real effectiveness will emerge after making it run in broad base form. Therefore, it is desired that BAMCEF must cover in first phase, every state, in second phase, every district and in the third phase, every Tehsil or Taluks of the country. The ideal will be to have it roots in each of nearly 6 lakes villages of India.

Cadre Based

It is here where the functionaries are required to share the load of membership to channelize their strength and to overcome their weaknesses. Made fully acquainted, well trained, directional and motivated people can only do this work when they are developed to raise their vision to see for themselves the whole organizational activities. They act not only as strong pillars beneath the unique structure but also create further men and material for the advancement of the organization. They develop more valuable raw material to be processed to generate good quality leadership for the organization. Trainers take position as generalist's untouched area, to direct the junior level functionaries and to guide them so that they become self-propelling. Thus a sound frame work is developed. Such a complex organization with a structure as detailed above cannot be developed in one stroke. The organization is composed of various organs, which are to be developed to

work independently and separately to each other. When all such organs are synchronies, they will constitute high, strong and efficient machinery like BAMCEF institution. The important organs of BAMCEF machinery are listed below.

Network of offices

It is envisaged that every district unit must have an office which is to be run by the district unit. But the minimum requirement is to have about 100 offices situated at capitals of the states and union territories, at almost all corporate cities, at important link junctions and of important industrial complexes. All such offices must be controlled from central control room at Delhi.¹⁶⁸

BAMCEF Secretariat

To operate such an organization like BAMCEF which is a missionary institution, it must have its secretariat wing. This secretariat wing should operate at central, State and District level. As the main function of plans made by Central, State and local self-governments for the benefit of the weaker sections of the society are implemented fully and faithfully, this Secretariat should function parallel to the Govt. establishments at every level.

Organizational wings

As per the structure of BAMCEF, the organizational set-up goes up from district, state, zone to centre. All resources, membership funds etc. are generated and developed from district level i.e. at grass root level only. Organizational wing at the center is in the

¹⁶⁸Bamcef.wordpress.com/bamcef-introduction/ p. 1

charge of an organizing secretary. He is responsible for the speedy development of the network of BAMCEF at all levels, with the help of zonal, state and district organizing secretaries. This wing plans cadre camps for training the activists and arrange meetings, functions, seminars, symposia etc. for the general masses, about the functioning of BAMCEF.¹⁶⁹

BAMCEF Brotherhood

After signing the Poona Pact and understanding free violation of its text and spirit by M.K. Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, BabaSaheb Dr. Ambedkar devised a sound scheme under the title 'Separate settlement' He ear-marked few patches on Indian Territory which were lying as barren land which could be converted into good yielding agricultural land. BabaSaheb under this scheme wanted to migrate gullible landless laborers from villages to the settlements. The size of a settlement in respect of area and population was to be equivalent to a parliamentary constituency. To develop such a settlement Babasaheb estimate that a sum of Rs. 5.00 cores and the same amount will be regenerated with the economic advancement of such settlement within a period of 5 years only. In this way the inhabitants of such settlements will be saved from the clutches of feudal lords. They would be in a position to elect their genuine representatives to the local self-Governments, legislative assemblies and even for the parliament. To advance their political goals, they were to be land owners and could develop their own agricultural economy. They were to take care of their children and arrange their education

¹⁶⁹Mool'Chand, op cit, p. 99

themselves. The scheme was good and also okayed by the British. But due to Second World War and after wards the exit of British the scheme had to be shelved.¹⁷⁰

After independence India embarked upon the industrial growth as main engine of economic growth. This trend of industrialization and urbanization made the gullible masses in the villages that were tortured by the feudal society, to migrate to cities and industrial complexes. Thus these poor masses have developed slums around the cities and still live in inhuman conditions. Their numerical strength may not be less than 5 Core and such migration still continues.

BAMCEF Adoption Wing

It is easy and approachable to attend to the problems of urban population as they make few in number. The most hopeless condition of oppressed society is observed in villages which are about 60, 00,000 in number. Further, due to reservation in services, the educated and employed people among the village population have shifted to the cities for better job prospects. The better among the remaining have also migrated to cities in search of wages and to escape from the clutches of the feudal lords. Thus the most illiterate and ignorant are left in villages itself to suffer from almost daily atrocities. To have approach to all such unfortunate brethren remains a herculean task which can be completed when BAMCEF is fully developed?

To start with, BAMCEF desire to adopt selected villages where from the requisite information will be collected and taken to the needy and presented to the appropriate authorities and got redressed. The residents will be helped to do away with their social

¹⁷⁰Ibid. p.100

evils and educated as to how to save them from tyranny. This way the dedicated workers of BAMCEF will be able to discharge their social obligation towards their own creed and brethren.

BAMCEF Co-operation Wing

BAMCEF believes that trade and commerce had been the monopoly of Bania community in private sectors since ages. After Independence, to fulfill the socialistic obligation of the constitution public sector was boosted in a big way by the Government. But the benefit of the public sector bypassed the weaker sections of the society as the managements of such public sectors being in the hands of high caste bureaucrats, desired results could not reach the weaker sections. Taking a clue from the labor fronts in the United Kingdom, who benefitted themselves through Co-operative societies and put an end to their exploitation at the hands of middlemen, Government of India started Co-operative sector with great fan-fair. But no sound scheme can be effective on its own. It is the Character of those who implements such programmes' which is of paramount importance. Being in the hands of selfish and shrewd high caste people the benefits of Co-operative movement in India also bypassed both the manufacturer and the consumer, and failed.

Keeping in view the consumption capacity of its own members BAMCEF decided to develop consumer co-operative stores of its own for the benefit of its members in particular and the public in general. Thus for such items which are manufactured by weaker sections of society and of which BAMCEF members happen to be the consumers, co-operative stores have been started first. In this way middle man is totally eliminated

and the benefits are directly shared by the producer and the consumers. At the same time, employment opportunities are developed for unemployed youths.¹⁷¹

Medical Aid & Advice Wing

Medical professionals were motivated to serve the poor after completion of their official duties as part of the service to community. The work of such qualified medical personnel was channelized through BAMCEF Brotherhood and BAMCEF Adoption Centers. Thus a great boost to the working labor that cannot go to the hospitals during day time for loss of their wages and at the same time cannot bear the fees of private medical practitioners is in the offing through BAMCEF.¹⁷²

Literary Wing

Literature and literary activities are the two foundations of a human civilization. Particularly in modern era literature plays a critical role in shaping the attitudes of human beings. No society can develop if it cannot preserve and generate its literature. Thus literary persons are a boon and backbone of any developing society. But in a caste ridden society like India, Dalits literature has been destroyed and discouraged by the ruling class. To give boost and encouragement to the persons who have been interested in literary activities the BAMCEF literary wing has been functioning in the field. The wing is discovering the lost and destroyed Dalits literature and arranging its publication afresh

¹⁷¹Ibid, p. 101

¹⁷² Mayawati, op cit, p. 272.

to preserve it. Thus a jolt to the since stagnated mind of the people has been planned to be imparted.¹⁷³

Research & Development Wing

An organization like BAMCEF which does not work for profit depends upon the moral strength of its activists to popularize the values it strives for. It is also true that fast moving objects are very prone to be affected by adverse environmental conditions. Thus a great care is required while moving fast. Though it is necessary to move fast to accomplish the required results and to achieve the laid down goals within the shortest time, time remains one of the scarcest commodity available with us. Working and existence of other organizations in the field, knowingly or unknowingly shall cast their shadows upon our day-to-day working and the strategies and programmes. Government policies, international and national groupings amongst powerful entities, may also hamper our working. The literature of social, economic and political thinkers may also create turmoil in the external environment and pose turbulences. When the organization is growing and growing very fast, some internal disorder is also inevitable, because cadres of mediocre and low commitment in the organization may feel tired and get retired from the organizational thrust when purity is bound to attract new and dedicated workers.¹⁷⁴

In order to contain the evil effects of all such external and internal forces a mechanism is being developed by BAMCEF. This mechanism expects to conduct

¹⁷³ Mool'Chand,, op cit, p. 101.

¹⁷⁴ Mayawati,,op cit, p. 272.

seminars, study developments and failure of the other social institutions, analyze reasons of their failures and suggest matching remedial measures; this organ will conduct different probes and develop guidelines for the working of BAMCEF organization so that its sailing may become smooth. This organ will be the think tank, in other words brain of the brain bank of the oppressed and exploited society.

BAMCEF Voluntary Force

With the development of BAMCEF, various functions for the further development of general members, activists, cadres and functions shall be conducted. At occasions functions for the information and inspiration of the general public are also to be conducted. To maintain proper discipline and render necessary voluntary services, a special organ under the name of BAMCEF voluntary Force (B.V.F.) has been developed. This volunteers' force in a prescribed uniform under the overall charge of a Central commander gives a unique look to the audience at functions and helps in maintaining proper discipline and decorum. At state and district levels also BAMCEF Voluntary Force is being developed as per the requirements of the respective units.¹⁷⁵

BAMCEF showed a way

Looking at, and inspired by the valuable services and the remarkable techniques adopted society become stunned. They started feeling that reprimand given by Badasaheb Dr. Ambedkar to the educated employees during his last days has borne fruits. This realization has brought educated employees under the banner of BAMCEF through a careful motivation. BAMCEF, which is functioning under the civil Services Conduct

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 274.

Rules, did a miracle job by departing from the stereo type thinking of the general people of Bahujan CARAVAN and by sincerely paying back to the society.

This inspiration of selfless service has encouraged the awakened amongst the Ambedkerite masses to do something of their own. They have started developing various organs such as follows which will come up in the form of a massive, imitational force for self-respect, when put together:¹⁷⁶

- a. Students Forum
- b. Ladies Forum
- c. Youths Forum
- d. Industrial labor wing
- e. Landless labor wing
- f. Awakening squads
- g. Press and Publication Trust
- h. Sports, track and Field activities
- i. Legal Aid & Advice wing
- j. Parliamentary Liaison

Historical Point of View

Even though BAMCEF mainly an organization of government employees, it has contributed significantly for the development of knowledge and consciousness on various aspects related to Dalits. It tried to create alternative politics and identity for Dalits of

¹⁷⁶Mool Chand, op cit, p. 104

India.¹⁷⁷ BAMCEF proposes that looking from the historical perspective the large mass of exploited and oppressed people also belongs to the Bahujan Samaj. During the course of History they are known by different names we must examine how did they get these different identities during the course of history? One of the significant contributions of BAMCEF is that identity formation by articulating alternative history and culture of India. It can be noticed that articulation of the alternative history of India which placated Dalits and other marginalised sections of India at center stage.¹⁷⁸ It was this projection played a crucial role in identity formation of Dalits in independent India.

Shudra (O.B.C) Mulnivasi

BAMCEF endorses the views of thinkers such as Phuley, Periyar and Iyoti Thass and other non Brahman thinkers on the ethnic history of India. In fact their ideas are propagated rigorously among masses. Lower sections of people and their belongingness to Indian ethnic history have long genealogies in the discourse of Indian ethnology. Colonial ethnologists proposed that lower sections of people of India are original inhabitants of India.¹⁷⁹ Besides this Christian missionaries also propagated the idea of Dalits being original inhabitants of India. In fact some of the nationalist thinkers such as Vivekananda accepted the view that Aryan is migrants and Dravidians are original inhabitants of India. The views of Vivekananda on this issue as follows:

¹⁷⁷ Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of World Largest Democracy*, MacMillan, New Delhi, 2007.

¹⁷⁸ M.S.S. Pandyan, *Brahman and Non-Brahman: Genealogies of Tamil Political*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007.

¹⁷⁹ For good review Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

In India there are two great races: one is called the Aryan; the other, the non-Aryan. It is the Aryan race that has the three castes; but the whole of the rest are dubbed with one name, Shudras--no caste. They are not Aryans at all. (Many people came from outside of India, and they found the Shudras [there], the aborigines of the country). However it may be, these vast masses of non-Aryan people and the mixed people among them, they gradually became civilized and they began to scheme for the same rights as the Aryans. They wanted to enter their schools and their colleges; they wanted to take the sacred thread of the Aryans; they wanted to perform the same ceremonies as the Aryans, and wanted to have equal rights in religion and politics like the Aryans. And the Brahmin priest, he was the great antagonist of such claims. You see, it is the nature of priests in every country--they are the most conservative people, naturally. So long as it is a trade, it must be; it is to their interest to be conservative. So this tide of murmur outside the Aryan pale, the priests were trying to check with all their might. Within the Aryan pale, there was also a tremendous religious ferment, and [it was] mostly led by this military caste.¹⁸⁰

The Dalit discourse, particularly of Adi movement propagated these ideas actively. It is pertinent to mention the ideas of Swami Acchutanand on the ideology of Adi or Dalits being original inhabitants of India. His ideas as follows:

O brothers! We are the original inhabitants of India, hundreds of our forts of stone are mentioned in Vedas. We were the rulers of this country before the advent of Aryans. These Aryan brahmins did not win from our ancestors in battles but they captured our country by lie and deceit. They devised caste system and became god

¹⁸⁰ Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda , Vol-3, pp-212.

and we who were the original inhabitants who were compelled to adopt the Aryan's religion were kept in the society as 'shudras.' Those who did not adopt Aryan's religion and were captured in the battle were called lowly untouchables and those who ran away to the forest were called tribal race or clan like Kol, bhil, Santhal, Kanjad, Sansi, Gond, Dravid, Munda, Ho, Urban etc. Some of us who are educated and have earned some money through business and are flourishing, these Aryans are trying to pick and swallow them so that their gang keeps swelling and we who are the original hindus keep minimising and remain poor forever. Our innocent brothers do not understand their tricks and are trapped in their jugglery.¹⁸¹

These views are systematically incorporated by BAMCEF in their discourse of Mulvasi which means original inhabitants. What in fact it has done is that it has given a sharp political and social dimension to the discourse and made it a weapon to attack upper caste dominated Indian society and tried to evolve an alternative identity to Dalits. BAMCEF strongly believes that Aryan Brahmins invaded India and undertook a continuous and prolonged attack on the culture and civilization of the Mulnivasi (indigenous people) of India. They destroyed and brahmanised the Sindhu Culture of the Mulnivasi. The Sindhu culture has been identified as Dravidian culture from which Dalit communities believed to have emerged.

It has also been proposed that Aryans first created Varna system (social order) and later imposed it on the Mulnivasi the original inhabitants of India. It is believed that this social order originally had only three Varnas viz. Brahmins, Kshatriya and the

¹⁸¹ Swami Achhutanand "*Harihar*" *Sanchayita* by Kawal Bharti, Swamya Prakashan, New Delhi, 2011, pp. 143-44. English translation of Hindi Speech was done by me.

Vaishya. That is why, after doing a thorough research on Vedas, Dr. Ambedkar, in his famous book “ Who Were the Shudras?” raised the serious question that when there were only three Varnas in the original social system, how the fourth varna came into existence? Dr. Ambedkar has carried a detailed analysis to answer this question. In the three fold Varna system; there was a struggle for supremacy between the Brahmins and the Kshatriya. With their cunning intelligence, the Brahmins defeated the Kshatriya. The defeated Kshatriya was banned from the religious right of “Sacred Thread Ceremony” (Janeu/Upanayan Sanskar). The deprived Kshatriya was labeled as Shudras and converted into Shudra Varna.

Thus, according to Dr. Ambedkar the three fold Varna System got converted into Four Fold Varna System and the fourth varna came into existence. Similarly, when the Brahmins invaded India, they had a long struggle with the Mulnivasi who were ultimately defeated. The Vedas are full of evidences of this struggle between Aryans and the original inhabitants the Mulnivasi people. The defeated Mulnivasi were also referred to as Shudras. According to western philosophers different titles were earlier conferred on the Mulnivasi people such as Anaya, Das, Dasyu, Danav, Asura, Rakshas etc. Thus, the so called Anaya, Das, Dasyu, Danav, Asura, Rakshas are according to BAMCEF actually the ancestors of the present day S.C., ST., O.B.C and Convertible Minority.¹⁸²

The theories given by the western philosophers were contested by Dr. Ambedkar and proved that before Aryans came to India there was Naga race in India. However during the course of history this original identity was forgotten by the present day SC/ST/OBC. The Aryans when invaded India, were only few in numbers compared to the

¹⁸² Christophe Jaffrelot, op cit.

large mass of the indigenous people. The present day so called Shudra, are original inhabitants (Mulnivasi people) of this country, and are in a vast majority. It is for this reason according to BAMCEF that even today the Mulnivasi (S.C., ST. O.B.C. and Converted Minority) form about 85% population of India.¹⁸³

The Brahmins had to struggle very hard to establish their system of Four Varna. Although, they succeeded to a great extent, the system started showing its adverse effects as there was resentment in the society. Dalit discourse proposes that a social revolution was initiated against this system by Tathagat Buddha around 6th century B.C. As he is from non-Brahman origin he got wide support for his movement from the Mulnivasi Bahujan. Buddha was a strong proponent of human values such as Equality, Fraternity, Liberty, Justice and Compassion. It is for this reason that not only India, but number of other countries also accepted and adopted his ideology. They have been included in the list of Backward Castes by the Mandal Commission. This gives glimpse of the events, which must have taken place in the historical times. Buddha challenged the very ideology and philosophy of Varna System. There was no such issue left which Buddha did not answer with his logic. The point here is that BAMCEF treats Buddhism as religion to be promoted as it provide sharp anti-Brahmical ideology.

Non-Brahman thinkers in general and Ambedkar in particular found a spiritual messiah in the form of Buddha who carried out a sharp onslaught on Brahmanical society. Particularly Iyoti Thas from South India tried to attribute the pre-aryan elements to Buddhism. Thus for BAMCEF Indian history needs to be studied from the prescriptive of Buddhist India and Brahminical India. It is believed that the special privileges

¹⁸³Bamcef.wrodpres.com/bamcef-introduction/p.5

including learning and teaching and rights, which the Brahmins had solely kept for them, were endangered. Since these special privileges were actually their means of livelihood, they started facing the problem of their livelihood. Thus, they were forced to adopt any profession which they could manage for their livelihood. During the time of Emperor Asoka the Great, many Brahmins joined the army. When Asoka's son died, his grandson Brihadratha was made the King. Since 'Brihadratha' was very young and still a minor, Pushyamitra Shunga, an Arya Brahmin, who was the Army Commander, started looking after the administration of the Kingdom. One day, Pushyamitra Shunga killed the minor Brihadratha in the assembly of the palace and declared himself as the King (around 185 B.C.). During the Maurrya Empire (Chandragupta, Asoka and their successors) Buddhism was the State Religion. After 'Pushyamitra Shunga' became the King, he declared Brahmin Religion as the State Religion. Thus, Pushyamitra reestablished Brahmin Religion in India. This incidence caused havoc in the life of Mulnivasi people, who had by then embraced Buddhism. BAMCEF narratives thus perceives Muryan period as time of joy for Dalits and marginalized which was rattled by Brahmanical rulers and its imposition resulted in displacement of non-Aryan people.

BAMCEF believes in the version of history of Dr. Ambedkar who proposed the concept of revolution and counter revolution (between Buddhism and Brahmanism). It is propagated that triumph of Brahmanism over Muryan Empire resulted in some of the mulnivasi had compromised and surrendered to Brahmanism, but others continued with their opposition. Those who compromised with the Brahmins were given status as shudras in the Verna system without any right. They were told to serve the upper three Varna's without any remuneration. It has been proposed that it was during the time of

Pushyamitra Shunga only, that notorious Manusmriti, which is the code of Brahmin religion and other brahminical scriptures, such as various Smritis, Ramayana Mahabharata Geeta and Puranas etc were composed. Provisions for code of conduct and penal code for shudras were made in Manusmriti. Pushyamitra announced beheading of all Buddhist monks and announced 10 (3 gold coins) coins for each “Head “as a reward, to terrorize the mulnivasi and uproot India. Dr Ambedkar has discussed the various fact with related evidence, in his word famous thesis “Who were the Untouchables.”¹⁸⁴

Adivasi Mulnivasi

Those, who did not accept Pushyamitra as king and Brahmanism as state religion, and continued to oppose his oppressive and inhuman policies, were not only debarred from accumulating any wealth, but were also deprived of all basic human rights including right to education, wealth and keeping arms. As part of the strategy of battle, they went to the jungles. The struggle was on for years together. Latter, this large group of Mulnivasi people started breaking into smaller groups. Some continued to stay in the jungles. These are called Adivasi. They are the Scheduled Tribes of today. This is to be noticed that BAMCEF bided for more inclusive identity of all marginalized sections of Indian society. Projection of tribes as larger molvasi identity is part of this.

Untouchable Mulnivasi

As part of narrative on Indian history, BAMCEF also proposes that other who left the jungles and came to the villages. Their wealth had already been snatched away. Thus, they didn't have any means of livelihood. They were forced to remove carcasses and to

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p. .6.

eat the meat of dead animals and live on the outskirts of the villages. Since no social intercourse was allowed with them, they came to be called as untouchables. These untouchables are the present day Scheduled Castes. Those, who surrendered and compromised with the Brahmins, were given the status of Shudras. These are nothing but the present days OBCs. This clearly means that in the four fold Varna System, the so called Shudras are the present days O.B.C. and are Mulnivasi of this land. The S.C. and the ST. are outside the Varna System (they were not included in the Varna System). They were called outcastes (Varna), Antyaja or Panchama.

Interesting explanation was offered for emergence of caste system by BAMCEF. It has been proposed that the major lesson, which the Brahmins learnt from the Buddhist revolution, was that the Mulnivasi, who were in vast majority, needs to be divided in such a way that they should never come together and keep fighting amongst themselves in future. For this, the Brahmins devised the Caste System. It was this context in which the Varna System was changed into a Caste System. One single Shudra Varna was divided into 6000 castes and developed a unique system of graded inequality, with ascending order of reverence and descending order of contempt. This system of reverence and contempt was established by force by the Brahmins, this prevented any possible reunion of these castes in future.¹⁸⁵

Thus, it can be seen that S.C., ST. and O.B.C., who are divided into different castes as on today, basically belong to one Mulnivasi Bahujan Samaj. They were very civilized, well off and united in the ancient times (Harappa Civilization), but have been forced to separate into different groups, because of the prevailing social conditions,

¹⁸⁵Ibid. p. 7.

during the course of history. Since all the three groups (S.C., ST. & O.B.C.) Originally belonged to one Mulnivasi Bahujan Samaj, it is necessary to unite them by making them realize this historical reality. BAMCEF thus evolve a discourse that aimed at counter hegemony to Brahmanism. Indian history was used as source to justify the claims of Dalits other marginalized sections as sons of soil and upper caste Indians belong Aryans outsides of India.

Converted Mulnivasi

Human equality has been guiding principle for Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Prophet Mahmud founded Islam religion on the basis of the doctrine of equality and said “Allah has made all as equal”. When the Muslim invaders came to India, they brought their religion with them. The Mulnivasi, who were oppressed by the Brahminical Social system of inequality, were very much influenced by the principles of equality in Islam religion. Gradually many got converted to Islam. Muslim rulers ruled for about 800 years and during this period, the Mulnivasi continued to embrace Islam. This explains why and how, India has had such a vast majority of Muslims, although only few Muslims came from outside India. When the British came, they also brought their religion (Christianity) with them. The great German thinker Holzer Christian, who is very renowned authority in the field of theology, in his research thesis “Jesus Lived-in India” has mentioned that Jesus lived India and that he was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Lord Buddha and founded Christianity with emphasis on the doctrine of compassion, equality and justice. During the British rule many mulnivasi discarded Brahminical social system and converted Christianity similarly when the Sikh religion was founded as a region against Brahminical inequality, Mulnivasi got converted to Buddhism in ancient times. Thus, for

BAMCEF from the historical point of view, it can be observed that people of S.C, ST. and O.B.C and those who have been converted from among them to various religions, are as such the people of one Mulnivasi Samaj. They are people of one blood and one religion. It is therefore BAMCEF believes that it is historical responsibility of intellectuals from below to unite all marginalized sections to put an end to their social discrimination and exploitation.¹⁸⁶

Why are organizing only educated employees

BAMCEF as an organization strongly believes in the fact that enlighten human agency need to play a crucial role in bringing social transformation or betterment of lives of marginalized sections of India. This is in fact a belief in the concept of evolutionary process of society which believes in the fact that human society evolves from simple to complex. BAMCEF gives ethical dimension to social Darwanism in the form of advocating the theory of repaying back to society. The targeted group of BAMCEF is educated employees from marginalized sections of Indian society. There are number of reasons as to why are giving emphasis to organize the class of educated employees, it is believed that educated section from the intellectual class and this class possesses three special characteristics;

1. In this section, which comes to knows latest trends in the development of human society? They examine their present standard of living vis-à-vis emerging new trends they objectively assess as to where do they stand in the race of several and development.

¹⁸⁶Ibid. p. 8.

They try to achieve higher standards in their life. By achieving higher standards in life they become the pioneers of modern and healthy social system.

2. In this section which understands as to how social system of degradation had come into bring? Who are the beneficiaries of the system? If the system benefits few then why only them? Why such a system was evolved against us? Who are creators of such system? These are the number of questions, which need a special intellectual outlook and analysis. It is only the intellectual class, which can and examine and analyze this issue in detail.

3. Intellectual classes can meet the requirement of creating a healthy social system through an organization they can provide required input of human and financial resource. These are the three special characteristics, which the intellectual class possesses. It is for this reason that Jyotiba Phuley and Dr B. R. Ambedkar gave top priority to generate an intellectual class among the SC ST and OBCs. The movement for social revolution, which was set by Phuley in 1848 and struggled up to 1890 till he breathed his last. It was later on taken over by Dr. B. R Ambedkar from 1916 to 1956 and BAMCEF wishes to take this mission further.

This chapter concentrated on three important things related to Dalit assertion and identity formation by focusing on discourse and practice of BAMCEF. Firstly, BAMCEF explicitly a culminated expression of Dalit fight for rights and respectable identity however mainly in the domain of politics. Secondly, BAMCEF created and diffused a discourse of confidence and assertion of all sections of marginalized sections of Indian society. It is a unique experiment structured based upon the notion of class modal enunciated by Marxism. The main vision of such experiment is that underdeveloped class

should come together and occupy the political power to change their fate. Thirdly, BAMCEF tried to create a distinctive identify for all marginalized sections in general and Dalits in particular. The identity formation process by BAMCEF was mainly aimed at creating non-Brahman identity by proposing new culture, values and history. By all means BAMCEF played a crucial role in formation of Dalti identity for infusing confidence derived from alternative interpretation of existing cultural values, beliefs and history of India.

CHAPTER-IV

DALIT POLITICS AND IDENTITY IN: A STUDY OF BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY

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PARTY

This chapter explores the process of identity formation among Dalits of Uttar Pradesh and role of Bahujan Samaj Party AS influencing factor. It has been proposed that after capturing political power BSP attempts to create new form of identity for Dalits who constitute core of its support base. A socio-cultural paradigm was created by BSP in which the claims of Dalits vociferously articulated for masculine identity as rulers of India. While BAMCEF was mainly interested in class based approach, BSP functions with caste based approach. The study of BSP and its impact upon the identity formation of Dalit shows an interesting case study of dialectical relationship between power and identity. This chapter proposes that BSP and the paradigm it has created tried to create new forms of identity aimed at carving not only respectable social space but also an identity of ruling class.

Emergence and ascendancy of BSP in Indian politics shows an interesting process of social structure from below claiming political power in independent India. The ideology of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) it is mentioned that: "Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation of the "Bahujan Samaj ", which comprises of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Religious Minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists and account for over 85 per cent of the country's total population. The proposition of oppressed people coming together for political power in India was a dream of Dr.

Ambedkar, BSP tries to actualize this dream.¹⁸⁷ It has been proposed that the marginalized sections belonging to India have been the victims of the "Manu-wadi" system in the country for thousands of years, under which they have vanquished, trampled upon and forced to languish in all spheres of life. In other words, these people were deprived even of all those human rights, which had been secured for the upper caste Hindus under the age-old "Manu-wadi Social System". Emergence of BSP shows the transformation of BAMCEF ideology and activism into political process.¹⁸⁸

All political parties are guided by certain ideological framework. Parties go to public with an agenda guided by ideology and when they acquire power attempt would be made to execute their agenda.¹⁸⁹ The ideological foundations of BSP were mainly incorporated the ideas of great persons (Mahapurush) belonging to "Bahujan Samaj", who fought courageously and with commitment against the brutal and oppressive Manu-wadi system, for providing a level playing field to the downtrodden to help move forward in their lives with "self-respect" and at par with the upper castes Hindus, especially Baba Saheb Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar's socio-political campaign later proved to be very effective in this direction.¹⁹⁰

The ideological framework of BSP was evolved from the ideas of non-Brahman and Dalit thinkers from various parts of India. The contributions of leaders of the downtrodden communities like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Saint Ravidas, Kabirdas,

¹⁸⁷ Chitistofaor Jeforlot, *Indian's Salient Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2003.

¹⁸⁸ Mayawati, *Mere Sanghreshmai Jeewan Evam Bahujan Movement Ka Safer namma*, BSP Central Unit New Delhi. 1995.

¹⁸⁹ Rajani Khotari, *Indian Politics*, Orient Longmen, New Delhi, 1970.

¹⁹⁰ www.bspindia.org Capture this "Temple of Power" For Your Emancipation.

Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj, Narayana Guru and Periyar E. V. Ramaswami have been incorporated into the ideological framework of BSP. Particularly the struggle of Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, and Kanshi Ram later formed core of BSP ideological commitments.¹⁹¹ BSP claims that besides waging a spirited campaign against the Manuvadi Social System, Dr. Ambedkar instilled consciousness among not only the Dalits, but also among those belonging to other backward groups, which continue to be victimized and trampled under this oppressive and unjust Manuvadi Social System.

It is generally believed that Dr. Ambedkar, during his lifetime, had counseled the "Bahujan Samaj" that if Dalits want to fully enjoy the benefits of their legal rights, as enshrined in the Constitution, they would have to bond together all the Bahujan groups on the basis of unity and fraternity, bring them on a strong political platform and capture the "Master Key" of political power. This was to be the modus operandi for the formation of Bahujan Governments at the Centre and in States. Only such governments could enforce all the constitutional and legal rights of the "Bahujan Samaj" and provide opportunities to its people to move forward in all spheres of life besides enabling them to lead a life of "self-respect"¹⁹². The dream of Ambedkar is that the lower segments of Indian society should capture the state power however under the leadership of Dalits.

The ideas of Dalit and non-Brahman thinkers indeed inspired whole generation of marginalized sections. But political manifestation of these ideas remained to be under dormant. Emergence of BSP as political power shows the transformation of non-Brahman

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Kanshi Ram, *Why is Bahujan Samaj Dependent in Independent India*, published by BSP, 1997.

ideology from social philosophy to political power. Kanshi Ram founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), with the help of his associates, on April 14, 1984. For many years while he enjoyed good health, he prepared the "Bahujan Samaj" to secure the "master key" of political power, which opens all the avenues for social and economic development.¹⁹³ This process shows the evolution of democratic process in India. After 1980s lower sections of Indian society had began to assert and aspired for capturing political power hitherto monopolized by upper caste dominated Indian National Congress. It also shows the fact that people of India wanted to participate in the governance process to change their fate.

Kanshi Ram being a diabetic and host of other serious ailments, his health did not permit him to lead an active political life for too long. On December 15, 2001, Kanshi Ram Ji, while addressing a mammoth rally of the BSP at the Lakshman Mela Ground in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on the banks of the river Gomti, declared Kumari (Miss) Mayawati Ji, then the lone Vice-President of the Party, as his only political heir and successor.

Moreover, on September 15, 2003, Kanshi Ram health suffered a serious setback, and the entire responsibility of the Party fell on the shoulders of Kumari Mayawati. Later, on September 18, 2003, the Party, through a consensus and in keeping with its Constitution, made her its National President. Being the National President of a National Party, Mayawati Ji in her address sought to assure that 'I would like to make aware people of the country that my Party, the BSP, is committed to not only improving the

¹⁹³ Ibid.

socio-economic conditions of people belonging to the "Bahujan Samaj" but also of the poor among the upper caste Hindus, small and medium farmers, traders and people engaged in other professions'.¹⁹⁴

On the basis of its ideology, the BSP wants to sound the death-knell of the "Manuwadi Social System" based on the 'Varna' (which is an inequality social system) and striving hard and honestly for the establishment of an egalitarian and "Humanistic Social System" in which everyone enjoys JUSTICE (social, economic and political) and EQUALITY (of status and of opportunity) as enshrined in the PREAMBLE of the Constitution. Further, the main objective of the party has been that 'the chief aim and objective of the Party shall be to work as a revolutionary social and economic movement of change with a view to realize, in practical terms, the supreme principles of universal justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enunciated in the Constitution of India'.¹⁹⁵ Such a social system is wholly in the overall interest of the Country and all sections of the society too. BSP has also mentions that if in this missionary work of "Social Transformation", people of the upper castes (Hindus) shed their Manuwadi mindset and join hands with the Bahujan Samaj, with all due respect and affection would embrace them. Such people will be given suitable positions in the Party organization in accordance with their ability, dedication and efficiency, and there would be no distinction between them and those belonging to the Bahujan Samaj. Also they will be fielded as Party candidates in the parliamentary and assembly elections, and if our government is formed, they will also be given ministerial berths.

5. www.bspindia.org. Capture this "Temple of Power" For Your Emancipation.

6 Kanshi Ram, op cit, pp.7-8.

Aim of objectives of BSP

The agenda or objective of BSP reflects its commitment to establish inclusive society in which marginalized sections of Indian society get their due share. The chief aim and objective of BSP is to work as a revolutionary social and economic movement of change with a view to realize, in practical terms, the supreme principles of universal justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enunciated in the Constitution of India. The following important objectives of BSP shows its core commitments:

1. That all citizens of India being equal before law are entitled to be treated as equal in true sense and in all matters and all walks of life, and where equality does not exist it has to be fostered and where equality is denied it has to be upheld and fought for.
2. That the full, free, uninhibited and unimpeded development of each individual is a basic human right and State is an instrument for promoting and realizing such development;
3. That the rights of all citizens of India as enshrined in the Constitution of India and subject to such restrictions as are set out in the Constitution, have to be upheld at all costs and under all circumstances;
4. That the provisions of the Constitution requiring the State at Center and in States to promote with special care and protect the socio-economic interests of the weaker sections of the society denied to them for centuries, have to upheld and given practical shape in public affairs as a matter of prime most priority.

5. That economic disparities and the wide gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have not' must not be allowed to override the political principle of "one man, one vote, one vote, one value" adopted by our republic.
6. That unless political empowerment is secured for the economically deprived masses they will not be able to free themselves from the shackles of economic and social dependence and exploitation.

In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the aims stated above BSP also pronounced that it would work specially towards the following objectives:

1. The Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, the other Backward Castes, and the minorities, are the most oppressed and exploited people in India. Keeping in mind their large numbers, such a set of people in India is known as the Bahujan Samaj. The Party shall organize these masses.
2. The party shall work for these downtrodden masses to:
 - a. to remove their backwardness;
 - b. to fight against their oppression and exploitation;
 - c. to improve their status in society and public life;
 - d. to improve their living conditions in day to day life;

The social structure of India is based on inequalities created by caste system and the movement of the Party shall be geared towards changing the social system and rebuild it on the basis of equality and human values. All those who join the party with the commitment to co-operate in this movement of social change shall be ingratiated into the fold of the Party.

Towards the furtherance of the above noted aims and objectives the organizational units of Party as designated in this constitution, shall be empowered to:

1. Purchase, take on lease or otherwise acquire, and maintain moveable or immovable property for the Party and invest and deal with monies of Party in such a manner as may from time to time be determined;
2. Raise money with or without security for carrying out any of the aims and objectives of the Party;
3. To do all other lawful things and acts as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of any of the aforesaid aims and objectives, Provided that none of these activities will be undertaken without the express approval of the National President.¹⁹⁶

Kanshi Ram & Bahujan Samaj Party (B S P)

"I will never get married, I will never acquire any property, I will never visit my home, I will devote and dedicate the rest of my life to achieve the goals of Phule - Ambedkar movement"

- B S P Founder Kanshi Ram¹⁹⁷

The BSP was formed by Kanshi Ram who has been ideologue and guiding force of BSP. He was born on 15 March 1934 in a Chamar Ramdasia Sikh from Khawaspur village in Roper district Punjab. Kanshi Ram's father and uncle were in the army and his family owned some land near about 4 or 5 acres some of inherited and the rest of

¹⁹⁶ www.ironladykumarimayawati.org

¹⁹⁷ www.bspindia.org/many. Shri Kanshi Ram *php*. *Identity of Revolution*, pp.1-3.

acquired through government allocation after independence. He managed to educate all his four daughters and three sons. Kanshi Ram the eldest is the only graduate. He was given a reserved position in the survey in India after completing his BSc degree. He transferred to the department of defense production as a scientific assistant in a munitions factory in Poona.

Kanshi Ram hailing from Punjab which not only has large number of Dalit population but also experienced a strong Dalit movement in the form of Ad Hindu movement he was well aware of caste based discrimination. Hence formation of BSP was consciously planned as a reformist lower middle class party of Dalits. Kanshi Ram his father and uncle were in the army and his family owned some land due to which he was able to obtain an undergraduate (B Sc) degree in 1956 science at Roper. Exposure to writings of Ambedkar made Kanshi Ram ideologically strong in his vision and action. Particularly *Annihilation of Caste* which made him aware of his identity and instilled pride in his background.¹⁹⁸ He wanted respectable identity to all Dalits of India.

The main views of Kanshi Ram could be captured from his two books namely **Introduction of BAMCEF and Chamcha Age**.¹⁹⁹ His agenda is to change the political equations of Indian politics by placing downtrodden into center of political power. He invoked new dynamic identity to Dalits. His views can be captured from the following the following reflection:

¹⁹⁸ P.S. Bains, *Socio Economic Problems and Rights of Schedule Cast/Tribes and Other Backward Classes*, Raj Publication Dehradun .1990.

¹⁹⁹ Kanshi Ram, *The Chamcha Age: An Era of Stooges*, Vedic, New Delhi, 1982.

The history of India is full of daring stories of the Shudras and Ati-Shudras. There are number of instances in which the Shudras and Ati - Shudras (the oppressed and the exploited)set examples of bravery in the field of battle at the cost of their life for the sake of others. Thousands of years ago they were the rulers of this land. Sikandar the Great had a taste of the bravery of the Shudra army, when he was advancing to conquer India. He had to go back when confronted with the tribes of the land. Unfortunately the high-caste historians of this land, who pose as the custodians of culture and literature, distorted the facts and wrote the history in such way that for all times, Shudras and Ati - Shudras were projected as helpless and hopeless creature.⁵

The fact is that Kanshi Ram's ascendancy in Indian politics facilitated by political context in which Dalits and anti-congress consciousness waiting for an alternative power center.²⁰⁰ He gradually exhibited remarkable ability to mobilise Dalits for concrete political action.²⁰¹ Kanshi Ram's strategy of Dalit mobilization strongly rooted in ideological and pragmatic dynamics aimed at capturing political power. He promoted the following emblematic symbols which he terms as four hands as expression of his socio-political ideology:

First – Buddhist Research Center - “Religious Hand”.

⁵ Sudha Pai , *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution : The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh , Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge* ,Vol-3 , New Delhi, Sage , 2002 , p- 123.

²⁰⁰ Rajani Khotari, *Indian Politics*, Orient Longmen, New Delhi, 1970.

²⁰¹ Rajani Khotari, *Caste in Indian Politics*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2010.

Second- BAMCEF (6 Dec 1878) - “Brain Bank, Talent bank, Financial Bank”.

Third –DSSSS (DS4, 6 Dec 1981) “Social Hand”.

Forth – (Bahujan Samaj Party 14 april1984) Political hand.²⁰²

The adjective of the of BSP is to implement of social, political and religious ideology of Dr B.R. Ambedkar to form society based on equality. The important leaders of BSP realized the fact that without influencing and capturing the memories of Dalis it is not possible to build a strong political party. Particularly history became a contested battle to advance new form of assertion and identity. Regarding the importance of history Mayawati said that: “ A society which does not have its history can never become a ruling society because it is history which gives inspirations from inspiration comes awakening, awakening evolves into thought, thought firm up as strength ,strength creates power and power makes one ruler.”²⁰³ BSP follows the interpretation of history given by Ambedkar who said that:” If you want to destroy any society then you destroy the history of the society that society will automatically get destroyed” what is history? The activists of BSP believe the famous sentence of Ambedkar which as follows on history: “history moulds then man but man can also mould the history’.²⁰⁴ Mayawati a leading figure of BSP proposes that Bahujan Samaj of India had the glorious history in the past and the birth and growth of Bahujan Samaj party is to reconstruct the glorious past of Bahujan Samaj by implementing social and political philosophy of Dr Ambedkar.

²⁰².P.S. Bains, op cit, p. 15.

²⁰³ Mayawati. *Bahujan Samaj and their Politics*, (Hindi). 2001. pp. 1-2

²⁰⁴ Bhasker H. Chand. *Dalit Political Issues*.(Hindi), Publication. Swaraj Publication, New Delhi.2013. pp. 58-59

BAMCEF (the all India SC, ST, OBC, and Minority Communities Employees Federation) is the name of that association which base was put by Kashi Ram in 1974 after resigning from government service. The aim of this association was not only to collect the employees of this class and aware them towards their demands and rights, while to in force and known about their duties towards their society. This association was fully a non- political association of employees. After the establishment of such a vast association BAMCEF, a other social association DS-4 (Dalit Shushed Samaj Sangharsh smite) made for generating awareness among various marginalized social groups. “Buddhist Research Centre” established to send the news for historical and research oriented knowledge. After the association of Dalit, backward and minor employees, Kanshi Ram established DS-4 because government employers cannot make movement fast and they can’t participate openly in politics. So to fill full this limit DS-4 was established. It was established on 6th December 1981, after 3 year of BAMCEF. DS-4 consisted of different wings Jagriti wing, women wing, and student wing. All wings were commanded directed by Kanshi Ram. The Jagriti wing play most important role among them. This wing concentrates on masses mediums to reach out to Dalit and bahunjan masses. DS-4 started rallies by bicycle to propagate the concept of unity in Dalit society and captured the attention of the whole country. Blue flags were on cycles. Dalit of whole country indeed came under the influence of this wave as each and every village was covered by activists. The workers of DS-4 awakened and collected to Bahujan society of

whole country. This was an innovative strategy followed by Kanshi Ram to take the message of Dr. Ambedkar and other Dalit thinkers to the masses.²⁰⁵

The DS4 were aimed at awakening the oppressed section of the people and make them realize their strength through Jagaran, people parliaments', programmers such as the Poona Pact Denunciation programmed 'anti liquor agitation and Preacher Arts. The popular cultural forms are used to spread the message of Dalit ideology. A major Yatra was the Message of the DS4 Miracle of Two Feet and Two Wheel launched between 15 March and 17 April 1983 in it, hundreds of cyclists, under the leadership of Kanshi Ram.²⁰⁶ This process indeed significantly influenced the minds and behavior of Dalits and other marginalized sections of Indian society.

After good success of D-S4, Kanshi Ram tried to transform the Dalit awakening into a systematic political action. It was in this context that Kanshi Ram declared a political party named Bahujan Samaj Party on 14 April 1984, the birth day of Dr. Ambedkar. The policy of Kanshi Ram besides BAMCEF was to organize SC, ST, OBC and religious minorities.²⁰⁷

Although BAMCEF was an organization of employers but it was not registered as trade union. DS-4 was also not registered. But from the begging BSP was registered political party. After establishing BAMCEF in Puna Kanshi Ram decided to concentrate on north India. Possibility two reasons exist for this: first is Kanshi Ram was of this area

²⁰⁵ Badri Naryan, *Kanshiram: Leader of the Dalits*, Penguin, New Delhi, 2014.

²⁰⁶ Pai.Sudha, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution*; Sage, New Delhi, 2002. pp. 92-93

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

and for political practical, the position of this area was clearer. Secondly Maharashtra was the work field of Dr. Ambedkar, where the customs' of different types of revolutionary aspects may resist to Kanshi Ram works. He decided to concentrate on UP as it has number of Chamar, Kureel, Jatav castes were same as upper castes in high grade officers and at the same time U.P also has large number of Brahmans against who animosity of Dalits exists.

The BSP which officially founded on the anniversary of Ambedkars birth day took over the mantel of DS4.the members of DS4 were to provide 10 to 12 rupee annually as membership fund to create "financial bank" for the party Kanshi Ram was the first to demand money from his voter instead of bribing them with cash for their votes. One Rupee, One Vote is what he would ask everyone everywhere. And he got it from a whole lot of them. From Nagpur, from 30th march 1984 started publishing a Marathi daily newspaper "Bahujan Times". On 14th April 1984, it introduced "Bahujan Times" also in Hindi and English languages.²⁰⁸

BSP party tried to make use of Dalit consciousness crated by a vibrant Dalit movement took place in colonial India. Swami Atchunand's Adi Hindu movement, several Dalit caste associations such as Chamar Mahasabha, Jatav Mahasabha etc organized Dalits against the oppression of upper castes. Week position of Replication Party also created a political vacuum for Dalits to fill with new political ideology. It was in this context the political activism of Kanshi Ram acquired relevance and popularity.

²⁰⁸ S.S. Gautama and Anil Kumar, *Tributes to Bahujan Nayak Manyavar Kanshi Ram*; Gautama Book Centre. Delhi, 2012. pp. 27-28

The political strategies of Kanshi Ram show novel methods in political landscape of lower sections of Indian society. He contested in Allahabad Loc Sabha by election of July 1987 against Sunil Shastri of the congress and VP Singh of the opposition. Kanshi Ram objective was to make this into a genuine three sided contest and throughout most of the campaign in fact it appeared as if the BSP with low funding had the most enthusiastic and vigorous campaign centered on the rhetoric of overthrowing upper east political power **“Vote Hammara Raj Tumhara Nahin Chalega Nahin Chalega”**. **(Our Vote Your Rule, No Lungar No Lungar)**

In all of this what is striking is nearly total lack of any clear ideology in the programming and functioning of BSP etc. the thrust is solely on breaking the cast system to overthrow the rule of the three upper casts by organizing “oppressed and exploited for ‘Equality.’ “Changing” and destroying the system” are stressed but the system is described almost solely in social terms. A programme is absent so is any concrete outline of what Dalit and backwards might do once they gain political power or what kind of society might be built according to Kanshi Ram.

Kanshi Ram’s ideas on Indian democracy also crystallized during this period. He felt that true democracy is not possible under a Varna system and described Indian democracy as rule by upper cast based upon Manu’s order on Brahmanism order. These

ideas were later developed in his book “Chamcha age” in which he criticises post Ambedkar Dalit leaders for being ‘Chamchas or stooges and attempt to rise beyond them.’²⁰⁹

Any political tend to develop some cracks in the due course of time. The Bahujan ideology is not an exception to this. In 1986 a major split took place. Kanshi Ram announced at that time that he was no longer willing to work for any organization other than Bahujan Samaj party. His transition from the social worker to politician was complete with this. Kanshi Ram is more an organizer and political strategist than an innovative thinker or charismatic public speaker while his Ambedkerite ideology has remained constant and lacking in any innovation there has been progression sharpening of his rhetoric the early issues of BAMCEF’s monthly magazine *the oppressed society* were full of his dedicated expositions of Ambedkar, views on Indian society. These have now given way to simpler promulgations. Repeated in numerous newspaper accounts and both public and private speech. The central proposition is that Indian society is characterized by the left interested rule of 10 percent of several castes they derive their legitimacy and ruling ideology and distortion, including the press. These institutions can therefore be termed Manuvadi (after the great Brahmin- inspired text) or Brahminwadi in the marketplace of election such simplicity has been further reduced to crudeness and epithet. A slogan coined after the formation of DS-4 was “Brahmin, Bania, Thakur, Chor. Bake Sab Hai DS4” (Except Kshtriya, Brahmin, Vashya, all are Exploited members of the society. Together they constitute Dalit Exploited society struggle committee.) Kanshi Ram’s strategy and his larger understanding of social change are now considerably evolved and he no longer beelines in the primary of social reform. Rather expenditures of

²⁰⁹ Badri Naryan, op cit.

effort of any object other than the capture of government are seen to superfluous. It is administrative power that will bring about desired social change not vice versa. So he declines to spell out policies on land reforms. His view is that such issue was on the part of Bahujan Samaj against their Bramminwadi oppressors in the context of this war debates about policy are almost frivolities. This is a stance of pure fund mentalist but it also frees him to engage in the most ruthless pragmatism in the name of capturing power.

Vote Se Lenge PM/CM

Aarakshan Se Lenge SP/DM²¹⁰

(From vote we will have Prime Minister, Chief Minister and from reservation Superintendent of Police and District Magistrate)

Consistent with this stance, Kanshi Ram has become increasingly entail of the institution of reservation in government reservation is a 'crutch' useful for a enplane but a positive handicap for someone who wants to run on his own two feet. He will be they who can condescend to the Brahmins by giving them reservation proportional to their own meager population. There is more than a little bravado in this but there is no doubt that Kanshi Ram is now hostile to the system of the institutional preference that was the indispensable basis of his own personal and political career.

Jiski Jitni Sankhya Bhari

Uski Utmi Bhagidari

(For every one Representation/Participation should be on basis his number)

²¹⁰ V. Kumar and U. Sinha. ,*Dalit Assertion and Bahujan Samaj Party Publicationjan* . Bahujan Sahitya Sansthan, Lucknow.2001. pp. 70-71.

He further argued that minority rule over majority (Bahujan) is not just. Therefore for establishment of an order based on equality, liberty and fraternity each section of the society should be given representation according to their strength (population).²¹¹

85 Per 15 ka Raaj Nahin Chalega, Nahin Chalega, Nahi Chelga

The central proposition of Kanshi Ram is that, the Indian society is characterized by the casteist, selfish and self centered rule by 15% over the 85%- Bahujan Samaj. Although the ruling 15% is composed of several casts, they derived their legitimacy and ruling ideology from Brahmanism. All the institution of society, reflect this ruling ideology and distortion, including the press and court. That is why three institutions are essentially Manuwadi or Brahminwadi.²¹²

BSP in fact used the problems that victimized Dalti society in India. For instance, the issue of land ownership, historically Dalits is deprived of ownership rights over land. The aspiration of landless to land can be captured from famous slogan of BSP activists “Jo Jameen Sarkari Hai , Vo Jameen Hamari” was for the campaigns for all the land less people: B.S.P Ki Kya Pahchan Neela Jhanda , Hathi Nishan meaning that to recognize BSP, there is the blue flag and elephant symbol; and B.S.P Kya Nara Hai, Bharat Desh Hamara Hai meaning BSP slogan is, India is our country by these slogans, Kanshi Ram awakened the Bahujan Samaj and made people conscious about the power of vote.²¹³ Kanshi Ram then did, what was always thought by Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phuley, Chhatrapati Sahu Maharaja, and Periyar E V Ram swami. On 6 December 1993, he

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² S.S. Gautam. and Anil Kumar, op cit, pp. 22-23.

²¹³ Ibid. pp. 28-29.

started a movement at the all India level “Jati Todo Samaj Jodo” as part of this movement, huge processions was organized in Hyderabad, Patna, Calcutta and Ahmadabad. These meetings organized all over country made BSP not only a political party, but also a movement for social justice and socio-economic change of the Bahujans at all India level.²¹⁴

The consolidation of political power in the hands of BSP resulted in special treatments to the lower castes, of which Dalits were the first beneficiaries. Mayawati and Kanshi Ram, started to bring about a series of visible changes. The change brought about by the BSP government in up included, appropriately renaming the existing institutions. In quest of this new identity formation Agra University was renamed as Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, the University in Kanpur as Chaterpati Sahuji Maharaja University, the BSP Government also named the Agra stadium, as Eklavya stadium several of the existing big districts were bifurcated to create new districts. Many such new district were named after Bahujan Samaj leader and saints, who great noble icon in their own credit and they were Dr B R Ambedkar (Faizabad) District, Sahuji Maharaja District (Ameethi), Mahamaya Nager (Hattherus) District named after the mother of Gautama Buddha.²¹⁵ Panchsheel Nager (Haapur) District, Kanshi Ram Nager (Kanshgang) District, Bheem Nager (Sambhal) District, Prabuddha Nager (Sahamali) District, Jyotiba Phuley (Ameroha) District, Saint Ravidas Nager (Bhadohi) District, Saint Kabir Nager (Khalilabad) District, Ramabai Nager (Kanpur Dhehat) District.

²¹⁴ Ibid. pp.30-31.

²¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 30-31.

Kanshi Ram quest for political power based on Ambedkarian dictum that ‘Political power is the key to all problems’. The fragmentation of politics through the assertion of the regional bourgeoisie in the 1970s thereafter accelerated emergency too long sentence thereafter a wide coalition was ushered into power at the centre. This provided a congenial political climate for the BSP strategy of exercising a lever for the balance of power, to tilt in favor of davits.

In the election, when even the mainstream parties could not muster courage to contest all seats the strategist in Kanshi Ram decide to do so, to win them, but to split the votes and cause the defeat of and weaken the mainstream parties. This strategy resulted in root of the congress party in different election in Utter Pradesh. The concept of a Majboor Sarkar –dependent government in place of everybody’s claim to provided a Majboot Sarkar –strong government proved to be a master stroke of genius, in forcing the mainstream parties, to beg the support of BSP and Kanshi Ram it is this strategy that lent it the requisite bargaining power to repeatedly grab government power in UP.²¹⁶

It seems that Kanshi Ram believes that reservation has now done enough for the scheduled castes he met that of same 500 Indians administrative service (IAS) officer in Utter Pradesh, 137 are from the backward caste. His point is not that these are now too many scheduled caste officers their number conforms strictly to the legal quota-but too few from the back ward castes. He apparently assumes that the capture of politician power will atomically transform the composition of the bureaucratic elite.

²¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 72-73.

Politics of the Ambedkarite Movement

Ambedkar's political direction was clear and consistent throughout his life, although changing circumstances and constraints led to different political formations. The direction was to maintain the autonomy and leadership of Dalits, but at the same time to seek a broader alliance or coalition which would include peasants and workers (in class terms) and all middle castes-non-Brahmins/backward castes (in caste terms). Throughout, the Congress as the representative of Brahmins and capitalists, was viewed as the most dangerous political enemy of the exploited and oppressed.

In the 1930s, Ambedkar formed the Independent Labour Party which came out with a bold peasant-worker action programme in the mid 1930s, a period of tumultuous mass movements. The ILP fought not only for Dalit interests, but also organized joint struggles of Mahar and Kunbi tenants against the khoti landlord system in the Konkan as well as participated fully in the major textile workers' struggle of 1938. At the same time, Ambedkar sought to convince non-Brahmin leaders in Maharashtra not to join the Congress, and urged the Bihar Kisan leader Swami Sahajanand to pull his movement out of the Congress orbit. Although the ILP had some respectable success in Maharashtra, at an all India level the middle castes and the peasant movement were getting fairly firmly drawn under the Congress hegemony and were helped considerably by the illusory leftism of the Congress Socialists and by the Communist policy of seeing the Congress as a "national united front".

Thus, in 1942, the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF) was formed as a party of Dalits, at all India level. Although this was seemingly a surrender of efforts to develop a broader movement, Ambedkar's political aspirations did not change the 1951 election manifesto of the SCF and declared that it would like to work with backward caste and scheduled tribes and would be willing to change the name to Backward Castes Federation. To make this possible, it also declared a willingness to accept a merger into a federal party like the Socialists, the Justice Party and the Kisan Mazdur Party (the latter many represented peasants caste), without jeopardizing its autonomy. Finally, before his death, Ambedkar gave a call to form a formally open party to represent all exploited groups which resulted in the creation of the Republican Party.

This broad political thrust towards forming an alliance/coalition with middle castes and non-Brahmins and often Muslim/peasants was shared by other sections of the pre-independence Dalit movement, in spite of the tensions that continued to exist between middle caste Hindus and Dalits, between peasants and agricultural laborers. In Bengal, in the 1930s Namasudras had a sporadic alliance with the Muslim peasant based Krishak Praja party. In Punjab, Mangoo Ram's Ad-Dharma joined the Muslim-Hindu-Jat peasant-based Unionist Party. Both the parties had the broader anti-Brahmin, anti-Bania, anti-Bhadralok rhetoric and tenor thrust.²¹⁷

However, the extraordinary absorptive power of the Congress managed to stifle such attempts at an alliance from below. In a way, this was spearheaded by Gandhi with his various of Harijan programme and his very strong assertion of not a national, but a

²¹⁷ R. Krishisagara, *Dalit Movement and its Leaders, 1857-1956*, M.D. Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

Hindu unity. However, it has to be clearly recognized that Gandhi was not the only factor, that the Congress elite very consistently and over a long period of time had developed a capacity and willingness to appeal to Harijans and scheduled castes whenever they were threatened by the non-Brahmin peasantry. Put in other terms, the Congress capitalists tried to use agricultural laborers against peasants and the Congress Brahmins tried to use Dalits against the non-Brahmin middle castes, and they were quiet successful in doing so. Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh was not the only (or even main) effort in 1930s to appeal to Dalits, the role of Jagjivan Ram who founded an agricultural laborers organization to split the Bihar Kisan Sabha, and Depressed Classes League as a counter to Ambedkar's ILP and Depressed Classes Federation-both in the same year 1936 also played an important role.²¹⁸

Historically Indian National Congress tried to assimilate Dalits into its fold. Indira Gandhi's rhetoric of Garibi Hatao and appeals to the rural poor and Dalits was no new political creation. The late 1960s witnessed the massive political alienation of middle caste peasants which had shaken Congress strongholds in North India. Pro-Congress progressives (needless to say, invariably urban, salaried Brahmins) described "Kulaks" and "rich and middle peasantry" as the sole beneficiaries of agricultural progress and the main exploiters of agricultural laborers and Dalits. Indira Gandhi and Congress leaders perfected "KHAM" alliance in many states referring to Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims (where as Kshatriyas referred to various backward castes in Gujarat)-but the hidden, unnamed term of the KHAM alliance was the Brahmins. It was really a renewed

effort to unite the upper castes with the lowest castes against politically assertive middle castes.²¹⁹

In the face of this political strategy, the Dalit movement could not progress rapidly. Even in Ambedkar's own time, of course large sections of Dalits' subordination and they were pulled into organizations like Congress and even Hindu Mahasabha. The appeal to Dalit poor peasants/agricultural laborers to see the village dominant peasants/middle castes as their main enemies and exploiters did of course have a base in the day-to-day forms of subordination and exploitation-and the power of this appeal and the ideology of the "rural poor" took on even more force when backed up by the very substantive political/economic benefits which Congress had to offer (at least to Dalit leaders). Congress did manage to capture the Harijan vote bank in most states, and most of the various factions of the RPI were pulled eventually into some kind of open or indirect alliance with the Congress. Dalit interests got expressed only in sectional lobbying. Even the explosion of the "Dalit panthers" in the early 1970s got dissipated into factionalism, with a good proportion of the leadership getting reabsorbed into Congress.

In this background, the rise, from the early 1980s of an independent, largely anti-Congress political force, firmly based on Dalits but with a broader appeal to all backwards and exploited, can in fact be seen as a renewal of the earlier political thrust of the Ambedkarite movement. Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party and Prakash Ambedkar's Bharatiya Republican Party have numerous differences in

²¹⁹ Dr Rajkumar , *Ambedkar and Politics*, Commonwealth Publishers. Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi. 2011.

strategy and rhetoric, but they both represent the new political assertion, in which Dalits seek to emerge as leaders in a wider coalition of the exploited and marginalized. A comparison here can even be made with the phenomenon of Jesse Jackson and his “rain to coalition” in the U.S., where perhaps for the first time in history a black leader emerged with an impressive degree of success.

Political Ideology: Advantages of Vagueness

The interesting feature in the domain of ideology is that nearly total lack of any clear ideology in the programmes and functioning of BAMCEF and BSP. The thrust however, is mainly on breaking the caste system to overthrow the rule of the three upper castes by organizing the oppressed and exploited sections for equality. Noticeably the ideological apparatus described almost solely in social language. An economic program is absent, so is any concrete outline of what Dalits and backwards might be built. According to Kanshi Ram:

We have not laid down an ideology for our struggle. We are in the process of formulating it. Our struggle for annihilation of caste has begun all over India. At the end of the campaign we will hold a seminar in Delhi where people from different caste groups, interests and political parties will be invited. We shall seek a common approach on the basis of a consensus (Surya India, May 1987; quoted in “The New Messiah”)²²⁰

²²⁰ Singh Jag pal, “*Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit Identity Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut district of Western Utter Pradesh*” ‘Economic and Political Weekly’ October 3,1998.

In this sense it can also be noted that all the agitation and other campaigns of DS-4, BAMCEF might have been at the symbolic and cultural-political level; they have not dealt with any economic issues; they have been Jagruti (awakening) campaigns. Massive bicycle tours from the far ends of India into remote villages, and people's parliaments were organized. The only issue taken up has been the 1987-88 anti-drink (alcohol) campaign.²²¹

Although the attempt is to unite the minorities with Dalits and backward castes, Kanshi Ram does not show the kind of "pro-minority. Line which condones all minority fundamentalism on the pretext that Hinduism is the main enemy, there is a wariness about Islam, for example, or rather the positive stress (and this is consistent with Ambedkar) on Buddhism (with some references to humanism, atheism of Phuley, Periyar and all). Similarly, there is no ideological interpretation of the origins of caste and untouchability, specifically, little of the "non-Aryan" theory which interprets all of Indian history in terms of Aryan (white) conquest of originally such a view have identified India's Dalits with "blacks" the world over, they have also added a strong racist tinge to the Dalit movement.

All of this ideological vagueness contrasts strongly with Ambedkar himself who had clear economic programmes, who wrote extensively on the origins and history of untouchability and caste. Nevertheless, it era (very different from that of Ambedkar) in which the major ideologies (in particular, traditional Marxism) have been in a state of

²²¹ K.L. Sharma, "Kanshi Ram and Bahujan Samaj Party", in G. Omvedt (Eds), *Caste and Class in India*, Rawat Jaipur, p. 165.

crisis for some time. Ambedkar's economic ideology, for example, was by and large that of the Marxist Left, tempered with a firm commitment to political democracy. (This general, very broad type of Marxism, with commitments to heavy industrialization, state planning, land reform, etc., also lay behind the Nehru model of development). Thus his specific economic programmes at the time of the Independent Labor Party were broadly those of peasants and workers not different form (and certainly equally militant as) the Communist or Socialist Left of the period. His orientation to technological development, industrialization, mechanization of agriculture was seen as going along with and requiring nationalism and collectivization-the whole program; of "state socialism" was very broadly along Marxist Left lines. And Ambedkar himself generally made it clear that his disagreements with Communism centered on issues of totalitarianism and violence, on how to reach the goal, not so much on the goal itself or the economics of its construction.²²²

Further, there are some specific reasons why the currently available form of Marxist economic ideology should be unacceptable to an organization like BAMCEF/BSP. The first is the tendency onwards discussing atrocities on Dalits or caste conflict in the village, to interpret these in terms of a basic class conflict between rich and middle peasants (Kulaks, capitalist farmers, but the emphasis on "property ownership" as basic to "class" leads to a tendency to lump together all landowning peasants) and agricultural laborers and poor peasants.

²²² S. Ambirajan, 'Ambedkar's Contribution to Indian Economics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No, 46/47, November, 20-26, 1999, pp. 3280-3284.

However, this assumed class conflict is in contradiction to the caste alliance which Kanshi Ram is seeking to build between Dalits and backward castes. With some exceptions, the majorities of “rich and middle peasants” (and certainly the majority of those actually involved in attacks on dalits-the “foot-soldiers” of atrocities) are those classified as Sudras and falling in the eighty-five per cent majority the BSP wants to represent.

The second issue is that the general “Leftist” solution to the problems of the rural poor and Dalits has been in terms of land distribution and collectivization and nationalization of industries at the broader societal level. Now in one sense, this “Satism” might be seen to be in the interest of the governmental (bureaucratic) employees who are the main “brain-bank, talent bank and financial bank” for the BSP. However, the fact remains that the scheduled caste and the backward caste government employees are subordinates and a minority force in the bureaucracy, a move towards “Satism” in the Indian context clearly brings with it Brahminism, the control of the upper castes. It is not surprising that there would be an ambiguity on this issue. Nor is it surprising that the lower middle class support base of the BSP with its strong urban foothold could be skeptical about the tendency of urban Brahmin salaried intellectuals to tell them that the main enemy of Dalits are the rural “dominant caste” peasantry. They confront more immediately the “dominant caste” of the cities and the bureaucracy and its much subtler forms of daily domination.²²³

²²³ Teltumbde. Anand, “*An Enigma Called Kanshi Ram*”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4 November, 2006, pp. 4531-4532.

In the face of these complexities and uncertainties, then the lack of ideology of the BSP may be a kind of advantage-open-endedness in an era of uncertainty. There is also something to be said for the assertion that bringing the low-caste “oppressed and exploited” into political power, into organizational leadership and intellectual competence, is a prerequisite to any real building of ideology. Kanshi Ram is an organizer and political strategist than an innovative thinker or charismatic public speaker. While his Ambedker ideology has remained constant and lacking in any innovation, there has been a progressive sharpening of his rhetoric. The early issues of BAMCEF’s monthly magazine, *The Oppressed Indian*, were full of his didactic expositions of Ambedker’s views on Indian society. These have now given way to simpler formulations, repeated in numerous newspaper accounts and both public and private speech. The central proposition is that Indian society is characterized by the interested rule of 10 per cent over the other 90 per cent (the Bahujan Samaj Party or common party). Although the ruling 10 per cent is composed by several castes, they derive their legitimacy and ruling ideology from Brahminism. All the institutions of society reflect this ruling ideology and distortion, including the press. These institutions can therefore be termed Manuwadi (after the great Brahmin-inspired text) or Brahminwadi. In the marketplace of elections, such simplicity has been further reduced to crudeness and epithet. A slogan coined after the formulation of DS4 was, ‘Brahmin, Bania, Thakur Chor, Baki Sab Hem DS-Four’. Loosely translated, this rhyme states that Brahmin, Bania, and Rajputs are thieves, while the rest of society is their victims. The epithets reached their height during the election campaign for the UP Assembly in 1993, the most notorious being: ‘Tilak, Taraju, Talwar. Marro Uno Joote Char’. This slogan, with its insistent rhythm in Hindi, advocates that

Brahmin, Bania, and Rajputs each identified by a slighting term, be beaten for times with a shoe - a traditionally demeaning form of punishment because of the ritual impurity of leather. While Kashi Ram and Mayawati denied authorship of such slogans, they served as a simple and dramatically offensive marker of the party's ideological position.²²⁴

Kanshi Ram has become increasingly critical of the institution of reservation in government employment. Reservation is a 'crutch'- useful for a cripple, but a positive handicap for someone who wants to run on his own two feet (Kanshi Ram interview; 1996). He now throws off the line that once the Bahujan Samaj gets to power throughout India, it will be they who can condescend to the Brahmin by giving them reservation proportional to their own meager population. There is more than a little bravado in this, but there is no doubt that Kanshi Ram is now hostile to the system of institutional preference that was the indispensable basis of his own personal and political career. It seems that he believes that reservation has now done enough for the Scheduled Castes. He notes that of some 500 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers in Uttar Pradesh 137 are from the Scheduled Castes. By comparison there are only seven IAS officers from the Backward Castes, six of them Yadavs (Hindustan Times, 6 April 1994). His point is not that there are now too many Scheduled Caste officers their number conforms strictly to the legal quota-but too few from the Backward Castes. He apparently assumes that the capture of political power will automatically transform the composition of the bureaucratic elite.

²²⁴ Ibid.

The Bahujan Samaj Party first made headway in Punjab, Kanshi Ram's home State, but his primary political task was to wean the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh from Congress. It was Kanshi Ram's fortune that he built the party at the historical moment that the long term Congress decline became a landslide. The formal entry of his party into Uttar Pradesh was in a by election in 1985 for the Lok Sabha seat of Bijnor, in which its candidate was Mayawati. She is a Jatav (or Chamar), the daughter of minor government official in Delhi, and had completed a BA and LLB from the University of Delhi. Mayawati had made contact with Kanshi Ram in 1977 while she was a student, and had gradually been drawn into his organization. Her opponents in Bijnor included Ram Vilas Paswan the two have had poor relations since this contest and Meira Kumar, Jagjivan Ram's daughter, representing Congress. Rajiv Gandhi was at the height of his popularity at time, and Meira Kumar won the seat easily. But by 1989 the Bahujan Samaj Party had put in five years of solid organizing work in UP and also in the neighboring regions of Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, and parts of Haryana. And meanwhile the Congress Party had slumped in popularity. Kanshi Ram had prepared the ground carefully. He had selected organizers and candidates from variety of social backgrounds. One of his organizers was Dr. Mahsood Theme, a temporary lecturer in history at Aligarh Muslim University. Mahsood had become disillusioned with Congress when Indira Gandhi made her infamous tilt towards the Hindus in the early 1980s (Mahsood interview: 27 November 1995). He joined BAMCEF and then switched to DS4 in 1983 as a full time organizers and fund raiser, Mahsood was later put in charge of the whole of eastern Uttar Pradesh for the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Having seen the ideological dynamics of BSP it is necessary for us to see what are the programmes that are undertaken by BSP while it was in power for emancipation of Dalits.

Special drive for filling backlog of reservation-

Though the Constitutional provision for reservation of SCs/STs already existed, yet honest efforts for filling posts under the reserved category were not made due to indifference and neglectful attitude of previous Governments. It was identified that large number of vacancies remained vacant under reserved category in various government departments. Out of this, 27,388 posts were reserved for Scheduled Castes and 5678 for Scheduled Tribes.

- Following special drive launched by the present Government, recruitment, to 19,361 posts has been made.
- Request has been made to the U.P. Public Service Commission to speed up the process of recruitment to the posts falling under its purview.
- The Government is effectively pursuing for the vacation of the stay on filling the posts by various courts, including the High Court.
- Selection process for filling rest of the posts in 2008-09 is on. This clearly shows that no previous Government has ever initiated process of fill such a large number of posts in the reserved category in one year.
- Government Order has been issued to give the benefit of consequential seniority and reservation in promotion to the officers and employees of the Scheduled Castes and

Scheduled Tribes in conformity with the provisions of the 85th Amendment to the Constitution.

Full protection to the interests of SC/ST farmers-

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Tube-well Scheme is being implemented in order to make available irrigation facilities to the SC/ST farmers in such water scarcity areas of the State where installation of shallow tube-wells and successful implementation of boring scheme is not possible. A budgetary provision of Rs. 86.60 crore has been made in this year's budget for providing 100 per cent grant to these sections for installation of deep tube-wells.

Besides, Dr. Ambedkar Community Tube well Scheme is being implemented for the farmers of all sections of society subsisting below poverty line. Under this scheme, farmers of SC/ST community get priority and a subsidy of 50 per cent of the cost or a maximum of Rs. 2.15 lakh per tube well. An amount of Rs. 39 crore has been earmarked for the scheme.

The Government has decided to provide sprinkler and drip irrigation equipments to the SCs/STs farmers at government expense to provide sprinklers and drip irrigation equipment in the drought-affected Bundelkhand region. A provision of Rs. 65 crore has been made to benefit as many as 10,000 farmers this year under the scheme. Groups of beneficiary farmers of the new method in predominantly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes areas will be formed in such a way that no eligible farmer is deprived

of the benefit. The Government has decided to spend Rs. 400 crore under the scheme in the next four years.

New initiative for International level higher Education Facility to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

BSP identifies that higher education is critical for formulation of new ideas. Following globalization and privatization, respectable positions are available in the private sector. Thus, it is being felt that the higher scientific-technical, legal and management education should be accessible to the Scheduled Castes and the weaker sections. Keeping this in view, 50 per cent reservation for students of Scheduled Castes/Tribes, OBC and those below poverty line in admissions in the Gautam Buddha University, is being ensured. The Gautam Buddha University is tying up with leading European Universities and institutions. Under the arrangement, desirous students will be sent to foreign universities for higher education for two semesters.

It is imperative to explain here that under this arrangement, the Gautam Buddha University will be given full assistance by the State Government for sending 50 per cent students of the Scheduled Castes and those below poverty line to foreign universities for two semesters. This step of the Gautam Buddha University to give higher education to the students of Scheduled to give higher education to the student of Scheduled Castes and the BPL is unique in the country.

First time one lakh houses for homeless SCs/STs under Mahamaya Housing Scheme-

Presently, there are 16 lakh homeless Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families in the State. Under various housing schemes being implemented, only 1.5 lakh houses could be constructed in a year. In the circumstances, it will take at least ten years' time to make available housing facility to eligible Scheduled Caste/Tribe beneficiaries.

Keeping this in view, the State Government has launched Mahamaya Housing Scheme during 2007-08 from its own resources. Sixteen lakh homeless families are being brought under this scheme. Out of Rs. 500 crore made available during the financial year 2007-08, an amount of Rs. 407 crore was spent on the construction of 1.11 lakh additional houses. Besides, 1,55,421 houses were contracted for the families of these sections under the Indira Awas Yojana. Thus, more than 2,66,127 houses were constructed for the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe families during 2007-08. This clearly shows that no previous government had ever constructed as many houses for the homeless of these sections in a year as has been done by the present Government.

Urban poor among SCs/STs to get Houses-

The Government has decided to launch Shri Kanshi Ramji Shahri Gharib Awas Yojana for providing housing facility to the urban poor. Under the scheme, one lakh two-room Pucca houses with basic amenities like roads, power, drinking water and clean toilets are expected to be provided to destitute women, disabled and the urban poor below poverty line on a priority basis. Those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes will be given preference among all the three categories. Under the scheme, construction of one

lakh houses every year for the next five years will be ensured. Work on the construction of houses at a cost of Rs. 500 crore during 2008-09, has commenced.

All-round Development of SC/ST dominated Villages-

Following the directives of the Chief Minister soon after taking over the reins of administration on May 13, 2007, out of 26,796 villages selected between 1990-91 and 2002-03, during her two previous regimes under the Dr. Ambedkar Gramin Samagra Vikas Yojana, work on saturating 2,467 villages unsaturated till April 01, 2005 with basic amenities, began. During 2007-08, 1964 villages were saturated during 2005-06 and 2006-07. The remaining 172 villages are being saturated during 2008-09.

With a view to ensuring rapid development and creating basic infrastructure in villages, decision has been taken to implement Dr. Ambedkar Gramin Samagra Vikas Yojana as Dr. Ambedkar Gram Sabha Vikas Yojana by making sweeping changes in its structure and form. Out of 18 points targeted earlier for the saturation of Gram Sabhas, it has been decided to focus attention on the following five-construction of lavatories, electrification, link roads, construction of streets and drains, drinking water and allotment of housing and agricultural land to the poor.

Leather Park and Shoe Mandi set up first time in Agra-

Decision has been taken to set up a shoe Mandi in Agra in order to provide marketing facility to the product of small shoe makers. With a view to encouraging

leather footwear business, a leather park is being set up an estimated cost of Rs. 100 crore in an area of 250 acres in Agra.²²⁵

Respect to Saints, Gurus and Great Men

The Government led by BSP firmly believes that all the saints, gurus and great men should be given full respect to provide respectable religious identity to Dalits. Therefore, BSP tried hard to perpetuate the memory of the saints, gurus and great men born in the Bahujan Samaj, so that the people could, take inspiration from them. No other government in the past had ever thought of taking such a step and did not raise any memorial in their name.

- The statues of the architect of the Indian Constitution, Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, his wife Smt. Ramabai Ambedkar along with the statues of Manyawar Kanshiram and the Chief Minister, Ms. Mayawati were unveiled of April 14, 2008 on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar Jayanti at the Samajik Parivartan Prateek Sthal at Gomti Nagar embankment.
- In order to give the Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Samajik Parivartan Sthal a permanent character, the present memorial is being remodeled and made resplendent.
- A memorial would be constructed in honor of Manyawar Sri Kashiram Ji, who dedicated his entire life for uniting Dalits, downtrodden and deprived sections of society, on the Lucknow-Kanpur V.I.P. road.

²²⁵ Pradeep Kumar, '*Dalit and the BSP in UP Issue and Challenges*, Economic Politically XXXIV, No. 14, 3 April 8, 1999, pp. 22-26.

- A huge rally spot named after Ramabai Ambedkar, is being developed near the Dr. Ambedkar Central University and Shaheed Path with an objective of saving the city from rallies in the busy localities of the city.
- 15th March 2008, the birthday of Manyawar Shri Kashiram Ji, has been declared a public holiday.
- Maghi Purnima which fell on February 21 this year, was declared a Public Holiday on the occasion of Guru Ravidas Jayanti.
- Decision has been taken to construct Sant Ravidas Ghat in Nagwa at a cost of Rs. 3.75 crore. Besides, announcement has been made to provide Rs. 15 crore for improvement and cleaning of water of nearby Nullah.
- An amount of Rs. 10 lakh has been provided to the Shri Narayana Dharmasangam Trust, Kerala named after Shri Narayana Guru who worked for the uplifting and bringing Dalits into the social mainstream throughout his life.
- Besides, several places, institutions, schemes and programmes were named after great men, like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj, Shri Narayana Guru, Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and Manyawar Shri Kashiram Ji.²²⁶

History and identity formation

The point this chapter tried to show is that BSP has created a paradigm from which new form of identity formation took place. Particularly the historical consciousness of Dalits as

²²⁶ Sushri Mayawati Ke Gatiseel Netritva Me Uttar Pradesh Sarkar Ke Pramukh Nirnay Awam Thos Uplabdhya (in Hindi) Report Issued by Department of Information Publication Relations, Lucknow 20 September, 1997.

legitimate ruling class could be seen in several publications in Hindi language. These writings acquired prominence in influencing the identity formation process of Dalits of Uttar Pradesh.

The resistance of Dalits for their own history not only confined to spiritual domain but also history. Satnam Singh's 110 pages book *Chamar Jati Ka Swatantra Sangram Me Yogdan* not only analyses how untouchables were kept aloof from the freedom struggle but also provides rare intense, analytical and research oriented material on thousand of Dalit heroes, heroines, martyrs, revolutionaries and great men who participated in Indian national movement. The excellence of Chamar caste has been brought to centre stage through the introduction of martyrdom sites, revolutionaries, martyrs and important persons of chamar caste and their participation in society as a whole. The role and importance of many martyrs of chamar caste has been indicated so that chamar caste can feel glorified. The author attacks ironically on Manuwadis while presenting the role of dalit society. Further, the author has tried to prove through this book that during freedom struggle between 1857 to 1947 many untouchable heroes and heroines played inerasable and eminent role but Indian feudal Manuwadi brahminist writers and scholars never mentioned untouchable heroes.

Satnam Singh has presented book *Chamar Jati Ka Gauravshali Itihas* an intense analysis of the origin, myths, criticism, sub-castes different religious communities and great men of Chamar caste with the very caste as the base and centre of it. As per speculation this is the first creation on this subject in which chamar caste has been historically scrutinized and has been tried to be connected to Indus valley civilization. It has also been tried to depict through this book that how in India chamar caste was put away from the mainstream, rights, resources and freedom and made untouchables. The evidences of this caste being the original caste or aboriginal Hindu of India has also been presented

along with it. He not only indicated the significance and contribution of this caste among Dalit castes but has also objected to the upper castes denying the heroes and their roles of this caste.

Babudas Sajan's 103 pages booklet *Dalit Puran* puts the Dalit favorite before us on the basis of logic between two parties. The author describes the advent of Aryans, caste system, Harappa civilization, Shaiv religion, teachings of Bhagwat, Manusmriti, Ram of the Ramayana and Shambuk as the cause aspect and the revolution of Kabir, the works and message of Dr. Ambedkar, the contribution of Jyotiba Phuley, the role of Buddhism and Osho's view of Brahmanism and dalit opinion are comparatively described as deterrence aspect. The author draws the conclusion Gautam Buddha, Kabir, Jyotiba Rao Phuley and Dr. Ambedkar are the hems men of Dalit society. Hinduism and Brahmanic system are responsible for the pitiable condition of Dalit society.

Dr. Vijay Kumar Trisharan's 104 pages book *Anuvanshik Shodh aur Videshi Arya Brahmin* tried to establish through this book that Dalits are the original dwellers of this country and upper castes are outsiders. He supports his opinion through the idea of D.N.A. research and opinions of various scholars. Both indigenous as well as foreign scholars find mention here. A decisive light is focused on the issues like name of India, its original denizens and their culture and civilization, upper caste women being original residents etc. The cunning effort by the upper castes to hide their outlandish identity has been analyzed in the book.

Dalit Dastavez by M.R. Vidrohi gives us an insight into the revolutionaries, martyrs, saints and torch-bearers of Dalit society. It is the heroic tale of the oppressed class of society which never got

propagated in mainstream media. Many great men who talked of social equality are described in this book. This book investigates into the fact that how Dalit society which was the original inhabitant of this country was made to live like a slave. The author has described very realistically the great people who have lost everything for development of untouchables, deprived and ignored people. The book shows us the contribution and struggle of Shambar, Jeenak, Alhan, Dashnath, Kamkandal Sangram Shah and Neelambar and Peetambar Shani whose significant role was ignored in the mainstream history book.

Book entitled *Bharat mein Dalit Jagran aur Uske Agradoot* by Mataprasad, has presented a realistic account of Dalit's condition and situation in India, messengers of Dalit awakening, local martyrs, revolutionaries, heroines, aboriginals and their struggles Dalit literature etc. The condition of Dalit society in the pre-independence era, their contribution, struggle and their post-independence situation has also been perused here. Here we find the names, addresses and precious struggles of local martyrs of different states of India. A detailed description of Dalit litterateurs is also given here. The author has put Dalit participation and struggle in different parts of India into a single thread.

The aforementioned books only represent a small fraction of the vast available literature on Dalit history the point this chapter make is that new historical forms representation by making Dalits at center state emerged in Utter Pradesh. This process indeed crated new form of identity formation among Dalits by creating histories written with the approach of self respect.

This chapter has examined the emergence, ideology, programmers and mobilization strategies of the BSP since the early 1980s, against the background of two significant change in

UP. A strong wave of Dalit assertion and decline of the broad, aggregative single party system could be seen. It shows that within a short period of time, the BSP has emerged as a strong party within the emerging multi party system in UP in the post congress phase. Despite the brief period it has been in existence, the BSP has been instrumental in introduction of two fundamental changes that have impacted upon the Dalit community in UP in particular and in India in general. It has created a new identity, awareness confidence and self-respect that Dalit value, and which have change their perception of themselves and the world around them. Second, it has brought them into mainstream politics. Today Dalits occupy a central position whose support is sought by all parties. The BSP with a transferable vote and by forming alliances of it choice with other parties can determine who forms the government in the state. These are no mean achievements in the highly conservative society such as UP which still exhibits elements of social feudalism. However, the BSP has not been able to radicalize the Dalit movement in the state and create 'class 'solidarity and a new subaltern identity among the lower caste, thereby contributing to the process of social transformation, nor has it been able, despite capturing state power, to introduce change in the lowly socio-economic position that Dalit occupy at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, due to which, the vast majority remains poor, uneducated, backward and unable to make use of opportunities and enjoy the fruits of developments. Thus while there have been considerable achievements on the part of the BSP, there are many task it could not –fulfill, thereby rending it an unfinished democratic revolution for Dalit and society as whole these. Ambedkar Gram Vikas Yojana Sambandhit Mahatva Poorn Shasandesh (Report in Hindi). Lucknow, Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1999.

CHAPTER-V

BHUDDISM AND DALIT IDENTITY IN

NORTH INDIA

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Buddhism a religion founded by Gautam Buddha indeed a religion constructed based upon the humanitarian values. In colonial India like Hinduism Buddhism has also shown the signs of revivalism. In this process intelligentsia belongs to non-Brahman and Dalit background played a crucial role. Attempt has been made to restructure Buddhism as more socially emancipatory philosophy than a theological doctrine. It is this context that made Dalits to drift towards Buddhism which culminated into conversion of Dr. Ambedkar and advocacy for conversion of Dalits to Buddhism. All these developments in a way created new forms of religious identity and Dalits of Maharashtra and north India shown strong propensity towards Buddhism as alternative to Hinduism. This chapter examines the process of emergence of Buddhism as alternative to Hindu and role of Dalit intellectuals in making Buddhism as religion of Dalits.

In the sixth century B.C., Northern India did not form a single Sovereign State. It was divided into many States ruled by several dynasties. Of these some were Republican and some were monarchical. The republican states were those of the Sakyas of Kapilvatsu, the Mallas of Pava and Kushinara, the Lichhavis of Vaisali, the Videhas of Mithila, the Koliyas of Ramagam, the Bulis of Allakapa, the Kaingas of Resaputta, the Mauryas of Pipphalvana and the Bhaggas of Samsumara Hill. These republican states were also known as Sangh or Ghana. There were many ruling families in the Republic of the Sakyas and the head of the ruling family was known as Raja.

At the time of the birth of Siddharth Gautama it was the turn of Suddhodana to be Raja. The capital of Sakyas was the city called Kapilavastu, named after great rationalist Kapila. Gautama Siddhartha was a son of Suddhodana and Mahamaya. Siddhartha was married to Yasodhara and had a son Rahula.²²⁷

It is generally believed that the teachings of Buddha are indeed radical and revolutionary against the established values of his contemporary times. He attacked the notion of privilege based upon the birth and advocated it to be transformed into privileged based upon worth. Gautama drew his disciples from all walks of life such as castes, professions etc. Gautama survived for around 44 years after getting the Bodhi, or enlightenment. A short while after his attaining 'Bodhi' he preached his first sermon at Sarnath (Rishipatan Mrigadav). According to Buddha the two extremes which man ought not to follow, the habitual indulgence on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions and especially of sensuality, on the other hand, of asceticism or self mortification, which is painful, unworthy and unprofitable. There is a middle path 'Majjhim Patipada' which avoids both these extremes. This opens up the eyes of known edge, generates wisdom and peace."²²⁸

Buddha determined to spread the gospel of social equality among people of his times. Except the three month of rainy seasons Gautama tirelessly travelled on foot and preached his doctrine of freedom, love, and knowledge; rationality of practical life. During the rainy seasons he stationed at a certain camp. This stay is called 'Varsavas'. Buddha stayed for the maximum

²²⁷ B.R. Ambedkar, *Buddha and His Dharma*, Siddhartha, New Delhi, 2006.

²²⁸ A.K. Anand, *Buddhism in India: 6th Century BC to 3rd Century AD*, Neha, New Delhi, 1996.

period (24 rain-stay) in the city of Shravasti. These were not his pleasure trips. He crossed the boundaries of Kingdoms with missionary zeal for the welfare and liberty of humanity.²²⁹

In the A.D. 7th century Hiuen Tsang saw seventy Vihars or Sangharams. Out of these the Viharas of Pundravardhan Tamralipti, Capital of Samatat and Karnasuvarna grew as famous colleges. It was Ikhitiar Uddin Mohammadbin – BakhtiarKhalji the able general of Qutb Uddin Ibak who destroyed the Nalanda University; burnt down its wonderful library and other Buddha Vihars all around the territory, in A.D. 1198. He destroyed and demolished so many Bhikku Sanghas in the region that, according to the tradition, he afterwards named the state as, Bihar. The name of the state still continues.²³⁰

Gautama Buddha, at different places and on various occasions, categorically denied the validity of inhuman caste system, because this system blocks the scope to grow even through the process of diligence and practice of virtues and which on the contrary, sterilizes human aspirations to become what one wanted to be in the field where one wanted to excel. “Inequality was the official doctrine of Brahmanism. The Buddha opposed its root and branch.”²³¹ No caste; no inequality; no superiority; no inferiority; all are equal. This is what he stood for. “Identify yourself with others. As they, so I, As I, so they”, so said the Buddha.²³² “No one is an out caste by birth and no one is a Brahmin by birth.” “All have to enter into what is called the struggle for existence.... and what society wants is the best and not the fittest.” This was the approach of Buddha in dealing with lower castes people.

²²⁹ A.K. Harh. *Towards A Buddhist Social Philosophy*, Neha, New Delhi, 2014.

²³⁰ K.T.S. Sarao, *Decline of Buddhism in India: A Fresh Perceptive*, Munshilal Monohar, New Delhi, 2012.

²³¹ B.R. Ambedkar, op cit, p. 216.

²³² *Ibid.* p. 219.

It is to be noted that that the doctrine of Buddha was not just a concept of non-violence and an idea against vocational supremacy of the Brahmins. Moreover, non-violence, according to D.D. Kosambi, was the culture of our society that existed in the Harappa time.²³³ Gautama assured people of happiness and prosperity; “Sabbe Satta Sukhi Hantu; Sabbe Hantu Chakhemina.” His doctrine of fraternity was the sure agent attraction for his Sangha.²³⁴

The Buddhist Sangha was open to all irrespective of caste, creed, color and gender. Caste had no place in the Sangha. Social status had no place in the Sangha. Inside Sangha all were equal. In the Sangha, rank was regulated by worth and not by birth. The deprived sections of Indian society under the hegemony of Brahmanism found Buddhism as good opportunity to acquire access to spirituality. Gautama Buddha showed the path to eradicate poverty and went beyond by seeking solution of life in totality. It is pertinent to mentions the impact of Buddhism on the Muryan state policies in order to underscore the impact of Buddhism on polity and social attitudes of human society.

Asoka Dhamma

During the post Gautama Buddha period, the influence of his Dhamma increased considerably amongst the elite and the masses. The mercantile class and the ruling class actively supported and propagated Buddhism. But no Indian ruler had any scheme to make the Dhamma as the vehicle to win humanity throughout the world. None could visualize the power of the

²³³ D.D. Kosambi, *Introduction to Study Indian History*, Sangam, New Delhi, 2004.

²³⁴ K. Jones, *The New Social Face of Buddhism: A Call for Action*, Wisdom, New Delhi, 2003.

doctrine of Buddhism to be of international brotherhood. It was the extraordinary zeal and ambitious imagination of the Emperor Asoka the Great that made a blueprint of a unique scheme of fostering international brotherhood by spreading the doctrine of Buddha, his Dhamma and Sangha. But for this extraordinary position of internationalization of the 'Dhamma' we would not have been able to restore to the lost track of either the life of Gautama Buddha or his 'Dhamma' in the form we have got it today. We discovered Buddha, by discovering the lost track of the Emperor Asoka Maurya.²³⁵

However, the Indians were completely unaware of Emperor Asoka till only a century ago. Two thousand five hundred fifty years ago, in our country, there lived a great emperor named Asoka Maurya. History of this emperor was not maintained in India. His name came to light only when the European scholars exhumed the archaeological findings on the history of ancient India in the recent past. Emperor Asoka's name was known to some of the South – East Asian countries like Sumatra, Burma (Myanmar) Japan, Ceylon and China. But Europe had almost no idea about the Emperor Asoka till the day they, fortunately, discovered the archaeological evidences on his mammoth and monumental activities.²³⁶

The European rulers of India discovered, from all over the territory, many monolithic, highly polished sandstone Pillars since the beginning of the second half of the 18th Century. The smooth surface of the polished pillars was used as the slate to engrave message of the monarch who erected these imperishable monuments. The edicts on the pillars and Rock – surfaces

²³⁵ Romila Thapar, *Asoka and Decline of Muryas*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1961.

²³⁶ D.D. Kosambhi, *op cit*.

reveal that the Emperor Asoka adopted these unique methods of recording important matters of public life on stone surface. But not even a single Indian scholar was found to identify either the language of the edicts or the author who accomplished this splendid act of preserving history.

However, today, the name of Asoka the great is familiar more than any other Indian monarch amongst the history conscious people of India. Not only in India, but his name has become popular also in the whole world. Sir. H.G. Wells the historian and political philosopher of world repute paid tributes to the Indian potentate with golden letters, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowded the columns of history, their majesties, graciousness, serenities, royal highness and the like, the name of Asoka shines, and shines almost alone like a star. From Volga to Japan his name is still honored."

The Emperor Asoka built magnificent monuments of marvelous beauty all over his territory not just for decoration purpose or for the vulgar display of wealth, power and pomp of an absolute monarch but for the people of his contemporary period, but he made it also for the welfare of the posterity to come. Fahien, the Buddhist traveler from China, who in quest of the original texts on Buddhism came for pilgrimage to India about A.D. 400 saw many of the monuments constructed by the Emperor Asoka. "In the city (Pataliputra) is the royal palace, the different parts of which he (Asoka) commissioned the spirits (genii) to construct by piling up the

stones. The walls, doorways and the sculptured designs are no human work. The ruins still exist.”²³⁷

Most of the historians have explained that as a result of the Kalinga war, Emperor Asoka realized the horror of war devastation and embraced Buddhism. This idea was based mainly on the basis of the information supplied by one of his Rock Edicts. The Rock Edict XII reveals; “Directly after the Kaling war had been annexed, “began His Sacred Majesty’s zealous protection of the law of piety, his love for that Law, and his inclusion of that Law.”²³⁸

Emperor Asoka the Great maintained his regal style both in war and peace. Apart from a benevolent ruler, an ardent and sincerely active devotee of Buddha, the emperor played a unique role of historian. He seems to have played the grand role of the first historian of the world. No ruler in the world, before him wrote so much about the human activities of the past and the contemporary period as Asoka did. He, very consciously, used the imperishable stone surface to record the history to make all documents available with the mankind even thousands years after.

On the basis of the Sanskrit literature, the historians failed to tell the name of the Indian King who had inscribed the tales and ethos of the contemporary period on innumerable polished surfaces of the stone pillars, hills, caves and rocks. Everywhere, it was credited to one ‘Devanampiya’ or the ‘Piyadassi’. It was extremely difficult for the historians to identify this kind

²³⁷ Tansen Sen, *The Travel Records of Chinese Pilgrims Faxian, Xaungyang, Yijing, Education About Asia*, vol.11, no.3, 2006, pp. 24-33.

²³⁸ Edict of Asoka, No. II

called, 'Piyadassi' as no Indian literature contained any testimony of this terminology or objective. This unique terminology, 'Piyadassi' is not available in the lexicon of Indian languages.

When countrymen destroyed the sources of Indian history the foreigners were left to rescue the same from foreign lands. These foreign sources were also the creation of the emperor Asoka himself. James Prinsep for the first time, discovered, "Delhi-Meerut-Pillar inscription" in 1750. In the same year, the ancient Buddhist town, "Kosambi" was discovered at Allahabad. In 1784, was discovered the "RadhiaPilla" or the pillar inscription at 'LauriaArreraj' in Bihar-Nepal- Tarrai. Next year, the "Delhi-Topara" pillar at Firojshah Kotala, Delhi, and the Barbar Hill Cave inscriptions were discovered. The process continued, Forty two Asokan edicts are found so far, from all over India, Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan. The edicts were written in hitherto unknown scripts, so the language was also unknown.

The scripts namely "Brahmi" and "Kharosti" and the language were identified as the Pali and Prakrit. In July 1837, James Prinsep he published the facsimiles phonetic transcription and English translation of some of the Edicts: 'Thus speak the beloved of gods, King Piyadassi'. This Piyadassi was not the 'Former Buddha'. He was a King. But who was this unique King? It was still a mystery. Interestingly, in the same year George Turnour translated and published the Ceylonese chronicle Mahavamsa in English. An Indian Buddhist King called 'Piyadassi' was mentioned here. James Prinsep very rapidly deciphered many inscriptions single-handedly.

However, finally the word, 'Asoka Piyadassi' was found in the Maski edict of Hyderabad in 1915.²³⁹

The Buddhism disappeared from the land of its origin. It became almost a nonentity in the mainland of India by the beginning of 11th century A.D. The flower garden of Dhamma was destroyed to such an extent that even traces were difficult to track down here. People even forgot the name of Buddha. Alberuni one of the captives of Sultan Mohammad completed his book, "Ideology" a leviathan on Indian society and culture, in A.D. 1030. He had discussed most of the famous Hindu scriptures right from the oldest of the lot, the Vedas to the various Purans of much later age. But the inquisitive scholars had to lament and express his regret that he could find no Buddhist scriptures or meet a single Buddhist Shramanas or Bhikku.²⁴⁰

Buddhism was once dominant religion of India; it had however begun to decline by the 12th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, Buddhism was all but dead in India, the land of its origin. The Buddhist revival began in India, when Sri Lankan Buddhist Anagarika Dharmapal came to India²⁴¹ and founded the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1891. The Maha Bodhi Society mainly attracted upper strata of the society.²⁴² Upper strata of the Society did not identify themselves specifically as Buddhists, because there was no significant difference between Buddhism and Hinduism according to them.

²³⁹ S. Dhammika, *The Edicts of King Asoka*, Theraveda Library, 1994.

²⁴⁰ *Alberuni's Bharat Tattwa*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1974, p. 26.

²⁴¹ D.C. Ahir, *Buddhism in Modern India*. Satguru, p.7. 1991.

²⁴² Bhagwan Das, *Revival of Buddhism in India. Role of Dr Baba Sahib B. R. Ambedkar*. Lucknow: Dalit Today Prakashan.1998.

Attempts were made by intellectuals belong Dalti community to evolve Buddhist identity to Dalits in India. Ayothee Thass (1845-1914) a strong advocate of non-Brahman India. He prepared a grand project of non-Brahman India which has three core features: replacement of Brahmanism with Buddhism as a socio-spiritual and religious ethos in India: establishment of dalits as the real or genuine sons of the Indian soil and need for cultural construction of India as a domain of egalitarian society.

The revival of Buddhism started by a Sri Lankan Buddhist Monk, Angarika Dharmapala who has established Mahabodhi Society in 1892. This movement was actually inspired by the guidance of a theosophist Henny Olcott who published *The Golden Rules of Buddhism* published in 1887. His construction of Buddhism was obviously influenced by American Baptist missionary ethos which looks at religion as a moral dialogue with society. He tried to construct the Buddhism as a rational and moral force which counters the Brahmanical religion. He evolved a critique of Arya Samaj's propagation of Shuddi Movement. He invoked Buddha in the following sentence: 'by oneself evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another'.²⁴³ This statement actually set the agenda for Buddhist revival movement in India which is professed and practiced by non-Brahman intellectual.

Thass is a versatile personality belongs to Parayar caste (an untouchable castes in Tamil Nadu). He was a practitioner of Siddha medicine, a public intellectual and more importantly a non-Brahman crusader. He was not convinced with Hinduism and Christianity as suitable

²⁴³ Henry Alcot, *Golden Rules of Buddhism*, Theosophical Society, Madras, 1918, p. 165.

religions for dalits. His quest for respectable identity of dalits in South India led him to move closer to Buddhism. He accompanied Henry Olcott to Sri Lanka in 1898 and embraced Buddhism. Returning from Sri Lanka he established Sakya Buddhist Society in Madras in the same year. From this year onward his journey in Buddhism starts. The ideas of Thass on Buddhism and its relevance to dalits of India can be captured from two sources: his book entitled *Indra Desha Chirata* and several articles published in his journal *Tamilan*. It is impossible for me to present his contribution to Buddhism. As a student of history I would focus on his endeavour to construct the past of dalits by making Buddhism as focal point.²⁴⁴

Like Phule, Thass tried to invert the cultural heritage of India. He developed the concept of Aryan migration and subjugation of Tamil Buddhists. He proposed that the word India is originally derived from the concept of a person who conquers five senses. For Thass it was none other than Lord Buddha. He argued that the word India derived from the identity of Buddha. He proposed a radical reinterpretation of Indian history and culture. For his views are originally Buddhist texts and all gods are great human beings who served people. Brahmins gradually absorbed the great Vedic literature as their own on account of their victory over the original inhabitants of India who happened to be Buddhists. Thass not only founded his own Buddhist movement; he also identified Dalits with Buddhists by arguing that the Tamil Paraiyas were not only Buddhists, but descendants of the Buddha's own clan, the Sakyas.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ G. Omvedt, *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*, Sage, New Delhi, 2003.

²⁴⁵ V. Kita, and V. Rajatari, *Towards Non-Brahman Millennium*, Samya, New Delhi, 1998.

He offers radical reinterpretation of India culture by claiming that all the religious festivals observed by Hindus are originally Buddhist festivals. He proposes that Pongal is celebrated of the nirvana of Buddha, Mahasivaratri his renunciation; Deepavali the discovery of oil by Buddhist Monks. He thus proposed that the Brahmanic India was constructed on the foundation laid by Buddhist who are original inhabitants India. By using historical interpretation, Thass engaged in creating a sense of pride to untouchable communities, moral confidence and evolved the concept of original inhabitants from Buddhist point of view.

For Thass and his collaborators such as Laxmi Narasu religion is not about abstract superstition and metaphysical obscurantism, rather a moral code of conduct for smooth functioning of society. For them Brahmanism thrives upon the black magic and ignorance of masses. Building a healthy society and nation, they argued healthy social order is required. Buddhism they identified as solution to the grievances the dalits of India encountered such as denial of natural, civil rights by Brahmanism.²⁴⁶

Thass proposed that religion should be a force which facilitates evolution of egalitarian society order. Buddhism he proposed that capable of providing solutions to not only dalits but all non-brahmans. Religion for Thass is nothing a trajectory in which human beings interacts with each other. Brahmanism is system of hierarchies based upon birth which is a class pre-modern element and Buddhism proposes guna should determine the virtues of a person which is essential condition for modern society. Hence the dream of Thass is that India should become Buddhist India in which dalits are at the helm of affairs. The point to be noted here is that

²⁴⁶ L. Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Samya, New Delhi, 2009.

attempts have been made before Ambedkar to make Buddhism as religion of Dalits with emphasis on emancipatory discourse.

The attraction of Dalits towards Buddhism significantly gained momentum after Ambedkar advocated it as suitable religion for emancipation of Dalits. For him Hindu religion does not have scope for material and spiritual advancement of Dalits. Ambedkar became admirer of the Buddha first time, when K.A. Keluskar presented his new book, *The Life of Buddha* which was in Marathi, in a congratulatory meeting, and which was organized by the leader of Satya – Shodak movement, S.K. Bole on Ambedkar passing his matriculation examination in 1907. This little gift awakened the mind of Ambedkar. Throughout life Ambedkar regarded three great men as his preceptors. The first was Kabir who took him to the devotion cult, the second was Jyotiba Phule who inspired him to strive for anti Brahmanism and amelioration of the masses, their education and economic upliftment and the third was Buddha who gave him mental and metaphysical satisfaction and showed the way leading to the emancipation of the untouchables by resorting to the path of mass conversion. It is significant that he builds a bungalow in Bombay and named it *Rajgriha* the first city where the Buddha entered before enlightenment, which indicate the inclination towards Buddhism.²⁴⁷

The thought of Bodhi is followed by his vow to work for the welfare, happiness and liberation of his fellow beings. Since the thought of enlightenment is private and personal experience, it is rather difficult to trace its origin. The vows of the Bodhisattva are innumerable

²⁴⁷D.C. Ahir, *Ambedkar and Buddhism*, Naha, New Delhi, 2004.

and differ in number as well as in nomenclature in various Buddhist works but the following four vows are most important and they are regarded as 'Great Vows':

1. To save all beings;
2. To destroy all evil passions;
3. To learn the truth and teach others;
4. To lead all beings towards Buddhahood.

After 1930s Ambedkar tried to find an alternative belief system to Hindu religion. His quest for alternative religion could be seen in his one of his speech which addressed the gathering mainly consisted of Mahars. He hinted in his speech in 1935 that Buddhism could be an alternative religion which capable of giving respectable identity to Dalits. His monumental book *Buddha and His Dharma* is manifestation of his quest to make Buddhism as religions of Dalits with the gospel of equality. In his book Ambedkar reformulated the basic facades of Buddhism and focused on the social equality and emancipatory dimension of Buddhism. He represented Buddhism more of social philosophy than a religion.²⁴⁸

It is on record that in 1935 he had actually taken Parivraja. Though he was not a Buddhist at that time, even then he became Sanyasi with a view to having practical knowledge of a homeless wanderer and seeker after truth. It is not difficult to attract people towards political revolutions because politics has the charm of power. However, social or religious revolutions do not have anything of this kind to offer and to induce people to change their

²⁴⁸ D. Pandyan, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dynamics of Neo Buddhism*, Neha, New Delhi, 1996.

religion is the toughest job. Ambedkar attracted the people towards Buddhism by laying emphasis on its message of social equality and scientific outlook so badly needed in the atomic age of today. First, he prepared the ground by hard work for more than 20 years and made the masses understand the drawbacks inherent in their traditional faith as well as the qualities of the Buddha Dhamma and the advantages that would accrue by the suggested change. Moreover, when he found social fertile, he showed in it the seed of the Dhamma, which is sure to become one day, a flourishing tree.²⁴⁹

Ambedkar choice of ideology was based on a very broad and deep study of comparative religions. It took him a long time to consolidate and propagate an ideological perspective for a new social order. To him, the aim and object of religion is to make a social order in which men live a moral order. He considered religion as a social force. According to him, the philosophy of a religion has to be judged by applying the test of justice and the test of utility. Justice is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity.²⁵⁰

Ambedkar has shown that the philosophy of Hinduism does not satisfy the test of justice or of utility. Hinduism is not interested in the common person; it is not interested in society as a whole. The center of its interest lies not in individual but in a class; and the maintenance of the rights of few such classes is its sole concern. This religious notion of Hinduism took the form of the doctrine of *Chaturvarna*. This unique system of caste had worked, as the steel frame of the Hindu society. It is not possible to ensure social justice to all individuals and sections of the

²⁴⁹ L. Karunyakara, *Modernization of Buddhism and Contribution of Ambedkar and Dali Lama XVI*, Neha, New Delhi, 2003.

²⁵⁰ Raj Kumar, *Ambedkar and Religion*, Neha, New Delhi, 2011.

Hindu society within the framework of the caste system. Caste or class among the non-Hindus is only a practice, not a sacred institution. However, to Hindus it has decidedly a religious concentration.²⁵¹

He saw religion not as a means to spiritual salvation of individual souls, but as a 'social doctrine' for establishing the relations between man and man. Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of religion does not mean either theology or religion. For Dr. Ambedkar, "philosophy is nothing but a standard to measure the conduct of man".²⁵² He took religion to mean the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which men live a moral order.²⁵³

Thus two characteristics of the Buddha's teachings were praised by Dr. Ambedkar, rationality on one hand, and their **social message** on the other. He describes the Buddha as "a reformer, full of the most earnest moral purpose and trained in all the intellectual culture of his time, who has the originality and the courage to put forth deliberately and with a knowledge of opposing views, the doctrine of salvation to be found here, in this life, in inward change of heart to be brought about by the practice of self-culture and self-control."²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ N.K. Singh, *Ambedkar on Religion*, Anmol, New Delhi, 2000.

²⁵² Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2ndedn. pp. 455.1962.

²⁵³ Moon, Vasant, ed., *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol.3, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1987, p.6.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,p. 131-132.

According to Dr. Ambedkar the idea that all religions are true and equally good is positively and demonstratively a wrong belief. The study of comparative religion had broken the claim and arrogance of revealed religions as being the only true and good religions. He observed, "While it is true that comparative religion has abrogated the capricious distinction between true and false religions based on purely arbitrary and prior considerations, it has brought in its wake some false notions about religions. The harmful one is the one I have mentioned, namely that all religions are equally good and that there is no necessity of discriminating between them. Nothing can be greater error than this'.

Attraction towards Buddhism

Dr. Ambedkar in the meeting at Varli, Bombay, explained to the people how he was attracted towards Buddhism in his early childhood. "While congratulating me in the meeting, Mr. Keluskar presented me a copy of the life of Buddha. I understand the importance of Buddhist teachings, which was more superior to other books. A new vision developed about Buddhism and could know the difference in Hinduism and Buddhism." There are two streams of the Indian culture. The first one is Brahmanism and the second one is Buddhism. The dirty water of the Brahmanism entered in the clean water of the Buddhism and the Hinduism came up. Dr. Ambedkar explained the need of religion to the human being in the present situation. For the success of the democracy based on equality, there is an almost necessity of the religion.²⁵⁵

Dr. Ambedkar had started writing the book on the 'Buddha and Buddhism' in November 1951, along with two other books 'Revolution and Counter Revolution in India', 'Buddha,

²⁵⁵B.R. Ambedkar, *What Buddha Taught*, Critical quest, New Delhi, 2009.

Buddha and Karl Marx'. These two books were left incomplete and the first one was brought to completion. In December 1954, he had started writing 'The Riddle of Hinduism'. The book on Buddha and Buddhism was printed under the title 'The Buddha and His Gospel and later two chapters were added to it, which is 'there is no God and there is no Soul'.

He wrote preface to his book in his own handwriting and dictated it to Rattu Nank Chand, his private secretary. Further, he wrote to librarian of the Siddharth College, Bombay, "There is one urgent matter, which I want to you attend, that is the publication of my book 'The Buddha and His Dhamma.'²⁵⁶ Dr. Ambedkar was going to start soon a political party called the Republican Party of India, in order to invigorate the democratic forces in India. He also decided to establish a Training School for entrance to politics.

In May 1956, he talked, from the British Broadcasting Corporation, London, on "Why I like Buddhism and how it is useful to the world in its present circumstances". He observed, "I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles Prajna (understanding against superstition), Karuna (love), and Samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life. Neither God nor soul can save society.

Conversion to Buddhism

It is true, as Dr. Ambedkar recognized that religion, as a social, could not be ignored. Besides, religion stands for a scheme of divine governance, though not existent, yet it is real as it can be found in the case of Hindu social order. Dr. Ambedkar's test of justice and utility consist

²⁵⁶ Bhagavandas, *op. cit.*, p.139.

the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, a trinity of principles.²⁵⁷ For Ambedkar Hinduism does not recognise and practice them. He asserted, "Hinduism is inimical to equality, antagonistic to liberty and opposed to fraternity."²⁵⁸ Therefore he renounced it and took refuge in the Dhamma of Lord Buddha.

Dr. Ambedkar observed that the function of the true religion was the upliftment of the individual, with regard to the spiritual aspect of the issue. For that purpose, it should teach the virtues of follow feeling, equality and liberty. As Hindu religion did not teach these virtues and had failed to provide him a favorable environment and denied him individual freedom for development without the means of education weal and arms, it had become imperative for him, to leave the Hindu fold and seek another religion that would offer him better conditions of life.

Dr. Ambedkar says that religion is for man and not man for religion. He wants to change the Hindu religion in order to organize, consolidate and the successful in the world. He aims to change the religion because the religion that does not recognize him as a human being, or give him water to drink, or allow him to enter the temples is not worth to call a religion. Religion is not to be found in temple. Religion is to be found in people hearts. If religion, is in the hearts conflicts can be avoided. However, when you will keep religion in the temple and not in your heart that is when conflict begins. Buddha's humanistic philosophy teaches that man must look not to temples but within him to find his salvation.

²⁵⁷ For details see Dr. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of caste* in his writings and speeches, vol. 1, 1979.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.3, p.66.

For Dr. Ambedkar, religion is social force and is essential for man and society. He said, "True religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests, and both their sanction."²⁵⁹ But at the same time, Dr. Ambedkar condemned a religion of rules and preferred a religion of principles, "which alone could lay claim to being a true religion."²⁶⁰ For him, the distinction between rules and principles was real and most significant. He drew a fine distinction between both kinds of religions as follows:

Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing thing according to prescription. However, principles are intellectual; they are useful methods of judging things. Rules seek to tell and agent first what course of action of pursue. Principles do not prescribe a specific course of action. Rules like cooking recipes, do tell just what to do and how to do it. A principle, such as that of justice, supplies a man head by reference to which he is to consider the bearings of his desires and purposes, it guides him in his thinking by suggesting to him the important consideration, which he should bear in mind. This difference between rules and principles makes the acts done in pursuit of them different in quality and in content. Doing what is said to be good by virtue of a rule and doing well in the light of a principle are two different things. The principle may be wrong but the act is conscious and responsible. The rule may be right but the act is mechanical. A religious act may not be a correct act but must at least be a responsible act. To permit of this responsibility, religion must mainly be a matter of principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules, it ceases to be religion, as it kills responsibility which is the essence of a truly religious act.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 76.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

The conversion ceremony of Ambedkar was itself very inspirational and sends message to millions of Dalits. For this historic ceremony, a fourteen-acre vacant plot of Government land was selected as venue. At the northern end of the huge pandal stood a huge rostrum, which was tastefully decorated with boundaries and with the five hued Buddhist flags, stood a huge rostrum lined with white cloth and surmounted by a replica of the Sanchi Stupa. On the bright morning of Sunday, 14 October 1956 lacks of men and women, who had been pouring into the Nagpur city by train and bus from all parts of Maharashtra or had trekked on foot hundreds of miles, prepared themselves for the ceremony wearing white clothes. Procession after procession of white-clad men and women with Buddhist flags in their hands made their way to the ***Deeksha Bhoomi*** or the Initiation Ground. By 9.00 A.M., they had reached the site and turned into a vast ocean of humanity.

When Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar reached the pandal, the vast crowd lustily cheered. Wearing the white silk Dhoti and white coat, he was seated at the dais next to the Venerable V. Chandramani Maha Thera, the oldest and senior most Buddhist monk in India: About four lakhs people witnessed the auspicious ceremony, which began at 9.40 A.M. The 80 years old Ven. V. Chandramani of Kushinagar administered in Pali to Dr. Ambedkar and his wife, the trisaran (Triple-Refuge), they recited three times *Buddham Saranam Gacchami, Dhammam Saranam Gacchami, and Sangham Saranam Gacchami*. The three refugees were followed by the five precepts (Panchsila). They repeated the same in Marathi. Then they bowed thrice with clasped hands before the Buddha image and offered white lotus flowers before it. With this, the conversion ceremony was over.

When Dr. Ambedkar's entry into Buddhism was announced, the vast concourse of humanity gathered there gave thunderous applause and raised full-throated cries of 'Victory to Lord Buddha' 'Victory to Babasaheb Ambedkar'. Medharthi, Bhoj Dev Mudit, and Mahastvir Bodhanand's Sri Lankan successor, Bhante Pragyand, attended the conversion ceremony.

The historic Nagpur ceremony marked the end of pilgrim's journey. Addressing the vast gathering, Dr. Ambedkar now a Buddhist, said in an emotional voice: "I started the movement of renouncing the Hindu religion in 1935 and since then I have been in continuing struggle. This conversion has given me enormous satisfaction and pleasure unimaginable, I feel as if I have been liberated from hell." Ambedkar then called upon those to stand up who were prepared to embrace Buddhism. Thereupon, the entire crowd rose as one man. Moreover, in loud and joyous tones they repeated the Three Refuges and the five precepts after Babasaheb. In addition, he also administered to them the twenty-two vows that he had specially prepared to ensure that his followers renounce their old religion fully and become good Buddhists. The twenty-two vows are as follows:

1. I will not regard Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as gods nor will I worship them;
2. I will not regard Rama and Krishna as gods nor will I worship them;
3. I will not accept Hindu deities like Gauri, Ganapati etc., nor will I worship them;
4. I do not believe that God has taken birth or incarnation in any form;

5. I do not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu, I believe this Propaganda is mischievous and false;
6. I will never perform any *Shraddha* nor will I offer any *Pinda*.
7. I will never act against the tenets of Buddhism;
8. I will not have any Samskara [ritual] performed by Brahmins;
9. I believe in the principle that all are equal;
10. I will try to establish equality;
11. I will follow the Eight-fold Path of Lord Buddha;
12. I will follow the ten *Paramitas* of the *Dhamma*;
13. I will have compassion on all living beings and will try to look after them;
14. I will not lie;
15. I will not commit theft;
16. I will not indulge in lust or sexual transgression;
17. I will never take any liquor or drink that causes intoxication;
18. I will try to mould my life in accordance with the Buddhist preaching's based on Enlightenment, precept and compassion;
19. I embraced today the Buddha Dhamma discarding the Hindu religion which is detrimental to the emancipation of human beings and which believe in inequality and regards human beings other than Brahmins as low birth;
20. I firmly believe that the *Bauddha Dhamma* is the best religion;
21. I believe that today I am taking a new birth;

22. I solemnly take the oath that from today onwards I will act according to the *Bauddha Dhamma.*"²⁶²

Of them special vows, the first eight vows require the initiates into Buddhism not to worship the Hindu Gods and Goddess; not to regard the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu; not to perform the traditional Hindu rites for the dead; and not to employ Brahmin priests for any rites and ceremonies. The next two vows from 11 to 18 call upon the new initiates into Buddhism to practice the Noble Eight Fold Path and the Ten Paramitas and lead a life in which knowledge; Right Conduct and Compassion are harmoniously interwoven. The last four vows practically sum-up all the vows. Three vows enjoin upon the new comer to renounce Hinduism because it is based on inequality and adopt Buddhism as his religion; to firmly believe that the Dhamma of the Buddha is the true religion; to believe that he is experiencing a (spiritual) rebirth, and to solemnly declare and affirm that hereafter he will lead his life according to the teachings of the Buddha.

On the next day, the vast crowd again assembled at the same place to hear the roaring voice of their liberation. Before he spoke, another conversion ceremony was held to admit into the fold of Buddhism about one lacks men and women who had arrived late the previous day and could not participate in the initiation ceremony. Thereafter in his three hour long speech, Dr. Ambedkar traced the history of the suffering of the downtrodden people through the ages; his life long struggle to mitigate their sufferings, and as to why he had chosen Buddhism of all the religions.

²⁶² Kaushalyayan, Anand: *Bharatiya Bauddho Ka Ghoshana Patra*, (Hindi), Buddhist Publishing House, Nagpur, 1974, pp. 12-13.

This epoch making speech holds a very high place in the history of the conversion ceremony. The entire function on 14 and 15 October 1956 was a unique experience for the people who had gathered there. They had experienced rejuvenation, new hope and new life. Many Dalits employ the term "Ambedkarite Buddhism" to designate the Buddhist movement, which started with Ambedkar's conversion and many converted people called themselves as "Nava-Bauddha" i.e. Neo- Buddhists.

The year 1956 marked a milestone in the chequered history of Buddhism. In that year, the Buddhist Era, which commenced on the day of the Maha-Parinirvan of the Buddha, completed 2500 years. The Government and the people celebrated this historic event with great enthusiasm throughout India. While laying the foundation stone of the Buddha Jayanti Park on the New Delhi Ridge, Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru said, "The 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations signify the home coming of the Buddha".

Not satisfied with mere gestures of thanks giving of the great Buddha, Dr. Ambedkar went a step further and sanctified the occasion by embracing Buddhism, along his half a million followers, on October 14, 1956. Thus, Dr. Ambedkar made the 'Home coming of the Buddha' a reality by showing the way to the suffering humanity who was in search of a democratic and just religion like Buddhism.

The mass conversion ceremony at Nagpur on 14 October 1956 was a miracle. In fact, it was a great miracle. Never before in the history of any religion in the world have so many

people, at one time and at the instant of one man changed their religion. An epoch-making event changed the course of the history of Buddhism in India. On that day, the Buddhist revival movement in India entered into an era of intense activity, which can be rightly called the 'Ambedkar Era' of Indian Buddhism.

Dr. Ambedkar's contribution is often equated with that of Asoka the Great who flourished in the third century B.C. and did a yeoman's service to the Dhamma. With his energetic efforts, Asoka took out the gospel of the Buddha from the caves and monasteries, and made it a national religion. He even made Buddhism an international force by organizing missionary activities in foreign lands by Indian monks. However, for Asoka, Buddhism would not have reached the heights, which it did in the following centuries.

Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhism seemingly differs from that of those who accepted by faith. This much is clear from its basis: it does not accept in totality the scriptures of the Theravada, the Mahayana, or the Vajrayana. He does not give much importance to faith based, belief based theological and metaphysical version of Buddhism. He wanted to make Buddhism as a gospel of equality of human beings with mild presence of spirituality.²⁶³ The neo-Buddhist movement dubbed as Navayana by certain Ambedkerites²⁶⁴ is considered the most influential of a series of 19th and 20th century Buddhist revival movements in India. It received its most substantial

²⁶³ G. Omvedt, *Buddhism in India : Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*. 3rd ed. ,New Delhi, Sage, 2003, p.2.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*,p.8.

impetus from B. R. Ambedkar's call for the conversion of Dalit to Buddhism in the context of a caste based society that considered them to be at the lowest end of the hierarchy.

The 1961 census revealed a still greater miracle. The Buddhist population in India registered an unprecedented increase of over 167%, that is, from 1, 80,487 in 1951, it rose to 32, 50,227 in 1961. In the case of Maharashtra, the home state of *Babasaheb* Ambedkar, the increase was the maximum, from a meager figure of 2,487 in 1951; the Buddhist population there rose to 27, 89,501 in 1961. Thus in one stroke, the Buddhists surpassed the Jains in Maharashtra as well as in India.

The clarion call given by Dr. Ambedkar to his people in 1956 to seek refuge in Buddhism in still working like a miracle, more and more of them are turning to Buddhism. In 1991, the Buddhist population during the 1981-1991 decade was brisk in majority of the states; the average increase being about 38%. There was whopping rise of 3020 percent in Panjab, from only 799 in 1981 to 24, 930 in 1991. The states, which recorded over 100 percent rise, are: Uttar Pradesh (305.99%), Madhya Pradesh (187.69%), Tamil Nadu (189.52%), and Hariyana (170.43%). Another five states recorded over 50% increase.

The Buddhist movement was somewhat hindered by Dr. Ambedkar's death so shortly after his conversion. It did not receive the immediate mass support from the Untouchable population that Ambedkar had hoped for. Division and lack of direction among the leaders of the Ambedkarite movement have been an additional impediment. According to the 2001 census, there are currently 7.95 million Buddhists in India, at least 5.83 million of whom are Buddhists in Maharashtra. This makes Buddhism the fifth-largest religion in India and 6% of the

population of Maharashtra, but less than 1% of the overall population of India. The Buddhist population according to the census report of the Government of India 2011, is 79, 55,207 which is 0.8% of the total population.²⁶⁵

Rajendranath Aherwar appeared as an important Dalit leader in Kanpur. He joined the Republican Party of India and converted to Buddhism along with his whole family in 1961. In 1967, he founded the Kanpur branch of "Bharatiya Buddh Mahasabha". He held regular meetings where he preached Buddhism, officiated at Buddhist weddings and life cycle ceremonies, and organized festivals on Dr. Ambedkar's Jayanti (birth day), Buddha Jayanti, Deeksha Divas (the day Ambedkar converted), and Dr. Ambedkar Paranirvan Divas (the day Ambedkar died).

The Dalit Buddhist movement in Kanpur gained impetus with the arrival of Dipankar, a Chamarbhikkhu, in 1980. Dipankar had come to Kanpur on a Buddhist mission and his first public appearance was scheduled at a mass conversion drive in 1981. Rahulan Ambawadekar, an RPI Dalit leader, organized the event. In April 1981, Ambawadekar founded the Dalit Panthers (U.P. Branch) inspired by the Maharashtrian Dalit Panthers. The event met with severe criticism and opposition from Vishwa Hindu Parishad and was banned.

Kinshi Ram, announced his intention to convert to Buddhism on October 14, 2006, the fiftieth anniversary of Ambedkar's conversion. He intended for 20,000,000 of his supporters to convert at the same time. Part of the significance of this plan was that Ram's followers include not only Untouchables, but also persons from a variety of castes,

²⁶⁵ Census Report of the Government of India 2011.

who could significantly broaden Buddhism's support. However, he died October 9, 2006²⁶⁶ after a lengthy illness; he was cremated as per Buddhist rituals.²⁶⁷ Another popular Dalit leader, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, has said that she and her followers will embrace Buddhism after the BSP forms a government at the Centre.²⁶⁸

One of the more prominent Neo-Buddhist leaders in recent years has been Udit Raj (formerly Ram Raj), who is frequently at odds with the older Ambedkarite establishment. Raj, also a political activist, organized a large mass conversion on November 4, 2001 where he gave the 22 vows, but the event met with active opposition from the government.

Bhante Buddha Priya Rahul, who gave deeksha to Ram Raj, performed the conversion ceremony where he gave the 22 vows, but the event met with active opposition from the government.²⁶⁹ Ram Raj's name was changed to Udit Raj after he received deeksha. Thousands of the Dalits who had gathered also took deeksha by chanting the prayers after the Buddhist priests clad in impressive saffron robes. A bronze idol of Buddha was brought on the dais and the monks publicly performed the deeksha ceremony in an open ground with new converts chanting religious oaths. The newly-converts to Buddhism also took the oath of not to pray Hindu gods and goddesses.

The fact is that Ambedkar version of Buddhism popularly known as neo-Buddhism acquired prominence in Uttar Pradesh among Dalits. Particularly Dalits in urban areas and

²⁶⁶ Indian Dalit leader passes away, BBC News, 9th October 2006.

²⁶⁷ Kanshi Ram cremated as per Buddhist rituals, The Hindu, 10 October 2006

²⁶⁸ Kanshi Ram cremated as per Buddhist rituals, The Hindu, 2006-10-10.

²⁶⁹ "50,000 Dalits embrace Buddhism", Buddhism Today, Retrieved 2007-08-30.

educated attracted toward Buddhism. Particularly dominant castes within Dalit communities such as Chamer, Pasis and others are embracing Buddhism as a means to come out of Hindu fold. Buddhism thus provided a religious identity to Dalits of Utter Pradesh.

This chapter mainly concentrated on the evolution of religious identity and attempt being made by Dalit intellectuals to reconstruct Buddhism as religion and thought which facilitate social justice and emancipation from oppression. In Maharashtra and Utter Pradesh in particular and different parts of India in general Buddhism acquiring prominence among Dalits as substitute religion for Hinduism. The quest of Dalits for alternative religion and identity continues and Buddhism is being perceived as suitable alternative for respectable religious identity.

CHAPTER -VI
CONCLUSION

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This study is basically a narrative on discourse and practice of identity formation process took place among Dalits of Uttar Pradesh. In so doing, an attempt has been made to explore the structures, process and strategies that are manoeuvred in the domain of identity formation by Dalits. In short this study is a documentation of politics of identity formation and its implications in the contemporary times for Dalits of Uttar Pradesh.

E.H. Carr's famous statement of history is an unending dialogue between past, present and future is very much pertinent in case of identity formation in Dalits of Uttar Pradesh. In the British colonial period serious attempt was made by Dalits to carve out a distinctive identity rooted in the notions of self respect and human dignity. Wide range of strategies such as Sanskritisation, Adi ideology and Adi-Hindu identity, Buddhist identity etc are used to improve the level of status and dignity of Dalits. This process created massive corpus of knowledge, symbols personalities which articulated the need of new

identity. This study proposes that in the post independent period the Dalit Panther movement and Bahujan Samaj Party systematically rearticulated what has already been evolved by Dalit intellectuals in British India. Hence this study adopts a method of historical and contemporary analysis of Dalit movement from the prescriptive identity formation process to explore the dynamics of Dalit politics in the past and present and role of history in shaping it.

Generally it is believed that colonial modernity exercised significant impact upon the cultural and social practices of India guided by reason and rationality. This study proposes that colonial modernity is extremely plural and impacted life-worlds of multiple communities in general and marginalised communities in particular. It was during the British rule that Dalits of India begun to mobilise and redefine their identity in contrast to the traditional identity attributed to them. This mobilisation and assertion resulted in the form of vibrant anti-Brahman and Dalit movement in different parts of India. This movement besides critiquing Brahmanical religion articulated a vibrant discourse on non-Brahmanical identity for lower sections of Indian society. Dalit movement in different parts of India in general and United Provinces (now Utter Pradesh) in particular attempted to create dynamic and respectable identity to former untouchable castes generally now known as Dalits.

This study attempts to contextualise the process of emergence of Dalit consciousness propelled by socio-economic, cultural and political forces emerged in the context British colonial rule in United Provinces. Particularly emergence of leather

industry, urbanisation and access to modern education brought about new rationalist ideas among Dalit communities and prepared ground for reform movements to do away stigmatised identity ascribed by traditional social values. This study tries to document the emergence of Dalit movement and articulation of new dynamic identity in the form of caste associations such as Chamar Mahasabha, Jatav Mahasabha, Pasi Mahasabha, Kori Mahasabha etc, Adi-Hindu movement and others and their role in shaping identity formation process in Utter Pradesh.

The main crux of identity formation process among Dalits of United Provinces is that the process of demanding and commending respectable social recognition from non-Dalit population. This manifested into wide range of approaches, methods and strategies. In United Provinces we could see broadly three frameworks for identity formations. Firstly, Sanskratised identity approach, influenced by the ideas of Arya Samaj, Dalit intellectuals advocated the reformist mission within the Hindu framework. It means within Hindu religion the social and cultural status of Dalits can be bettered by reforming certain unacceptable practices usually done by Dalits. It has been argued that taboo on beef eating, and non-vegetarian food, liquor and adopting the practices of upper caste such as sacred thread the social status of Dalits would improve. This trend could be seen in the strategies of several caste associations which claimed their origins in Surya vemasha, and Chandra vemsha, Raj put and Brahmanical origins. Second trend could be seen in the form of assertion of the theory of sons of soil by Swami Atchutanand and his Adi-Hindu Dharma. This movement proposes a radical ideology of Dalits being original inhabitants of India who were subjected and oppressed by Aryan invaders. This strategy

tried to provide Dalits as authors of original and pure Indian culture and civilisation and therefore command respectable identity in India. This Adi ideology in fact provided a political and cultural platform for Dalits to put forward their demands to Hindu public and British government. Third trend in the identity formation process is that Buddhist identity trend initiated by Iyoti Thass from Madras and subsequently adopted by Dr. Ambedkar. In United Provinces attempt has been made by Dalit intellectuals to associate Dalits with Buddhism as a means to achieve respectable social status. These are the some of the main trajectories of identity formation process adopted and executed by Dalits castes in Utter Pradesh. This study vividly describes these processes in the chapter one, two and three.

The significant trend to be noticed is that the knowledge and activism of Dalit movement of British Indian and its views on identity formation process transformed into vibrant cultural and political movement by Dalits in independent India. Emergence of the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra and its ascendancy in different parts of India is in fact a cultural manifestation of the quest of Dalits for respectable identity and strategies to achieve it. The major contribution of the Dalit Panther Movement is that it generated vibrant consciousness among Dalits of India and unleashed a process of translating the thought in the form of literature. This movement in fact prepared a good ground for unity among Dalits and prepared them for political assertion.

The level of assertion and quest for respectable identify among Dalits acquires higher proportion after establishment of BAMCEF by Kanshi Ram. It is a culmination

and transformation of Dalit thought into social and political action. It has done a serious work in mobilisation and dissemination of Dalit consciousness among masses by using the services of Dalit intelligentsia. This study demonstrates that BAMCEF penetrated into every nook and corner of India and mobilised and prepared Dalits for a movement to change their life and identity. Emergence of Dalit as political force is indeed an interesting development in Indian politics. It marks with de-hegemonisation process in which alternative to Indian National Congress emerged to translate the aspiration of lower sections of Indian society into political power. Attempt was made by BAMCEF to organise Dalits by using innovative methods of cycle yatras, public speeches, publication and dissemination of Dalit literature etc.

This study also proposes that emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party is yet another manifestation of the quest of Dalits for respectable identity with transformative vision. Chapter number four demonstrates the context and process of emergence of BSP in Uttar Pradesh and its heavy dependency upon history, symbols and contents on Dalit movement in colonial India. The party mobilised Dalits and other marginalised sections of Indian society with slogan of power of majority of social groups to transform their lives. Attempt has also been made to show how BSP tried to change of socio-economic conditions of marginalised sections in general and Dalits in particular by the way of executing several schemes and strategies and creation of visual symbolism by creation of massive monuments to immortalise Dalit culture and leaders.

The main propositions of this study are follows: serious attempt was made by Dalit communities to carve out a respectable identify as pre-condition for transforming their lives from Untouchables to a strong political power: several experiments were made by Dalit intelligentsia to situate Dalits in different domains of respectable identity sources: attempt was made to unite multiple ethnic and caste communities traditionally treated as Untouchable under a single identity to make them as formidable political force; in independent India the assertion of Dalit continued and particularly transformed into political power in the form of BSP. In fact the quest of Dalits for respectable identity still continues as oppressive forces still actively doing their work.

This study is basically a history of counter hegemony of Dalits to the hegemony of Brahmanical hegemony. This we locate in the domain of identity formation process in Utter Pradesh. We tried to assess the impact of history on Dalit politics as sources of inspiration for unity and assertion of Dalits and their claim for political power. This study is thus a documentation of dialectical relationship between hegemony and counter-hegemony in the historical and contemporary analytical perceptive. The concept of identity formation is indeed a vast a complicated phenomenon, this study could be able to provide a chronological narrative on Dalit movement and it influence upon the contemporary Dalit politics. But the fact is this field of study offers immense potential for further studies as role of several caste associations, personalities, organisations and their role in shaping Dalit identity could be studied in a detailed way.

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