

**DALIT POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND THE ALTERNATIVE
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES: CASE STUDY OF MUZZAFFARPUR
AND JAMUI DISTRICTS IN BIHAR**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RAKESH RANJAN



**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI- 110067**

2017



21st JULY 2017

DECLARATION

I, Rakesh Ranjan, hereby declare that the Thesis entitled “**DALIT POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND THE ALTERNATIVE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES: CASE STUDY OF MUZZAFFARPUR AND JAMUI DISTRICTS IN BIHAR**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** is my bonafide work and that it has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any degree or diploma of this university or any other university.



(**RAKESH RANJAN**)

CERTIFICATE

It is hereby recommended that the thesis may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur


(Supervisor)
SUPERVISOR
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067


Prof. Shefali Jha


(Chairperson)
CHAIRPERSON
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

DEDICATED
TO
MY PARENTS



Acknowledgement

It gives me an immense pleasure to submit my thesis. I feel all the more pleased because my thesis is not only an exercise in academic fulfillment but also a sense of fulfillment of duty towards people who, by being born in certain community, were\are condemned to live an indignant inhuman life. During the course of my writing I have benefited from academia, intellectuals, institutions, friends and family members. I would like to thank (though I am quite conscious it does not suffice what I owe them) them all for their generous support which kept me on my track during the course of long and arduous journey.

At the outset I must thank my guide, Dr. M. N. Thakur, who not only supervised my work throughout by offering constructive criticism at every stages of my research but also kept encouraging me for what I was doing was worth doing. He guided me at every stages of my thesis. For his intellectual supervision I owe him a great degree of gratitude and respect. His wise and philosophical counseling throughout helped me to broaden my intellectual horizon. My thanks are also due to all my teachers, who in one way or other helped me to keep academy in me alive during my M.A., M.PHIL and PhD at the Centre for political studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. My special thanks to Prof. Gopal Guru, whose provocative lectures in class and his considerate attitude outside was immensely helpful in shaping my academic aptitude.

My interactions with Madan Bhai and other Sarvodaya Activists, Buddh Saran Hans (Dalit Babu), Suresh Paswan, Kishori Prasad, Subedar Anand, Badri Narayan, Amit Kumar, K. N. Paswan, Father Philip Manthra, Shrawan kumar, Santosh Kumar, Madan Kumar, Harikeshwar Ram, Shashikant, Dr. Rajeev Kumar, Narendra Ji, Chandrika Mallik to name a few were immensely fruitful. These interactions prodded me to take notice of the various dimensions of local practices of Dalit community of Bihar, while providing me with some relevant materials concerning the same. My immense thanks to them. I also thank the staffs of the differnt institutes for their friendly conduct and help during my field-work.

During my fieldwork in Bochahan and Chakai so many people helped me in so many ways but a few names require special mentioning. The two candidates- Sunita Kumar Paswan and Bjrang Bihari Singh who allowed me to attend their all modes of political campaign in the constituencies. They are thankful as they also taken care of my accommodation. During the visit of Patna, I am thankful to Suresh Paswan who helped introducing me to many interviewees and visited with me to their places.

My thanks are also due to eminent scholars like Prof. Vivek Kumar, Prof. Badri Narayan, Prof. D. M. Diwakar, Prof. Nil Rtan, Prof. Habibullah, Social Science Institute Patna, Prof. R. S. Arya, Prof. Arun Kumar Sinha, Prof. Srikant, Dr. Rakesh Ranjan, Dr. Archana Jaiswal, Vidyanand Bikkal, Jitan Ram Manjhi Sanjay Paswan, Janak Chamar, N. K. Nanada, Bhagwan Singh Kushwaha, Ashok Chaudhary, Lalan Paswan, Shiv Sagar Sharma, Kamlesh Sharma to name some of few among many others. For bearing the financial liabilities during my last years of PhD, I am thankful to the ICSSR.

I thank all my friends in Jawaharlal Nehru University as well as outside whose company has always been both a source of intellectual gain as well as a chance of unruffling and renewing.

Last but not least my family especially my parents whose blessing and faith in me has always enliven my spirit and given soaring energy to my wing.

July 21, 2017

RAKESH RANJAN

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgements	i - ii
List of Tables and Maps	iii
Abbreviations	iv-v
Introduction	01- 24
Chapter-01 Dynamics of Dalit Politics in Bihar	25- 60
1. Dalit Question in Social Science	
2. Determinant of Dalit Politics of Bihar	
2.1 Dalit Leadership in Bihar	
2.2 Identity Politics in Bihar	
2.3 Quantitative Representation of SCs	
2.4 Role Reversal Position	
2.5 Dismantling Patron-Client System	
2.6 A Unique Polarized Situation and Divided Leadership	
2.7 Concentration of SC Population	
2.8 Absence of Interconnecting Threads	
Conclusion	
Chapter-02. The Gandhian Movement and Dalit Engagements	61- 105
Introduction	
1. Different Phases of Dalit Discourse in Bihar	
1.1 Caste Consolidations and the Identity Movement: First Phase	
1.2 The Beginning of 20 th Century: the Second phase	

- 1.3 Dalit Issues and the Beginning of Gandhian Movement: the Third Phase
- 2. Bihar Model of Dalit Politics and the Spector of Dalit Conversion
 - 2.1 Leaderless Dalit in Dalit Mass Movement
 - 2.2 Bihar Earthquake: New Ease to Gandhian Popularity
 - 2.3 Fast Unto Death: A Political Drama
- 3. Jagjivan Ram: Deepening the Faith in the Politics of Assimilation and Reformation
 - 3.1 Dalit Conversion Would Weaken the Indian Freedom movement
 - 3.2 Dalit were Dear, Nationalism Dearer
 - 3.3 A Call for Reform, Re-organize and Assimilate
- 4. Towards the Construction of an Independent Dalit Space
- Conclusion

Chapter-03 Communist Movements and Dalit Engagements

106- 144

Introduction

- 1. Mobilization of Dalits Under Communist Framework
 - 1.1 Extremists' Legitimacy and State Exploitative Role
 - 1.2 Committee Meetings
 - 1.3 Extremists and Mass Participation of Dalits
 - 1.4 Symbolism, New Social Relations and its Significance
- 2. Dalit Question in Communist movements
- 3. Dalit Critique of Communist Movements
 - 3.1 Leadership Issue
 - 3.2 Major Problems with the Movement

Conclusion

Chapter-04 Ambedkarite Model of Politics and Dalit Response in Bihar 145- 181

Introduction

1. Ambedkarite Movement: A Mission for Emancipation
2. Socio-Cultural Movements and its Impacts on Dalit Community
 - 2.1 Psycho-Spiritual Aspects of Ambedkarite Movement
 - 2.2 Dalit Psych and the Post-Ambedkarite Movement
 - 2.3 Socio-Political Impact of Post-Ambedkarite Movement
3. Post-Ambedkarite Models of Dalit Identity Politics
4. Dalits Responses to Ambedkarite Movement in Bihar

Conclusion

Chapter-05 Social Construction of an Alternative Dalit Identity: Study of

Bochahan

182- 224

Introduction

1. Introducing the Constituency
2. Introducing Dalits in the Constituency
 - 2.1 Strong Caste Consciousness among Dalits
 - 2.2 Dalits are Mentally Enslaved and Ignorant
 - 2.3 Dalits are Intimidated Voters
 - 2.4 Holding Voter Identity Cards
 - 2.5 Dalits' Perception about Vote
 - 2.6 Public Perception of Dalit Voting Behaviour
3. Socio-Cultural and Political Conditions
 - 3.1 Mismatched Grassroots Dalit Aspirations and Dalit Political Elites
 - 3.2 Absence of Construction of Alternative 'Social Imaginary'

- 3.3 Occupational Boundaries and the Cultural Stigma
- 3.4 An Absence of the Dalit Dissenting Culture
- 3.5 Lack of Understanding of Alternative Dalit identity
- 3.6 Construction of 'Dalit Counter Space'
- 4. Perspectival Study
 - 4.1 Upper Caste Perception towards Dalits
 - 4.2 Dalits Perceptions towards Upper Castes
- 5. Dalit Sena
- 6. Fiction, Myth and Contesting Multiplicity
- 7. The Politics of Multiple Identities
- 8. Mela and Dalit Consciousness
- 9. Symbols, Booklets and New (Dalit) Politics
- Conclusion

Chapter-06 Dalits in Chakai: Community Without Political Consciousness 225- 253

Introduction

- 1. Political Economy
- 2. Strong Patron-Client System
- 3. Socio-Economic Conditions of Dalits
- 4. Maoist Perception of Emancipation from Hunger and Humiliation
- 5. Dalits' Understanding of the Backward Politics
 - 5.1 Local Political Contestations
 - 5.2 Liquor-Chicken Politics
- 6. Socio-Religious Engagements
 - 6.1 Dalits and the Christian Engagement

7. Economic Dependence and Dalit Social Autonomy

8. Socio-Religious and the Political Patronage

Conclusion

Chapter-07 The Possibility of an Autonomous Dalit Politics in Bihar 254 - 299

Introduction

1. The Contemporary Politics of Bihar

2. Dalit and the Hindutva Politics

3. Politics and the Principles

4. Reserve Constituencies and Upper Caste Dominance

5. The Open Elite System of Dalits

6. The Irresponsible Roles of Dalit Intellectuals and Bureaucrats

6.1 Dalit Academia Acts as 'Vector's of Brahmanism'

7. The Land Relationship and Economic Inter-dependence

8. The Alternative Religious Orientation of Dalit Community

8.1 Dalit Religious Institution: An Agency of Brahminism

9. The Media and Dalits

10. Dalits and Their Education

11. Roles of Undemocratic Institutions

12. Last Assembly Election: the Lost Opportunity

13. Distinct Advantage to OBCs Politics

Conclusion

Conclusion 300 - 315

Bibliography 316 -334

List of Tables and Maps

Description	Page No.
List of Tables	
Table no. 1: Percentage of SC and ST Population, 2001	226
Table no. 2: List of winning candidates from Bochahan (SC) Reserve State Assembly Constituency (Bihar) Till Date	185& 186

List of Maps

Map no.1: District-wise SC Population in Bihar, 2001	52
Map no.2: District-wise SC Population in Uttar Pradesh, 2001	53
Map no.3: Buddhist Population in Bihar, 2001	58
Map no.4: Kabir Panthi Population in Bihar, 2001	58
Map no.5: Christian Population in Bihar, 2001	59

Abbreviations

ABSU- All Bihar Student Union

ADM – Autonomous Dalit Movement

BAMCEF- Backward And Minority Communities Employees Federation

BHASU- Bihar Harijan and Adivasi Student Union

BSP- Bahujan Samaj Party

CDB- Community Development Block

CPI (M)- Communist Party of India (Maoist)

CPI (ML)- Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

CPI (ML) Liberation- Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation

CPI- Communist Party of India

GOI- Government of India

HSD – Hindustani Seva Dal

IND - Independent

JD (U) – Janata Dal (United)

JNP (JP) – Janata Party (JP)

JNP- Janata Party

LJP- Lok Janshakti Party

LKD – Bhartiya Lok Dal

LPG- Liberalization Privatization and Globalization

MALE-

MCC- Maoist Communist's Center

MDM- Mid Day Meal

MGNREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

MLA- Member of Legislative Assembly

MP- Member of Parliament

NDA- National Democratic Alliance

NGOs- Non-Governmental Organizations

NITI- National Institution for Transforming India

OBCs- Other Backward Castes

PDS- Public Distribution System

PWG- People's War Group

RJD – Rastriya Janata Dal

RSS- Rashtriy Swamsevak Sangh

SAP - Samajwadi Party

SCs- Scheduled Castes

SSP- Samyukta Socialist Party

UP- Uttar Pradesh

UPA- United Progressive Alliance

**DALIT POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND THE ALTERNATIVE
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES: CASE STUDY OF MUZZAFFARPUR
AND JAMUI DISTRICTS IN BIHAR**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RAKESH RANJAN



**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI- 110067**

2017

Abstract

If contemporary politics of Bihar seduces us into judging all political values and principles by a single standard, certainly it will be nothing but caste based identity politics. All other democratic values come later for understanding and analyzing the electoral politics of the state. Like any other states in India, caste based identity politics is a basic feature of the politics of Bihar. One can easily find the posters and banners of caste Mahasabhas on the roads of the state capital announcing the need of caste consolidation. Particularly, nearing the elections such caste activism would catch any body's attention. Consequently, it would not be unfair to conclude that the single most important factor that plays the most crucial role in the state politics is the caste consolidation and caste alliances.

Given this caste based mobilization in Bihar politics, one would imagine similar consolidation of conglomeration of caste groups broadly falling under the category of Dalit community. However, one is surprised to find that opposite as one finds almost complete absence of any Autonomous Dalit Movement based on the idea of consolidation of Dalit community for a significant intervention in the state politics. Given the size of Dalit population in the state one would imagine a kind of intervention by this community something similar to what has happened in the politics of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh or Punjab. Compared to these state Bihar has been a way behind in terms of consolidation of the Dalit community for waging struggle for its own wellbeing. This seems to be a good puzzle for the analysts of the state politics.

Let me also mention the way I have defined Autonomous Dalit Movement (ADM) in this thesis. ADM claims autonomy at both the social and cultural levels. Such a movement advocates an autonomous politics led by Dalits within the rubric of parliamentary framework. It proposes three basic criteria for defining an Autonomous Dalit Movement: a) identifying the oppressor and oppressed categories and the basis of oppression; b) struggle against the socio-economic and cultural structure to end the economic exploitation, social discrimination and cultural segregation of oppressed community; and c) the construction of an inclusive, more democratic and egalitarian

alternative model based on the universal principle of quality, liberty and fraternity. This is the process of construction of heterodox tradition, which is inclusive, more democratic and egalitarian. It is going on simultaneously in different regions of India with the broader mission for the liberation of Dalit community from the scourge of Brahminical Hindu social structure. There are states in which ADM is in advanced stage, whereas, there are state lagging behind. Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, could be considered as examples of the former and Bihar, Rajsthan and Madhya Pradesh are examples of the later. The puzzle is that Bihar had a strong democratic upsurge much before than Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Yet, it has not moved forward in the direction of ADM. Bihar lacks this alternative model, which acts as an interconnecting threads to develop new patterns of social and political relations between individuals of Dalit community. I have considered it as one of the major reasons for the absence of autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar.

This research aims at solving this puzzle. It wants to explore the reason behind this absence of ADM in the state. There could be various reasons for the absence. One of the reasons I have discussed here is the assimilative and reformative politics under the strong influence of Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. I have called it 'the Bihar model of Dalit politics'. It is well known that Gandhi's Champaran movement had a deep impact on Bihar politics. His struggle for the marginalized communities attracted people from these communities. Since then Congress Party had a sizable number of Dalit leaders and they were convinced about Gandhi's method of their emancipation. Consequently, a good number of leaders like Babu Jagjiwan Ram, Bholu Paswan Sahstri and Mungeri Lal played significant role in the politics of the state. I have argued that this model was based on reconciliation technique of Gandhi, however, it did not allow the Dalit community to consolidate its identity and the political role they acquired, remained mostly a gift by Congress instead of being earned through mass mobilization.

Another reason I have tried to explore is the Dalit community's engagement with the communist movement in the state. Almost all left parties in the state had a good base in the Dalit communities. However, the CPI (ML) had the strongest base as it picked up their struggle at the grass-root level. For several decades the party has struggle for the minimum wages, for gairmajurua land (land owned by the state) and more importantly for the dignity of the Dalit community. No doubt, under the leadership of

CPI (ML) Dalit community achieved a lot in terms of their economic rights and the right to dignity. However, since the movement did not encourage the idea of identity formation based on the caste exploitation and demeaned religious identity, there could not be any movement to reform the sources of identity. Particularly, when the left movement has become weak the mainstream parties have attracted their attention. Consequently, whatever they gained during these struggles it seems they have lost in last few years. Once again they remained fragmented.

My research in two Assembly constituencies of two districts has suggested that despite the left presence in these constituencies the issues related to the Dalit community remains in the margin. In fact, I was surprised to see that no political party even mentioned these issues either in their manifestoes or in their campaign. The third reason for the absence of ADM in the state could be the lackadaisical responses of Dalit community to the Ambedkarite politics. In last few decades Ambedkar has emerged as a Dalit icon helping the community to politically organize itself in the different parts of India, however, surprisingly enough this has hardly been a case in Bihar. I found a number of groups drawing upon Ambedkar's philosophy involved in organizing the community in the state. However, one can't say confidently that such organizations have any significant impact on the mobilization of the community for the electoral politics.

The above mentioned three reasons contributed to the absence of construction of an alternative Dalit socio-cultural consciousness to challenge the socio-cultural hegemony of the mainstream society. It is equally contributed to the absence of construction of an alternative social, cultural and political imaginary and the construction of Dalit dissenting culture to construct a Dalit counter space. These are considered important for the development of an autonomous Dalit movement (ADM) in the state.

There is no doubt that one may have many more reasons to explain the absence of the ADM. However, one of the reasons I have explored in much detail is the lack of alternative religious practices in this community. The central question, I have raised in this dissertation is about the relation between ADM and alternative religious practices. The survey of literature suggests that this is one of the least explored aspects of Dalit mobilization. I have tried to demonstrate that there is a strong link

between the autonomous Dalit movement and alternative religious practices. It acts as an interconnecting thread to mobilize Dalit community. It is considered as precondition to generate a sense of belonging, sense of solidarity, we-feeling and brotherhood among Dalit community. It also acts as 'cohesive force' to bind Dalit community together having the common lived experiences and sufferings. There are many reasons for the absence of ADM in Bihar but I have focused to find out that to what extent the lack of alternative religious practices of Dalit community can be considered as one of the reason for the absence of autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar?

After analyzing the literatures on the politics of Bihar in general and Dalit politics in particular and understanding the different models of Ambedkarite politics based of the identity of Dalit community, I got to know that as to how the spirit of an autonomous Dalit Movement in Bihar lost its relevance under the scattered engagements of Dalit community under different political formations of the state. Further, this spirit lost under the self-interpretative models of Dalit politics, personal political aspirations and multiple political contestations of Dalit leaders of Bihar. The studies of these phenomena are discussed in the first three chapters. The fourth and fifth chapters are based on the fieldwork undertaken the two Assembly constituencies of Muzzaffarpur and Jamui districts. In Jamui district, I have conducted my research in the Chakai Assembly constituency. It is non-reserve constituency with a sizable number of the Dalit community. As Chakai is closer to Jharkhand boarder there is sizable population of the scheduled tribe in this constituency. Though my focus was the Dalit community, I can say confidently that the situation is not different for the Tribal community too. Chakai is also known for the base of the Naxal movement. However, I did not find any intervention by them during the elections. I started my fieldwork thinking that the left presence probably would force the political parties to raise the issues concerning the Dalit communities. My second field was Bochahan Assembly constituency in the Muzzaffarpur district. It is a reserved constituency and for almost four decades it returned a prominent Dalit leader of Bihar, Mr Ramai Ram.

I chose ethnography as method of inquiry. I decided to conduct my fieldwork during the Bihar Assembly Elections 2015. This was a difficult election as in 2014 Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) came in power under the leadership of Narendra Modi with a massive majority. It was projected as Modi wave. In this Modi wave even Bihar

returned large number of MPs for BJP. Since this Assembly election was just after the parliamentary election, BJP was expecting a similar support. What made this time suitable for my fieldwork was the strategy BJP adopted in this state. As it was clear that Muslim and Yadav, which constitute a good chunk of voters in the state would not vote for the Party and other backward classes would support JDU, BJP focused mainly on the Dalit voters apart from Upper caste and EBC. For this purpose, BJP aligned with three different parties. LJP (Lok Janshakti Party) led by Ramvilas Paswan and his son Chirag Paswan, RLSP (Rashtriya Lok Samta Party) led by Upendra Kushwaha and HAM(S) [Hindustani Avam Morcha (Secular)] led by Jitan Ram Manjhi. This alliance was named as NDA alliance and the battle began between Mahagathbandhan [RJD and JD(U)] and NDA alliance. BJP forged alliance with two Dalit parties in the state to woo Dalit voters but what I observed during my fieldwork that Ramvilas Paswan has created a very negative image even among the Paswan caste. Howsoever big stature Ramvilas Paswan has owned but due to his different moves in different parties people were taking him opportunistic. Local people now call him 'be pendi ka lota' (the pot without base). The unprecedented emergence of Jitan Ram Manjhi gave some hope to Dalit community as I clearly observed the 'Swabhiman rally' in Gandhi Maidan Patna on 19th April 2015. But his decision to join BJP led NDA alliance once again destroy the hope of Dalits in the state. This move cultivated Paswan image in Manjhi as opportunistic and not interested in Dalits' interests. This image of both Dalit leaders became more pronounced when they start fighting each other on the issue of ticket share. Chakai was one of the hottest seats for both because of the two reasons. First; it falls in the Lok Sabha constituency of Chirag Paswan, the son of Ramvilas Paswan and Sumit Kumar candidature of the son of Manjhi mentor Narendra Singh and second; this constituency constitutes good population of Dalit, Tribals and OBCs

The method of this study is the ethnographic study based on participant observer of two limited political territories i.e. the state assembly constituency Bochahan and Chakai. As a participant observer I wanted to observe the symbolic dimensions of social, cultural and political behavior of Dalit community, equally focused on to observe and understand socio-cultural dimensions of their responses to the mainstream politics under the prevailing socio-religious and economic conditions. Election is a multi-phenomena event. It gives (a researcher) a unique opportunity to

participate in everyday engagements of community/individuals through conversation, observing events, gossips, jokes etc. and other (formal and) informal speech acts. So, I decided to work with one candidate in each constituency in order to get access to Dalit community in election campaign.

It helped me immensely to reach almost every village of Dalit community in those constituencies. I attended every meeting where the strategies for next day campaign were planning and demands and other concerns related to those constituencies of various castes were being listening. I participated in almost all forms of campaign i.e. door to door, meetings, rallies etc. It helped me understand the cultural and social events, the process of reaching on political decision, political mobilization, voting behavior etc. It helped me understand lively, and some time complex articulation of meaning to reach on the political decisions, which is not possible to explore without participating in various modes of the election campaign. The direct involvement with them and their political, social and cultural understandings during election time provided me an ideal opportunity to understand their pattern of political mobilization. That gave me an opportunity to understand symbolic dynamics of various modes of Dalit engagement and important insight to understand the process of Dalit political mobilization in the state.

This research has proved my hypothesis right that the available models of Dalit participation in politics have not allowed the consolidation of Dalit identity. Consequently, this community has failed in articulating its own interest effectively. For such a consolidation, I have argued, there is need of use of alternative religious practices effectively. The prevalent models of Dalit participation have taken up certain concerns of the community but they have not promoted any understanding of the real issues that the community has been facing. In both the constituencies, one see easily, that the community lives under the hegemonic dominance of the upper caste and the they continue following the conservative Hinduism. However, there is a counter trend of radicalization of Dalits done by the left parties. But this radicalization has put the caste issues under the carpet. As a result, broadly speaking the politics of Dalit community remains always dependent on the other community based political parties. It was very well reflected in the Bihar Assembly election in 2015.

Let me elaborate upon the steps I have taken to arrive on this conclusion. I will do this through discussion my chapters in little detail. The first chapter explains the relationship between Gandhian movement and the Dalit community in Bihar. The argument I intend to put forward with the emergence of Dalit discourse in India and what were its eventual consequences on the Dalit discourse of Bihar. It deals with issue of engagement of the Gandhian movement with the Dalit question. I think Dalit issues remained within the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism and the Indian National Congress. Understanding the emergence of Dalit discourse in the mainstream Indian politics, this chapter also explains the different phases of Dalit discourse in Bihar. This includes the caste consolidation movements, the ongoing debates in the political and social forums of Indian National Congress and the beginning of Gandhian movement in Bihar. Further, it deals with the specificity of the 'Bihar model of Dalit politics' based on assimilation of Dalits into the mainstream Hindu social structure and the reformation of Savarna Hindu castes attitudes towards Dalits under the leadership of Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. When the contemporary Dalit leaders of other states, where vibrant Dalit movement and politics are found, were constructing an independent Dalit movement against the socio-cultural segregation, economic exploitation and political marginalization of Dalit community to challenge the mainstream politics, the most popular Dalit leader of Bihar Jagjivan Ram associated himself with the Gandhian movement, which was under the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism. However, through the assimilative and reformative politics Jagjivan Ram succeeded to develop a completely different model of Dalit politics in Bihar but his approach failed in both essences i.e. assimilation of Dalit into the mainstream society and reformation of Savarna Hindus attitudes towards the Dalit community of the state. Understanding the failure, he made the call for construction of an independent organization of Dalit communities but not in the rubric of Ambedkarite conception of alternative socio-cultural and political organizations. Consequence of which was the absence of the construction of an alternative social, political or religious Dalit identity independent from Hindu society or as an alternative model of Dalit community to challenge the mainstream politics. This was thought necessary for the independent consolidation of Dalit communities in Bihar, which remained absent yet, so did the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement based on the liberation of Dalit community.

The second chapter discusses that when the Indian National Congress became the party of Savarna Hindu castes and Dalit aspirations faded away and the emergence of OBCs dominated identity politics in 1990s further marginalized them, then Dalits of Bihar had now no option except to support communist organizations including extremists such as Naxalite and Maoist to break the hegemony of mainstream society. The mass support of Dalit community was also based on to express their anger -cum - rising political awareness and activism against their social and material deprivation. Taking the benefit of this, left organizations succeeded in capturing the mass Dalit aspirations of liberation to conceptualize the radical transformation of social and economic structure of state through the class based communist revolution. The alternative socio-cultural and political aspiration, this community once again subsumed under the theoretical conceptualization of communist revolution in the domain of collective interests of proletariat class. However, the practical way applied by Communist movement to develop intimate relationship with these sections of society and the symbolic practices of communist movements to earn strong commitment of Dalit community are completely against the alternative socio-cultural conception of Dalit community. The Communist movement is not only against the caste mobilization but they also do not support any religious mobilization. With the time, it is true that Dalit question based on multiple discrimination emerged within communist organizations but only after the emergence of BSP and Ambedkarite politics as strong forces in the neighboring state UP and growing sympathy of Dalits towards the BSP in Bihar. As I have explained in this chapter the communist movement in Bihar started considering Dalit questions only to mitigate the growing sympathy of Dalits towards the BSP and Ambedkarite forces in the state. Despite the consideration of Dalit questions communist organizations also remained under the hegemonic dominance of upper castes Savarna Hindus and Dalit even in these organizations remained just as foot-soldier like other political organizations of state.

As per as the issue concerned with the left movement and Dalit politics in Bihar then one thing is very clear that the left politics in Bihar is completely different from the left politics of the other parts of India. It has been very consistent, universal and cosmopolitan class approach in Bihar as other parts of India. Despite that along with the different kinds of oppression based on class, gender, religion, birth, position etc it has, in Bihar, also recognized the oppressions based of caste also. In Bihar the left

politics has well recognized the oppression based on casteism and social exclusion more seriously but only after the emergence of BSP as a strong political force in UP and its intervention in Bihar. Observing this move, I don't know how I would describe left politics of Bihar? Whether I call it transformation or moving away from the universal left ideology and principles that the left stands for but I must say that it is the pragmatic, realistic and inclusive approach of left politics in Bihar. However, it doesn't succeed to capture the political power of state or a major political force, It talks about both the broader issues related to the economic independence and the class oppression i.e. the issues related to the economic and social justice.

On the contrary, the Communist politics of Bihar is not what we really call progressive and democratic in its approach. The fact of the matter is that they are also trying to just acquire the rhetoric of nothing but populist politics. They are just trying to capture the imagination of Dalit and other backward caste and the rhetorical imagination of Dalit icons as well. There is no better example to justify my charge is the new slogan 'Jai Bhim, Lal Salam'. Still, their manifesto does not recognize the oppressions and exploitation based on caste. They are also using Dalits and poor as a flag bearer (foot-soldier) only as same, what right wing organizations like RSS, BJP and other mainstream parties have done so far. They talk about democracy but one cannot find any democracy within the party structure. Upper caste's people capture all the official and authoritative positions. They talk about participation and representation along with other democratic values to be insured in society. They claim this is what they are fighting for but one cannot find examples to prove their point of fair participation and representation of Dalits within the party. One can also observe a sheer upper caste dictatorship in the decision making process of party. Precisely, the authoritative structure and the character of governance are same in all the parties irrespective of their ideological stand and it is Dalits who are the ultimate victims under these politics.

It is true that the communist movements of the state failed to develop an alternative universal and broader class based culture around the working class movement against the ruling class, which was seen as emancipatory egalitarian theory as Ambedkarite philosophy. It is also true that they neglected issues like caste and religion but the assertion of Dalits in the state is not the unintended consequences of the communist movements. The hard work of communist cadres captured Dalit political imagination

to replicate it into communist model. It was intended to take Dalit issues more seriously, however, not in the same line of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics, despite that the communist-Dalit bonds are still so strong in the state that Dalit parties itself find tough to connect with their own constituents.

The third chapter evaluates the Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite model of autonomous Dalit movement based on the construction of an independent socio-cultural and political identity and institutions of Dalit community. What would the conceptual assumptions mean to Dalit communities in general and the Dalit community of Bihar? Whether they want to acknowledge the significance of their alternative identity to establish a kind of autonomy so that they can challenge the hegemony of mainstream social and religious dominance or they want to reinvent a different kind of structural relationships with the help of the production/construction of alternative institutions and agencies, which is contrary to Ambedkarite models present in other states? Understanding the broader impact of invention of new power relationship in the context of the changing dynamics and emerging paradigm of Dalit identity politics, I intend to address the following question: 'Is Ambedkar's model of socio-cultural politics based on the mission of liberation of 'Depressed classes' an identity politics? Alternatively, one may ask if the identity politics is a temporary mechanism of the broader mission of emancipation of Dalit community? Which have ultimate goal to establish socio-economic justice and a more inclusive democratic and egalitarian society in India based on universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity. I think that Ambedkar's idea of Dalit politics is not merely an identity politics, rather, it is aimed at the total transformation of society. It has twin approaches. On the one hand, it wants to inflict the guilt in the mainstream society for the discriminatory attitudes towards Dalit community; on the other hand, it tries to empower the Dalit community through the change in the cultural and material conditions.

To clarify my understanding, I took two successful models of Ambedkarite politics, which are practiced in Maharashtra and UP as examples. The Maharashtra model of Ambedkarite politics however subordinating the political mobilization of Dalit community is successful in term of socio-cultural assertion of Dalit community. On the other hand Ambedkarite politics of UP, which can be taken as post-Ambedkarite model of Dalit identity politics. However, UP model of Dalit identity politics

subordinated the socio-cultural mobilization of Dalit community is also successful in terms of political assertion of Dalit community. Both can be considered as the part of whole Ambedkarite movement, which has goal of total transformation of society in terms broader mission of establishing socio-economic justice and liberation of Dalit community. Both UP and Maharashtra model is not complete from the point of view I have defined ADM. Both the models have not ignored major concern of Ambedkar who wanted to combine the two aspects. These movements have worked on the 'either-or' model.

No doubt socio-cultural politics including conversion gives an independent identity to Dalit community but the empowerment infused in Dalit community in terms of self-respect and dignity through the political power cannot be undermined to the socio-cultural politics of Ambedkar. The difference between approaches of these models of Ambedkarite politics certainly suggest some other limitations of Ambedkar politics based on identity of Dalit community. Ambedkar made a very radical call for conversion while he was already established himself in the politics of India, at the same time he was also part of government and state. He tried to legitimize his move through his politics and position. Kanshi Ram however subordinated the conversion part of Dalit identity politics to start with the independent political mobilization of Dalits but at the same time he didn't negate the Ambedkarite philosophy to justify his political move. Thus, he followed the principle of social movement precedes political movement. It was certainly the same 'silent revolution' however the socio-cultural mobilization with the same spirit was absent. On contrary to both models, using his political position along with Gandhi, Ambedkar's contemporary Jagjivan Ram in Bihar, notwithstanding the importance of an autonomous Dalit movement tried hard to develop a completely different model of Dalit politics in Bihar based on assimilative and reformative approaches which was not based on an independent Dalit politics in nature blunted the scope of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state. These three different models followed by three Dalit icons in different states in India itself explain the complexity and limitations of Dalit identity politics that whether socio-cultural movement is the part of an autonomous Dalit movement? However, Kanshi Ram proved his point with the success story of BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

The contemporary Dalit leaders of Bihar reject all three models of Dalit politics available in India. They neither follow Ambedkar, nor do they try to construct a

broader independent Dalit social movement like Kanshi Ram. They also reject Jagjivan Ram model with their opportunistic move to one party to other. They are not serious about social reform and cultural change. They are just confined to the political calculation to remain an insignificant part of power politics. They don't only question their legitimacy rather they have made the mass Dalit population of state an insignificant part of the politics of state.

Fourth and Fifth chapters are the detail descriptions of findings during the field work in two sites (Bochahan and Chakai state assembly constituencies in Muzaffarpur and Jamui district of Bihar respectively). I took them as testing grounds to understand the two features of Dalit community. First; what are the reasons for the different political engagements of the Dalit community in Bihar, and second; how is Dalit community responding to the construction of an alternative socio-cultural and political model of Ambedkarite politics to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream social, cultural, religious and political institutions and structures. Are the responses to the Ambedkarite mission of the emancipation of Dalit community positive in terms of understanding and level consciousness? Whether any of these available models of Dalit identity politics working in the state? These are the questions I intended to explore in the both fields of case study. Bochahan is the SCs reserved state assembly constituency. It is very exceptional in two senses. First; it is the longest ruling constituency (almost 40 years) by a single Dalit leader, and second; it has been remained a constituency of non-mainstream political dominance since its creation. Neither Congress nor BJP candidate has won even a single time in the constituency. People voted for either candidate of Janata Dal and its constituent's parties or independent candidate. Even before the formation of Janata Dal people voted for the alternative to the mainstream political party. This constituency is the part of the district Muzaffarpur, which has been remained a vibrant place for the communist movement. It is also the place of the dominance of Paswan caste of Dalit community, which is the most politically assertive Dalit caste in Bihar.

The irony is that despite these facts the support to the Ambedkarite politics and understanding to the importance of the construction of an independent alternative socio-cultural and political organization of Dalit community are as low as one can find and so does their understanding about the ADM. These leading sections of Dalit community in Bochahan constituency failed to generate a level of consciousness to

fight for their liberation from the exploitation, segregation and multiple-discriminations. They also failed to reinforce a level of consciousness to challenge the exploitative Brahminical Hindu society and reinforcing a sense of justice, self-respect and dignity among 'Dalit-self'. Consequently, Dalit community failed to recreate a formal democratic discourse and sense of share in power to start a collective struggle through construction of an alternative institution and agency of liberation under Ambedkarite or post-Ambedkarite framework. In this absence of alternative construction or an autonomous Dalit movement Dalits of Bihar have never organized around their social marginalization and the various forms of exclusion that they face in day-to-day life.

The different castes of Dalit community in this constituency represent different political formations and the essence of an autonomous Dalit movement lost within the multiple political contestations. The strong caste feeling among them (Dalits) do nothing but to reinforce the same Brahminical construct of caste superiority and inflicting humiliation to other castes of same community as inferior to another. Except some pockets of Paswan caste that are politically highly assertive behind the leaders of Paswan caste only rest of the Dalit community is intimidated, segregated, exploited and marginalized. Particularly in Bochahan constituency where Dalit community is comparatively in better conditions than Chakai constituency, I found not even a single residence, home or hamlet having a single picture of Ambedkar or other such Dalit icons. On contrary to this every Dalit residences were full of the picture or statues of Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

In the absence of Ambedkarite politics in the region, I found lack of alternative social, cultural and political imaginary among Dalit community. Dalits are still mentally slaved, ignorant and deprived under the strong patron-client system. In the absence of Dalit dissenting culture even local Paswan leaders are very reluctant to construct an alternative socio-cultural identity of Dalit community. Neither they believe in the Ambedkarite politics nor do they attempt to challenge the Brahminical hegemonic discourses because they understand that cultural politics and identity politics are the same. In this lack of consciousness the some politically assertive Dalits of Bihar easily bypass the logic of Ambedkarite politics to become the blind followers of the opportunist Dalit leaders and finally to reinforce the same Brahminical construct exploitation and humiliation to other castes of their own Dalit community.

After observing the socio-economic conditions and cultural understanding of Dalit community of the Bochahan constituency through the ethnographic study as a participant observer I can easily explained that Dalit community of this region has not reached to the required level of political and cultural consciousness who can understand the importance of construction of an alternative Dalit identity movement. None of the model of Dalit politics is working there in the direction of ADM. However, the resources for the autonomous Dalit movement (not sufficient for the cultural politics) are available to start the process but it has lost the essence under the multiple political contestation and personal political aspirations even at local level of Dalit leadership. The dynamic of 'symbolic interactionism' has also been distorted under the political contestation between different castes of Dalit community. The prevailing social and cultural differences based on caste and other identities, which are major determinants of construction of alternative identities of Dalit community, could have helped immensely to launch an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and other states. However, it failed due to the self-interpretative modes governed by personal political aspiration of Dalit leaders of state. It killed the spirit of collective Dalit political aspirations even under the post-Ambedkarite framework of Dalit identity politics.

Coming to the Chakai constituency, my second field of study better I introduced this constituency in respect of Dalit community as the worse state neglected area than the worse Naxalite or Maoist affected area. I found a Dalit village called Bhoodan Tola in Loha Lakadaha Panchayat that comes under Sono Community Development Block, where Dalits are sharing water sources with animals. That is not a government constructed pond rather it was down land where water lags after rains. Their level of consciousness are so low that they can not even understand the meaning of Dalit, Democracy, Vote, Government, State, Liberty, Equality and other values then what to talk about socio-cultural politics, Dalit dissenting culture and alternative politics. They are living their lives in the complete absence of social and political understanding under the individual struggle of survival, hopelessness and helplessness. They never organized against their exploitation, marginality, discriminations and segregation; however, they have strong dissent against the feudal forces as well as Brahminical Hindu society.

In this situation they become easy prey of Naxalite and Maoist organizations. They are sandwiched between the state machineries and the Maoist organizations. However, this is also the region where Sarvodaya Movement was very active. The remains of Sarvodaya Ashrams are still there. Some are active but most of them are dis-functional. I visited all three Sarvodaya ashrams present in Chakai constituency. In the absence of state responses Sarvodaya activists either joined the political organization of their choice or chose to remain silent, as they are incapable to fight with the forces that inflict injustice to Dalit community. In the dominance and influence of Maoist organization inculcating the Ambedkarite spirit and idea are almost impossible until they achieve some level of material empowerment and literacy to understand the importance of organizing together against injustices being done to them. They do not understand the meaning socio-cultural Ambedkarite politics for the liberation and emancipation of Dalit community. However, in some Dalit villages I found Dalit engagements with Christian missionary and these missionary are working for the betterment of Dalit community as the non-political organization.

After analyzing the findings of these two fields of case study and the contemporary politics of Bihar the last chapter analyses the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar. It indicate that whether these Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite movements of Dalit community are more democratic and based on establishing socio-economic justice or not can be the subject of further research but after understanding its psychological and motivational impacts on Dalit community, I found it more assertive, more liberating and emancipatory to Dalit community than assimilative and reformative model of the mainstream politics. But the irony is that Dalit community of Bihar is still not responding positively to Ambedkarite politics. Baring some exceptions even Dalit leaders of Bihar do not endorse Ambedkarite politics in the state and so does the Dalit community. The Dalit leadership in Bihar has ignored both the aspects and that is a problem for the absence of ADM in Bihar. So, as the evidences found in this research suggest that there should be a movement within the Dalit community for consolidating its identity through alternative religions and construction of other independent Dalit social and cultural institutions and agencies. This would break them away from the hegemonic dominance of the Hinduism and of the mainstream political parties. It would enhance their bargaining capacity and

capacity to articulate their interest better. So, this thesis suggests one step forward for possible ADM in Bihar, i.e. construction of an all encompassing, all-inclusive alternative socio-cultural identity. It may require bringing all liberation theologians such as Ambedkar, Gandhi and Marx together, under the domain of universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity and the broader mission of establishing socio-economic Justice, meaningful social transformation.

Introduction

Identity of a human being, a section and a community in India is defined by their social, political, cultural and religious orientations. This has been true also for the Dalit community, which suffers from demeaned status, lack of self-respect, lack of dignity, and misrecognition. The question of the identity of Dalit community in these terms is endowed with these very social, cultural and religious characteristics. Therefore, in order to fight against the stigmatic identity they are subjected to, the Dalit community has no option but to address these sources of identity squarely. Which is meant to remove all their stigmatic position that originated as a product of hierarchical and exploitative caste structure. Dalits in various regions of India have started different methods to assert their identity and to control the social and political agencies. This process is termed as the assertion of Dalits in India, which is finally culminated into the Dalit movement in the various regions of India. These movements in various regions in India could be considered as forms of responses to these sources of identity, which could be broadly called as ‘Brahminical Hindu religion’¹, culture and social practices. This protest against the hegemonic dominance of Brahminism helps them in mobilization to control the social and political agencies. This research will explore the dynamics of this politics of protest in case of the Dalit communities of Bihar and it would examine particularly the way they are re-signifying the value of alternative religious and social spaces to construct that alternative identity to redress all injustices being done to them.

Dalit community is approaching in this direction on the assumption that religion is a significant fact of human existence. It acts as an interconnecting thread to weld individuals of society together. But given the essentially exclusionary feature of Brahminical Hindu religion, it explores the ways and manners in which the ‘excluded’ have forced to start practicing their alternative religion. The mainstream Brahminical Hindu religion excluded Dalits in exercise their everyday rituals and spiritual practices, the ways of Dalit community’s engagement with alternative religious

¹ Here the term used Brahminical Hindu religion different from Hinduism and Hindutva. In this thesis I have used Hinduism as the true Hindu religion, and the Brahminical Hindu religion is used as perverted form of true Hinduism. Its emergence can be seen after the introduction of Manusmriti, Varna system and hierarchical caste system, and other discriminatory practices such as purity and pollution, super ordination and sub-ordination, high and low. The concept of Hindutva is political category and political manifestation of the Brahminical Hindu religion.

practices. Thus, in order to fulfill their spiritual needs Dalit community are carving out a grand religio-cultural space of their own, which is helping them organizing together against the consistent assaults on the dignity, self-respect and identity that have been made on them for centuries.

What we are witnessing now is Dalit assertion as multi-dimensional, as it has its ramification in social, religious, cultural and political domains. These various dimensions bring a complete agenda of construction of Dalit movement. The process has the tendency of controlling the political agencies of a state by Dalits and it is known as the identity politics of Dalit community, on the other hand, the methods of construction of new social and cultural institutions by Dalits is termed as the assertion of independent identity of Dalit community.

Further it includes the process of 'symbolic interactionism', i.e. the process of re-evaluations, re-interpretations, constructions and deconstruction of demeaned histories, myths and identity, construction of alternative religious institutions and creation of alternative space and finally construction of a democratic and inclusive world for all. It is imbedded in all aspects of life of Dalits and their everyday cultural, social, religious and political engagements. It has also a deep engagement with memories, histories, myths and rituals of Dalit communities. To be precise, it is the process of a rational and innovative dialogue between everyday politics and Dalit dissenting culture emerged out in view of their long struggle against all injustices being done to them.

All these processes are the parts of a vibrant Dalit movement in India. No doubt a lot of work has been done by many social scientists on various issues of Dalit politics in India. However, the issue of construction of alternatives space and the importance of heterodox traditions in India in respect of liberation of Dalit is not much explored. Particularly, in case of Bihar one can say with confidence that it is under researched. The process of construction of heterodox tradition is going simultaneously in different regions of India with the goal to liberate Dalit community from the scourge of exploitative Brahmanical Hindu social structure. Some states have gone far in this process of construction of a strong Dalit movement. Whereas some of them are still lagging behind. It goes without saying that Bihar would be considered an example where Dalit assertion has not been sufficiently remarkable. My focus in this research

is especially on exploring the reasons of the absence of this process in Bihar. To be precise, this research will explore the way Dalit community of Bihar is trying to re-signify the value of alternative socio-religious and political space to construct that heterodox tradition and the importance of it to redress all forms of injustice being done to them.

This process of re-signifying the value of independent political and religious identity is based on the universal principle and value such as liberty, equality and fraternity. The theoretical basis of the movement is based on the philosophy of social justice, which includes the politics of recognition, redistribution and removal of multiple spheres of injustice based on social marginalization, cultural segregation and economic exploitation of depressed classes. For Dalit community this phenomenon is seen as the rise of the politics of identity. It aims at 'revalue the unjustly devalued identity'² to remove social and cultural stigma stitched with Dalits. It is the part of the broader mission of total transformation of the society and the liberation of Dalit community as envisaged by Ambedkar. It is a collective effort of 'depressed classes' to achieve a certain level of social-political and cultural participation and equal recognition so that they can at least enter into the political process of Indian democratic system.

Further, in the new emerging dynamics of socio-cultural scenario 'these marginalized sections have been asserting their identities through myths, legends, heroes and histories, narratives of their own caste. Many heroes of these castes have begun to symbolize their caste identities, evoking feelings of pride and glory within their members.'³ Also, Dalit movements have launched a number of emancipatory, reformative and alternative movements to subvert the Brahminical cultural code of conduct and to end the constant humiliation, exploitation and segregation in their everyday life. It has been playing great role in organizing Dalit community against their marginalization, segregation and exploitation. These local practices have such a huge impact that its presence is felt globally. This is how the question of Dalit identity came in the mainstream discourse of intense debate leading eventually to the construction of an alternative Dalit counter space and institutions for the liberation of

²Fraser, Nancy (2008). *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition & Participation*. New Delhi: Critical Quest, p. 4

³ *Ibid.*, P. 15.

Dalit community. And finally, it is turning into mass Dalit political mobilization after reinforcing strong Dalit assertion and a sense of share in democratic process of accessing the state power.

Many studies have suggested that the discriminatory, exploitative and hegemonic Brahminical caste system is responsible for unequal distribution of resources and misrecognition of the identities, which has further produced discrimination, exploitation and marginalization of the Dalit communities. So, to challenge the Brahminical dominance, Dalits have now started asserting independent Dalit identity. In the next section, I have tried to explain the theoretical basis of assertion of independent identity and the identity based Dalit movement in India.

The assertion of independent Dalit identity includes the politics of recognition that is based on 'difference friendly' world where misrecognition, assimilation and subsuming one's identity into a major and dominant culture are no longer price of equal respect and dignity'.⁴ It aspires to establish a just society in which different sections have equal opportunity as well as their rights to cultivate socio-political and religio-cultural freedom without a sense of inferiority, humiliation and fear of assimilation or losing and subsuming their identity into major and dominant political and religious culture.

As we know there are layers to the structures of domination, no one would disagree that there are multiple forms of injustice being practiced in society. If it is true, we have to accept that we require a theory of justice, which can address these forms of injustice. Any struggle against injustice needs several related forms of human interaction as co-operation, co-ordination, consideration, distribution, recognition, equal participation, proportional representation and so on. One would easily accept that for struggle against injustice experienced by the Dalit communities we simultaneously need to deconstruct the structures of domination and reconstruct new humanitarian structures. This would mean demystifying the symbols being used for domination of communities and creating more egalitarian symbols. It includes the construction of an independent identity as well as development of a democratic space

⁴ Fraser, N., & Honneth, A. (2003). *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso. P. – 07

for the Dalit community. One can take examples of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh to comprehend these processes.

How does this process work? I would like to agree with the idea that the precondition of the conception of collectivities is a 'sense of belonging', which acts as a 'cohesive force' as it establishes a permanent bond and feeling of brotherhood among individuals as well as communities.⁵ This is what Valerian Rodrigues see Dalits (Untouchables) 'sharing common communitarian bonds not merely by being sharers in common misery and oppression and for being 'outside the fold' but also for sharing their habitats in the outskirts of villages'.⁶ The sense of belongingness developed through the 'common communitarian bonds' has different aspects such as social, cultural and political. It has very positive psychological and motivational impacts on Dalits. The Dalit community is realizing it directly and indirectly through the engagements with these alternative socio-religious practices and the political institutions. Dalits are institutionalizing it as alternative institutions to counter hegemonic Brahmanical institutions and projecting it as an agency for the liberation of Dalit community.

The sense of belongingness, which I have discussed above, plays an important role in the process of mobilization of Dalit for social, economic and political justice. This has become possible because Dalit community thinks that discriminations, deprivation and humiliation of 'Dalit self' and their self-respect are characterized by Brahminical institutions. Since, these multi-pronged discriminating practices are based on caste and the Brahminical Hindu religion is the philosophical base behind the theory of caste and Verna system. So, 'one of the institutions they regard as crucial in this respect is religion. Religion can play a major role in according recognition, a sense of belonging and a sense of solidarity'⁷ among Dalits against their multiple-marginalities and question of demeaned identity. Thus, galvanized Dalit community to support Movement based on Ambedkar's vision, which believes in constructing parallel alternative institutions based on the universal principle of liberty, equality and fraternity to challenge the hegemony of Brahmanical institutions, which are highly discriminating, exploitative and humiliating to them. The Ambedkar's vision asserts

⁵ Rodrigues, Valerian (2008). Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India. New Delhi: Critical Quest. P. 22

⁶ *ibid.* p. 24

⁷ Rodrigues, Valerian (2008). Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in India. New Delhi: Critical Quest. P. 31

that there is need of socio-cultural politics with the goal of total transformation of Indian society. It is aimed to establish socio-economic justice and the Ambedkar has called it as the broader mission for the liberation of 'Depressed classes'.⁸ Ambedkar himself felt that liberation of Dalit community is possible only through the construction of alternative social and religious institutions based on the principle of equality, liberty and fraternity. Depressed community requires constructing an alternative model to govern their own life⁹ and the Ambedkarite politics claims following his philosophy to discover an alternative politics based on construction of alternative socio-religious and political model. This is clearly reflected in the Jagpal Singh study of Socio- cultural protest of Dalit community in Meerut district. He mentions that;

The dalits of Western Uttar Pradesh, particularly the Jatavs, have resorted to diverse means to register their protest and also achieve improvement in their living standards. Religious conversion, supporting mainstream political parties or parties having dalit leadership and launching socio-cultural organisations are some of the strategies adopted by the jatavs to redress their grievances. Though, currently, the Bahujan Samaj Party commands the allegiance of a large number of jatavs, it should not be overlooked that the roots of self-assertion of jatavs of western UP go back to the process of Ambedkarisation initiated by the Republican Party of India in the 1960s.¹⁰

This has helped them immensely 'to feel a sense of belonging', solidarity and a sense of security among Dalit community. It is called the Ambedkarite model of socio-religious politics but I doubt the model of identity politics followed by BSP in UP could be considered same as the model Ambedkar was endorsing. The politics of Ambedkar was not just an identity politics based on dividing the society on the basis of identity and caste, rather his politics constituted assimilation, reformation, redemption, affirmation and revolution. On the one hand, the politics of Ambedkar aimed at total transformation of the Brahminical Hindu society into democratic and more egalitarian society. It aimed at reinforcing the notion of equality, liberty and fraternity and in each and every individual of society. On the other hand, it has broader mission for the liberation of 'depressed classes' from the scourge of the Brahminical Hindu society. As I have mentioned above, the Dalit community feels that the construction of alternative religious identity can play a great role in liberating

⁸ for detail see Gail Omvedt (2004). Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India. New Delhi: Penguin

⁹ For detail see, B. R. Ambedkar (1947). States and Minorities: What are their Rights and how to secure them in the constitution of Free India. Retrieved from:
<http://www.drbacmahad.org/Speeches/states-and-minorities.pdf>

¹⁰ Singh, Jagpal (1998). Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit Identity: Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut District of Western Uttar Pradesh. Economic and Political Weekly. 33 (40) : 2611- 2618, p. 2611

from the stigmatic identity given under Brahmanical society. So, they are making efforts to construct alternative socio-religious identity of Dalit community independent from Brahmanical Hindu society¹¹.

This process has changed ‘the language of Dalit-Bahujan political discourse’¹² and it has given the legitimacy to the constructions of alternative socio-religious Dalit identities as the inherent part of the contemporary Ambedkarite and identity based Dalit movement in India.¹³ Further, their new socio-religious identities as well as different alternative religious practices are strengthening the thread that they have developed in years to broaden their network as well as their democratic space. This has brought different people of the same community together, having common experiences, pains and feelings of suffering. It generates an automatic relationship to feel solidarity and security among them. This has produced a sense of belongingness and brotherhood, as well as the political and social consciousness to fight their rights and use their democratic space independently. This movement does not only invoke alternative identity formation of Dalit community, but also it is based on the Ambedkarite principle of constructing heterogeneous culture in India inclusive to all through the total transformation of the Brahmanical society.¹⁴ Precisely, Eva Maria Hardtmann characterizes this discourse of Dalit movement as the process of constructing a heterodox tradition in India as an alternative to the Brahmanical traditional society.¹⁵

The dimension of the heterodox tradition of Dalit movement becomes easier to understand when we take it in the Weberian framework. It is because their relationships go beyond the relations of production and material distribution. It is defined by the psychological relation, which includes recognition of common feelings, pains and suffering of Dalits. It may be defined by the relation of historical

¹¹For detail see, Badri Narayan (2006). *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

¹² Guru, Gopal (2001). *The Language of Dalit-Bahujan Political Discourse*. In Ghanshyam Shah (ed.). *Dalit Identity and Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

¹³ For detail see, Guru, Gopal (1994). *Politics of Culture in Maharashtra*. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 (40),

¹⁴ Pande, D., & Jha, M. (2016). *Cultural Identity and Human Rights: Minority Claims, Ethnic Identity and Group Rights*. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 6 (4), 351-362. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2016.64032>

¹⁵ for detail see, Eva Maria Hardtmann (2009). *The Dalits Movements in India: Local Practices. Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

injustices, common sufferings with similar social stigma that can only be felt by these Dalit communities. This relation brings a different kind of a strong zeal among them to have psychological healing of wounds in terms of dignity, self-respect, and prestige and to cultivate various cultural and social rights, etc. in relation to other dominant castes/groups of society. It may be the strong acting force behind the contemporary Dalit movements. To understand the goals it is important to understand the way their different processes and practices construct different socio-political and democratic public spaces.

Again, it becomes important here to understand how has Dalit community, in the state where the vibrant Dalit movements are observed, established different every day socio-religious practices and new pattern of cultural and political interactions to answer their question of demeaned identity that originated centuries ago as the product of hegemonic Brahminical exploitative social structure based on caste. As several studies (which I have discussed in the first chapter) reveal the fact that the problems of Dalit communities in terms of status, honor, respect and misrecognition and marginalization are endowed with cultural and religious characteristics. To the Dalit community source of all forms of injustice appear to be a result of misrecognition (what is misrecognition it can not be non-recognition) and they believe that it can be redressed by recognition of their independent alternative identity and construction of a counter political, religious, cultural and social spaces, independent from mainstream Brahminical society which have been hegemonized by so-called upper castes for centuries. This explains the well-expressed desire behind the construction of alternative agencies and institutions of the Dalit community.

To explain this, taking the reference of Nancy Fraser, I would like to suggest that the potential cause for the construction of alternative religious practices of Dalit communities in some major states in India is the 'institutionalized value schemata'.¹⁶ The institutionalized value schemata deny some people the status of a full partner in various interactions.¹⁷ The dominant group 'intentionally or unintentionally fails to respect their distinctiveness and the trailing group lacks to enjoy the equality in terms

¹⁶ Fraser, Nancy (1999). In Ray, Larry and Andrew Sayer (ed.). *Culture and Economy After the Cultural Turn*. Sage Publication. New Delhi. Page- 37.

¹⁷ Ibid. page-35

of participation in different cultural, religious and political respect of life'.¹⁸ In the same way in India the Brahminical Hindu society intentionally denies Dalit status as a full partner in everyday lives and various interactions. In the Brahminical Hindu society the dominant Savarna Hindu castes undermine the equality and respect of Dalits by putting cultural and social stigma such as pure and impure touchable and untouchables or racial superiority and inferiority. This is what one can compare with Nancy Fraser's concept of the problem of the 'parity of participation'.¹⁹

I would like to extend Fraser's argument to explain the problem faced by the Dalit community. I think to eradicate this problem of 'parity of participation', which had occurred due to the exploitative and discriminatory Hindu social order based on Brahminical (Hindu) religion, is inevitable. In other words, it means to say that to redress the injustice faced by the Dalit community; deconstructions of the existing Brahminical symbols, myths, histories etc. as well as total Brahminical Hindu social order and construction of an alternative Dalit identity through re-interpretation, re-evaluation etc. with the notion universal principle of liberty, equality and fraternity simultaneously is the need of hours.

I think it will fulfill both the subjective and objective conditions of Dalit communities as what Gopal Guru and Surinder Sarukkai in their book *The Cracked Mirror: The India Debate on Experience and Theory* talk about. They discuss range of issues such as Dalit experiences, relationship between experience and theorization of social science, epistemological issue including moral and ethics. Gopal Guru argues that even theorization of Dalit experiences remained under the hands of privileged Brahminical society. They never reflect critically upon the multi-dimensional discrimination and humiliation of Dalit community. It is biased to the Brahminical society, and for Guru, it looks 'conspirational'. So, he suggests, Dalit themselves must be engaged in the act of theorizing their history and historical claims critically and creatively and 'the emergence of the politics of identity is a grim reminder of this deficiency in theorizing social reality'.²⁰ Assertion of the politics of identity has brought issues of self-respect and social justice in central importance in the politics of

¹⁸Fraser, Nancy (1999). Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation. In Ray, Larry and Andrew Sayer (ed.). *Culture and Economy After the Cultural Turn*. Sage Publication. New Delhi. Page- 37.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰Guru & Sarukkai (2012). *The Cracked Mirror: The India Debate on Experience and Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 1

India. What is more unique in the politics of India after the emergence of the politics of identity is to achieve self-respect and social justice by self-rule. This is thought out plan to improve the subjective and objective conditions of Dalit community.

Further, to fulfill objective conditions, it demands to remove material inequality by the equal redistribution of resources and to improve subjective conditions (which include all social, cultural and religious discrimination) deconstruction of the discriminatory philosophy of existing Brahminical social order and re-construction of independent social and cultural identity of Dalit community are the most viable options. Dalits believe that the demeaned identity is the major cause for the injustice they are facing. They also think that they can get justice by challenging different mainstream social, cultural and religious institutions, which act as an agency to preserve and propagate this exploitative Brahminical social structure. According to them, the solution lies only in the creation of a counter social, cultural and religious space. To create this space, they think, there is a need of deconstructing the caste based social identity and reconstructing all the devalued misrecognized, misinterpreted symbols, myths and histories. C. Joe Arun named this process 'symbolic interactionism'. This includes re-interpretation, counter-symbolism and re-evaluation, re-interpretation of culture, identity, myths and histories 'to revalue unjustly devalued identities' of Dalit community, which are the sources of injustices being done to Dalit community.²¹

So, the theoretical base of the politics of identity of Dalit community encompasses not only the politics of recognition and liberation of Dalit community from the scourge of Brahminical Hindu society but also the forms of broader movement of socio-economic justice. It endorsed total transformation of the Brahminical society into a democratic and more egalitarian society based on the universal principle of equality, liberty and fraternity. The reference point of this movement is the universal principle such as equality, liberty and fraternity as envisaged in the constitution of India. the politics of identity is temporary mechanism for the broader mission for liberation of depressed classes. The goal of total transformation of the Brahminical social order is meaningful and substantive. It is based on establishing socio-economic justice and the

²¹ For detail see, C. Joe Arun (2007). *Constructing Dalit Identity*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

movement is called an autonomous Dalit movement. Now, it is very obvious that one may ask a formal question as to what such a Dalit movement is constituted of?

Autonomous Dalit Movement

In this section, I would like to discuss the idea of Autonomous Dalit Movement (ADM) (as envisaged by Ambedkar not the contemporary so-called Ambedkarite movements) as it is one of the central themes I will be coming back again and again. By Autonomous Dalit Movement I mean the process of constructing identity specific socio-cultural and political institutions that act as an agency for the liberation of the Dalit community. The very tendency of this ADM is liberating and transformative. The very origin of this movement lies in the Indian experiences of oppression and expression for liberation of Dalit community from the oppression of mainstream 'Brahmanical Hindu society'. Since, this movement aims at the liberation of a community from the oppression of mainstream hegemonic dominance it needs to have an independent theological base that can be called 'Dalit theology'.²² This Dalit theology is constituted of two parts i.e. prophetic and political. The prophetic theology, through their historical analysis, evaluation, re-evaluation of histories, myths, symbols etc. identifies the various institutions and modes of oppressions. It constructs ideas, struggle and the efficacy to reconstruct a just, inclusive and democratic society that is based on the universal principle of equality, liberty and fraternity. The other part i.e. political theology develops various social actions for the recognition of Dalit identity. It launches different social, political and cultural activities to bring solidarity among the people having common feelings, pains and suffering. Political theology through its various actions turns into movement theology, some time a counter theology, a theology of recognition of independent identity having the notion of establishing 'parity of participation' and promotion of struggle

²²Eva Maria Hardtmann describes Dalit theology by quoting Goldstone that 'Dalit theology is a reaction against dominant Hindu culture, and it demands social justice in society at large. At the same time, it aspires to social justice within Christian Church, and finds Indian Christian theology to be insensitive to Dalit issues. Dalit theology is two edged. It is directed against the caste system and the Hindu culture and also criticizes the missionaries and the upper caste Indian Christians for not having taken care to train a Dalit leadership in proportion to their numerical strength within the church.' In her book *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*. New Delhi: OUP. P. 107
Since it emerged out as a protest ideology for the liberation of Dalit community from the exploitation and oppression of mainstream Hindu society based on social hierarchy and discriminatory religious practices. It does not deny the existence of God but attempts to ensure Dalit participation and promoting Dalit leadership to make the religious institutions more inclusive for liberation of the oppressed society called Dalits. An autonomous Dalit movement has the same theological base. So, calling it Dalit theology is very justifiable regarding its nature and functionality.

for liberation to the extent to establish a new political establishment led by oppressed community. Coming together both (prophetic and political theology) determine the 'practical efficacy' of an ADM.

Further, it has no tendency to assimilate in the larger and dominant culture; rather it is the struggle for the recognition of Dalits as an independent and equal identity free from the Brahminical notion of superior and inferior or super-ordinated and sub-ordinated. Also, it has neither a tendency to hegemonise other culture, nor it aims to discriminate others on any possible identity. The socio-cultural and religious strategies are very much parts of this movement. It brings spiritual foundation; motivation and ethical-moral guidance for Dalits to follow the basic punch line of Ambedkar's ideology i.e. educate, organize and agitate for the establishment of socio-economic justice based on the principle of equality, liberty and fraternity. This movement is neither the part of 'Sanskritization' nor the 'post-Sanskritization' movement; rather it locates the 'sin', not the salvation, that are being operated within the structure of Brahminical society. Salvation for this movement is to establish socio-economic justice, changing the human heart and promoting equality, liberty and fraternity in society. It is also not an identity based counter caste ideology, rather it believes in constructing just and egalitarian society. The construction of 'Dalit counter space'²³ or 'Dalit dissenting culture'²⁴ is temporary mechanism to move forward in the ultimate goal for the liberation of depressed classes. It has all social, economic, and cultural as well as political strategies to bring structural changes and total transformation of traditional oppressive society, to claim greater dignity, self-respect and very importantly to ensure autonomy of Dalits in society. Reinforcing a sense of share in the democratic power of state to ensure hitherto denied equality of opportunities is another dimension of ADM. Finally, it has a character to move towards more assertive political and social identity than the recognition of their victimhood identity in society to generate a level of confidence among Dalit communities that can break every consensus with the discriminatory philosophy of the mainstream dominant culture, religion and its exploitative social structure.

²³ Dalit counter space is the alternative space of Dalit engagements created through the process of 'symbolic interactionism', of Dalit community, which I have discussed above. It is the alternative or parallel social, cultural and political institutions and agencies of Dalit community to counter the hegemony of the discriminatory Brahminical institutions and agencies. For detail see, For detail see, C. Joe Arun (2007). *Constructing Dalit Identity*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

²⁴ Ibid.

Thus, breaking the consensus from the hegemonic Brahminical 'religion of rules'²⁵, traditions, structure etc. and construction of principles based on social and cultural rituals, practices, interactions, engagements etc., which must be free from discriminatory mechanisms define the autonomy of Dalit movement. In the contemporary India there is no better example of ADM than the movement led by Ambedkar. It claims autonomy at both levels; social and cultural levels. Such a movement advocates an autonomous politics led by Dalits within only the rubric of parliamentary framework. Keeping the above discussion in mind, I would propose three basic criteria for defining an autonomous Dalit movement (ADM):

- a) Identifying the oppressor and oppressed categories and the basis of oppression;
- b) Struggle against the discriminatory socio-economic and cultural structure to end the economic exploitation, social discrimination and cultural segregation of oppressed community; and
- c) Total transformation of Brahminical society into an inclusive, more democratic and egalitarian alternative model based on the universal principle of quality, liberty and fraternity.

Thus, the process of this movement is very consistent with process of construction of a heterodox tradition. This process of construction of heterodox tradition is going on simultaneously in different regions of India with the broader mission for the liberation of Dalit community from the scourge of exploitative Hindu social structure. There are states in which ADM is in advanced stage, whereas, there are state lagging behind. Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, could be considered as examples of the former and Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are examples of the later. It is interesting to note that Bihar had a strong democratic upsurge much before Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, yet it has not moved forward in the direction of ADM. Bihar lacks this alternative model, which acts as an interconnecting threads to develop new patterns of social and political relations between communities and individuals. I would consider it as one of the major reasons for the absence of autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar.

²⁵ I have used 'religion of rules' as the same concept to describe Brahminical religion how Dr. Ambedkar described. He described that Brahminical religion is the religion of rules, not the religion of principles. For him a true religion is based on principles, not on rules. Rules do not allow one judging the things, however, principles gives freedom to judge the things. For detail see, B. R. Ambedkar (2007). *Annihilation of Caste*. New Delhi: Critical Quest. p. 44

Even the population composition of Dalits in Bihar is almost similar with those states where this process is being practiced at a wider level. That is why my focus in this research would be especially on to explore the reasons of the absence of this process in Bihar.

After study of the politics of Bihar in general and Dalit politics in particular, evidences (which I will explain in chapters) indicate that there are three political models of Dalit politics are possibly present in the state. First; Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram's model of Dalit politics of Bihar based on the assimilation of Dalits and reformation of upper castes Hindus. Second; the model of communist politics based on radical transformation of social and economic structure of state through the class based revolution of proletariat. And third; the Ambedkar model of Dalit politics based on socio-cultural politics. This research explores the viability problems with all these models to become the model for a mass Dalit movement in the state. What are the reasons for its absence and what is the possible combination for the emergence of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar.

Since the statement of problem starts with some assumptions, such as to redress political, cultural and social injustices such as misrepresentation, misrecognition, under-representation and devalued distinctiveness, Dalit communities of Bihar are re-signifying their various cultural and religious engagements to restructure the long/centuries standing exploitative and irrational Brahminical social structure. The new patterns of social and religious interactions through alternative religious practices and the level of political consciousness of Dalit communities of Bihar have opened an opportunity to organize Dalits as a unit and to start a vibrant movement under the limits of secular upsurge. And, the newly developed social and cultural paradigm, inter community dialogic space and the collective political consciousness among Dalit communities for better participation and representation in the democratic institutions have created a wider support base to broaden their democratic space in Bihar.

These assumptions raise some obvious concern that while studying/analyzing the different models of Ambedkarite politics in India, why did scholars miss out the subject of cultural changes that was brought out by the identity politics in Bihar. While studying the Dalit movement in Bihar some of the scholars do give the importance to the structural changes brought out in the direction of the larger

emancipatory project of Ambedkarite movement but not within the Ambedkarite frameworks. A study of existing literature indicates the presence of independent Dalit agencies in the state but not within the framework of autonomous Dalit movement as observed in the states like UP and Maharashtra. It has limited appeal for mobilization mainly to put demand on the state for social justice but not beyond the state and government framework to evolve an alternative model to transform the exploitative Hindu socio-religious structure. These Dalit agencies ignored the importance of the politics of cultural reform and social transformation, which Ambedkarite politics considers more emancipatory in nature and content. However, some scholars do acknowledge the importance of cultural politics as envisaged by Ambedkarite politics but they do not endorse it from the point of the (identity) politics of Bihar.

Despite it, I would say that it is obvious that in India, occupational mechanisms of a community are the distributional operation and religious and social identities are their philosophical operation of life. Further, the cultural values are the part and parcel of both the occupational mechanism and philosophical operation of life. In all engagements of life, political engagements is a strongest mechanism which promises all these operational efficiencies on a single stage²⁶ and when this political engagement combines with religious engagements then it becomes very critical element and leaves wide scope of research in social science. Since the various engagements of Dalit community remained under the struggle of ‘Dalit self’ and a demeaned identity of ‘Hindu self’. So, it opens the wide scope to investigate the relations between occupational mechanism, religious identity and cultural values of Dalit communities in the state like Bihar where this struggle always remained under the hegemonic discourse of the mainstream society. What are their roles in political engagement of Dalit communities of Bihar? How much their political engagement is influenced by the dominant, the exploitative Hindu social structure of Bihar? What they are doing to liberate themselves from the scourge of Brahminical social structure? How are Dalit communities of Bihar trying to generate a better electoral support base through the processes of re-signifying the value of alternative cultural and social engagements? What is the impact of newly constructed alternative social and cultural engagements of Dalits cultivated through the help of the alternative

²⁶For detail see, Sen, Amartya (2010). *The Idea of Justice*. New Delhi: Penguin

model and different patterns of social and political interactions with other communities on the general electoral politics of Bihar?

Since, Bihar is too large to take a field/unit of this research. Chamar and Dusadh are the two numerically dominant castes of Dalit communities in Bihar. As above stated, Chamar is the most populous caste with a population constituting 31.3 per cent of the total SC population and Dusadh/Paswan is the second largest SC caste, constitutes 30.9 per cent of the SC population. Both constitute more than 62 percent of Dalit population in Bihar. So, it would be better to take a field of study having good representation of both castes (Chamar and Dusadh) who constitute most percentage of the total SC population in Bihar.²⁷ Since, my study is related to Dalit political mobilization through alternative socio-cultural practices also, so better I go for a limited political territory i.e. state assembly constituency, which should be well represented by both these leading castes of Dalit community in Bihar. In this respect there is no better field of study than Bochahan and Chakai state assembly constituencies because Bochahan constituency is not only well represented by Chamar and Dusads/Paswan but also it is reserved constituency for SC communities. It is the longest ruled constituency (40 years) by a single Dalit MLA and it also have a history that right from its creation in 1967, till now, neither Congress nor BJP have managed to win this constituency. This constituency throughout her history remained the place for either socialist or Janata party and its constituent parties. Analyzing the Dalit population composition along with other historical factors of this constituency, I found it most suitable field of study for my research.

While choosing in another field, I have taken care of huge Dalit engagements with the communist movements (both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary communist movements) in the state. In Jamui district Chakai state assembly constituency is one of the worse Naxalite/Maoist affected and least developed constituency of the state where Dalit has good representation and engagement with this left extremists movements. It also constitutes good population of Dalits. This is the field where Dalit communities are not only forced to spend their life in penury but they are most marginalized in every aspect of lives. They are completely marginalized from the modernity, modernization, development, technological advancement as well as values

²⁷Kumar, Sanjay. Alam, Md. Sanjeer and Joshi Dhananjay (2008).Caste Dynamics and Political Process in Bihar.Journal of Indian School of Political Economy. Jan- June 2008.

of democracy and electoral politics. However, the data shows that Chamar constitutes 58 – 67 per cent of the total SC population in Gopalganj, Siwan, Buxar and Kaimur districts. Dusadh constitute 54 per cent of SC population in Vaishali and Begusarai districts²⁸ but the socio-economic and cultural conditions of Dalits in Chakai is worse than any other constituency of the state and their engagement with Naxalite/Maoist movement will help study the another angle of my research i.e. Dalit engagements with communist movements. It is not only the Naxalite affected but also the worse state neglected area. So, Chakai assembly constituency will be another suitable field of study to explore the other questions related to my study.

Methodology

The importance of the methodology to explore a wider public issue and the contribution of finding to existing knowledge is the most important aspects for any relevant social science research. The contributions to resolve social problems and to achieve emancipation for some oppressed group are the major criteria for a valid research. From the above assumptions two potential questions arise here. The first question is related to the method adapted for the research to derive a required empirical response. Second question has to do with the meta-physics for the epistemological justification of methodology as a guideline to method in order to deal the nature of existence and truth and to make knowledge claims equally valid for the subject.

I intend consciously broadening the concept and idea of construction of alternative identity to the process of ‘cultural production’. I will treat the process of the construction of a new ‘culture’ that Dalit communities want to promote as what Raymond Williams called an attempt to develop an alternative ‘complete way of life’ (Williams 1976)²⁹ and the site where these processes have been started as Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘field of cultural production’ (Bourdieu 1993)³⁰. This process of production of a kind of culture within a new domain of ontological and epistemological assumptions is emerging as a ‘popular culture’ from the perspective of establishing socio-economic justice. It is emerging as a most expressive tool for

²⁸Bihar, Data Highlight: The Scheduled Cste. Census of India 2001, Office of the Registrar General, India.

²⁹ Williams, Raymond. 1976. Culture and Society, 1870 – 1950. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

³⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. The Field of Cultural Production. Ed. Richard Johnson. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Dalit communities in (northern) India to overcome the traditional boundaries (Lakshman Rekha) set up by mainstream Hindu religion. This conceptual as well as structural transformation being brought out with this new paradigm shift needs to analyze under modern temporality.

What would this new conceptual assumptions mean to that communities? Whether they want to acknowledge the significance of their new culture to establish a kind of autonomy so that they can challenge the 'hegemony' of mainstream socio-religious structure or they want to reinvent a kind of structural relationships with the help of the production/construction of an alternative social and cultural institutions and agencies? This research have tried to understand this phenomenon through ethnographic empirical work through interrogating the field and the process of cultural production by becoming a 'participant observer'³¹ of everyday life practices of the subject. It will also examine the way this process of cultural production transforms the traditional social and religious structures and institutions into a new inclusive and democratic structure. It is intended to understand the broader impact of invention of new power relationship in the context of the changing dynamics and emerging paradigm of Dalit politics.

My method of research involves collecting information of a community about various modes of existence, their beliefs, values, myths and social relationship to constitute a holistic description in their everyday life practices. It is an analysis of a complete 'way of life' of Dalit community. It is the analytical description/study of the way of behavior, their experiences, sufferings, feelings and treatment. It also involves, interviews of individuals, collection of literature, artistic performance, photos, movie or video and various other materials which need 'a detailed and comprehensive description of a community'³²(Angrosino 2007) and to interpret political, social and cultural pattern of behaviours which help to understand a complete way of life of a community taken for study.

Further, elements of traditional modes of existence (caste, class, birth, race, colour, region and religion) are losing their relevance. 'People no longer live exclusively in

³¹ It is the method of data collection by the act of observing the activities and perceiving the various interrelationships and the patterns of engagement of the individuals and the group of the field.

³² Angrosino, Michael. (2007). *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*. London: Sage Publication.

small, self contained, localized communities. They are involved in extended global networks facilitated by advanced communication and transportation technology³³. In this age of broaden scope, widen network and advanced technology even the local practices have established global connections. The values of democracy and the growing consciousness about freedom, equality and liberty, rights to equal participation, recognition, dignity, self-respect etc. have changed the traditional way of life of people. So, ethnographic method is the suitable for this research. In the state the people have been characterized by long and short terms political, economic, social and cultural rivalry especially in the competitions of leadership in local and national politics. Political mobilization in the state like Bihar has been revolving around caste and community interests while overwhelming support to a particular candidate; party or alliance. These sites/fields of study found to be ideal for understanding internal factors that are responsible to bargain, negotiate and mobilize members/voters of same communities during local and national elections. To translate everyday engagements and their implications on political decisions from the perspective of Dalit communities this research has adopted ethnographic method as a participant observer during the election.

Election gives (a researcher) a unique opportunity to participate in everyday engagements of community/individuals through conversation, observing events, gossips, jokes etc. and other (formal and) informal speech acts. It helps understanding the cultural and social events, the process of reaching on political decision, political mobilization, voting behavior etc. For this I joined the political campaign of one candidate at both sites/fields of research, which helped me immensely to reach to almost every villages of Dalit community in those constituencies. I attended every meeting where the strategies of next day were planning and demands and other concerns related to those constituencies of various castes were being listening. I participated in almost all forms of campaign i.e. door to door, meetings, rallies etc. It helped me understand lively, and some time complex articulation of meaning to reach on the political decisions, which is not possible to explore by a researcher without participating in various modes of the election campaign.

³³ Ibid.

The direct involvement with them and their political, social and cultural understandings during election time provided me an ideal opportunity to understand their pattern of political mobilization. In-depth interviews of local (villages and Panchayat) leaders and individuals who are actually the ‘opinion leader’ were taken. They play important role in construction of perception, understanding and finally the making political opinion during the election. In this process they helped me identifying other interviewers/leaders/ activists who gave me important insight to understand the process of Dalit political mobilization in the state.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts followed by a concluding chapter. Part-I contains 4 chapters, 1 to 4, which forms the base of my research. Part-II outlines the detail description of case study and it includes chapter 5th and 6th. Part-III is having single chapter (7th) to analyze the possibilities of an autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar followed by conclusion.

Chapter first traces the trajectory of the question of Dalit politics in Bihar. In the first section I have attempted to engage with the social science literature on village study and on the issue of Dalit politics. The purpose of this engagement with the literature is to see if we get some insight into the issue in hand. I would like to see if the village studies done by sociologist have been able to capture the Dalit question properly. Many of these writings are not on Bihar yet I would like to engage with to find out if we get some insight in the dynamics of the Dalit politics. The second section is devoted to the dynamics of Dalit politics and in terms of its determinants, which includes the Dalit leadership in Bihar, nature of the identity politics, comparisons of the concentration of Dalit population in UP and Bihar and the population having the alternative religious orientation in Bihar. I think, it is necessary to understand the unique polarized situation and divided leadership in Bihar. It will give a clear picture about the Dalit politics of Bihar, which has rejected the contemporary Dalit identity politics. So, it indicates a broader possibility to organize hitherto scattered voices of Dalits around their marginalities and exploitation and struggle based on the meaningful, sustainable and substantive social transformation.

The second chapter explains the relationships between Gandhian movement and the Dalit community in Bihar. The argument I intend to put forward with the emergence

of Dalit discourse in India and what were its eventual consequences on the Dalit discourse of Bihar. It deals how does the engagement of the Gandhian movement with the Dalit questions remained within the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism and the Indian National Congress? Consequence of which was the absence of the construction of an alternative social, political or religious Dalit identity independent from Hindu society or as an alternative to mainstream politics. This was thought necessary for the consolidation of Dalit communities in Bihar, which remained absent yet, so did the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar. This chapter includes five sections. First section explains the emergence of Dalit discourse in the mainstream political society of India. The different phases of Dalit discourse in Bihar, which includes caste consolidation movements, the ongoing debates in the political and social forums of Indian National Congress and the beginning of Gandhian movement in Bihar. Second section deal with the discovery of the 'Bihar model of Dalit politics' based on assimilation of Dalits into mainstream Hindu social structure and the reformation of Savarna Hindu castes attitudes towards Dalits under the leadership of Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. Third section evaluates the role of Jagjivan Ram in the development of the Bihar model of Dalit politics. Fourth section explains the reasons why Jagjivan Ram himself felt the need for an independent movement of Dalit communities in Bihar. The last section concludes the chapter.

The third chapter discusses how do left organizations succeeded to capture mass Dalit aspirations to conceptualize the radical transformation of social and economic structure of state through the class based communist revolution. When Indian National Congress became the party of Savarna Hindu castes and Dalit aspirations faded away, the emergence of identity politics in 1990s further marginalized them, then Dalits of Bihar had now no option except to support militant communist organizations such as Naxalite and Maoist to break the hegemony of mainstream society and to express their anger -cum -rising political awareness and activism against their social and material deprivation. This chapter has three sections. The first section explains the theoretical conceptualization of revolution in the domain of collective interests of proletariat class which includes poor, Dalits, Backwards, marginalized and oppressed sections of society. The practical way they apply to develop intimate relationship with these sections of society, their symbolic practices to earn strong commitment and the caste and class mobilization in the support of

communist organizations. The second section explains how Dalit question emerged in the communist organizations. Third section includes Dalit critique of communist movements followed by conclusion.

The fourth chapter evaluates the Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite model of Dalit political movement based on the construction of an independent identity and institutions of Dalits. What would this new conceptual assumptions mean to that communities? Whether they want to acknowledge the significance of their new culture to establish a kind of autonomy so that they can challenge the 'hegemony' of mainstream religion or they want to reinvent a kind of structural relationships with the help of the production/construction of alternative social and cultural institutions and agencies? This chapter intends to understand the broader impact of invention of new power relationship in the context of the changing dynamics and emerging paradigm of Dalit identity politics. This chapter explains, was Ambedkar's model of socio-cultural politics based on the mission of liberation of 'Depressed classes' an identity politics? Or his identity politics was the part of broader mission of establishing socio-economic justice, an inclusive democratic and egalitarian society in India. What are its impacts on Dalit community in India and how is Dalit community of Bihar responding to Ambedkarite politics? Thus, this chapter has three sections. First section explains the inclusive character of Ambedkarite movement, which was himself led by Dr. Ambedkar. Second section evaluates the psychological and political impacts of Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite movements on Dalit community. The third section explains the Dalit responses to these movements in Bihar. Last section concludes the chapter.

Fifth and sixth chapters are the detail descriptions of findings during the field work in two sites (Bochahan and Chakai state assembly constituencies in Muzaffarpur and Jamui district of Bihar respectively) to understand how the Dalit community is responding to the construction of an alternative socio-cultural and political model to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream social, cultural, religious and political structure. Are their responses to the Ambedkarite mission of their emancipation positive in terms of understanding and consciousness at different levels? It explains whether these available models of Dalit politics in state working to the Dalit community?

Understanding the contemporary politics of Bihar and different social, economic, cultural and political conditions as well as the nature of engagements of Dalit community. The seventh chapter is based on my fieldwork and over all engagement with the Dalit activists and scholars in the state. I would like to address the question, if there is a possibility of autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar. To recall the idea of Autonomous Dalit Politics, it is not exactly like the BSP politics of Uttar Pradesh or like the Dalit cultural Politics Maharashtra, but, something closer to the imagination of Ambedkar himself. As mentioned earlier it is a form of liberation politics aiming at creating a non-exploitative society. Of course, the cultural politics and identity politics are necessary component of such an imagination but only as tools of the larger aim of the politics of liberation.

Having concluded that the Dalit politics in Bihar has witnessed neither the identity politics of UP nor the cultural politics of Maharashtra. Now I would like to move on to examine if such there is any possibility of Dalit politics beyond the Gandhi-Jagjivan model or left model in the state. I have argued in this chapter that it would be possible only if the Dalit movement first raises an alternative religious imagination. However, to my surprise, at the moment there does not seem to be any possibility of such alternative religious imagination in the state. In this chapter, I would like to analyze the factors one may consider as hindrance in the path of the alternative religious imagination and hence, obstacles for autonomous Dalit movement.

So, exploring the reasons for the absence of an ADM (Autonomous Dalit Movement) in Bihar, in this thesis, I argue that the existing contemporary models of the politics of identity of Dalit community, who claim to be Ambedkarite, is not the sufficient condition for the liberation of Dalit community as well as depressed classes. It is not par with the movement of Ambedkar. Its approaches are neither liberating nor transformative, neither is they drawing their reference point from all encompassing approach of Ambedkar, nor are they based on the universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity as envisaged by Ambedkar. In all their approaches such as construction of alternative identity, they have succeeded to generate a level of assertion among Dalit community and reinforced a sense of share in the democratic power of state, but doing this in one or other ways they fall in the same Brahminical traps to reinforce the almost same Brahminical hegemonic characters to consolidate the caste based identity. Thus, they left with no option except to draw their reference

point from the petty 'rules of politics and political parties' for mere electoral gains, rather than meaningful, sustaining and substantive politics of total transformation of Brahminical society and social structure.

It is true that religion along with alternative social and cultural practices does play a significant role in the Dalit identity politics. It acts as interconnecting threads to generate a sense of belongingness, communal solidarity and unity to organize around their multiple-marginalities, exploitation and segregation but only identitarian approach does not sufficient leading to the broader mission for liberation and meaningful social transformation. Thus, Dalit community of Bihar rejected all existing model of Dalit identity politics, which indicates a broader but difficult possibility for the ADM in Bihar based on the liberation theology of Ambedkar. This thesis suggests one step forward for possible ADM in Bihar, i.e. construction of an all encompassing, all-inclusive alternative socio-cultural identity. It may require bringing all liberation theologians such as Ambedkar, Gandhi and Marx together, under the domain of universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity and the broader mission of establishing socio-economic Justice, meaningful social transformation etc.

Dynamics of Dalit Politics in Bihar

This chapter traces the trajectory of the question of Dalit politics in Bihar. In the first section I have attempted to engage with the social science literature on village study and on the issue of Dalit politics. The purpose of this engagement with the literature is to see if we get some insight into the issue in hand. I would like to see if the village studies done by sociologists have been able to capture the Dalit question properly. Many of these writings are not on Bihar yet I would like to engage with to find out if we get some insight in the dynamics of the Dalit politics. The second section is devoted to the dynamics of Dalit politics and in terms of its determinants, which includes the Dalit leadership in Bihar, nature of the identity politics, comparisons of the concentration of Dalit population in UP and Bihar and the population having the alternative religious orientation in Bihar. I think, it is necessary to understand the unique polarized situation and divided leadership in Bihar. It will give a clear picture about the politics of Bihar.

1. Dalit question and Social Science

How this question came in the mainstream discourse of intense debate leading eventually to the construction of an alternative Dalit counter space and institutions for the liberation of Dalit community, and finally to mass political mobilization having a sense of share in democratic power of state to ensure hitherto denied equality of opportunity based on the universal principle of equality, liberty and fraternity. Through a cursory survey of literatures available on the question of Dalit identity, this chapter examines whether the journey of Dalit struggle eventually leading to the ultimate mission for the liberation of Dalit community through the meaningful and substantive transformation of the Brahminical society or their struggle has been just restricted to the politics of identity which is just a temporary mechanism and not the sufficient condition for the liberation of Dalit community.

To understand this question I have divided available literature in three streams. First stream is represented the literature of M.N. Srinivas, Andre Batteille, S.C. Dubey Mckim Marriot, David Mandelbaum, F. G. Bailey etc. who have intense

study on the Indian villages. These studies locate the discriminatory practices based on Dalit identity and how the Brahminical hegemony operates in society. They bring the question of Dalit identity to establish a new discourse and intense debate in the academic world. The second stream is represented by scholars such as Ambedkar, Phulle, Periyar, Louis Dumont, Dipankar Gupta etc who are clearly locating the sin in the Brahminical social structure based on castes and the Brahminical Hindu religion, which is the very reason for the demeaned identity of Dalit community, and third stream represented by scholars such as Gopal Guru, Valerian Rodrigues, Sudha Pai, Badri Narayan, C. Joe Arun, Eva Maria Hardtmann and so on, who are examining the claim of construction of an alternative Dalit space and institutions of Dalit community as a means to the liberation of Dalit community. They are also visualizing the role of alternative Dalit identity in terms of mass political mobilization by reinforcing the sense of share in democratic power of state. I have rather gone through the arguments without taking an account of the time period of the study.

The first kind of relevant literature for this work is that of Village studies conducted by sociologists and anthropologists. Village studies by leading sociologists explain certain specific aspects of rural life and the holistic nature of the village communities based on Brahminical code of conduct. For instance, S.C. Dube's (1955), 'Indian Village' is the traditional account of Shamirpeth village. He has analyzed the nature and character of village and argues that it can be studied by giving due attention to the vital interactions between its different components. He suggested that in the village the issue of private property is very much connected with identity, as it has not only economic but a social and prestigious value as well. According to him village is:

System of co-operative labour, based on a pattern of inter-caste relations approved by tradition, is not confined only to economic activities but also extends to ceremonial and ritual life. The hierarchical organization of caste within the community is so fixed in the structural patterns of ritual India that the tribal as well as non-Hindus (such as Muslim and Christian) segments of the population came to be regarded as other caste in the village. In many parts of India while maintaining the socio-religious identity, several of these non-Hindu groups have acquired some caste characteristics, particularly occupational specialization.¹

¹Dube, S. C. (1998). *Indian Village*. London: Rutledge. P. 07.

And further on another page, he points out that:

Analysis of life histories reveals that spiritualism cannot be said to be the keynote in the life of community; far from it the religion appears to be a practical one. It strengthens and fortifies the individual and the group in situation when technical competence and practical intelligence are of no avail and at the same time acts as a bond of cohesion for maintaining the structural unity of the society.²

The quotes taken from the different pages of the book significantly explain that village is a pattern of organization, which comprises a territorial as well as social, economic and ritual unit. It is the place of diverse social groups interdependent and integrated in the social, occupational as well as rituals collectively. It is not only the territorial organization but also a distinct unit of community having distinct way of life, where religion play great role in maintaining a bond of cohesion among different castes.

In his study of Shamirpeth, I find, he brings out details about the village and deduces that despite there being more than a dozen castes, the village displays solidarity. He has discussed almost all the issues of village social life including religio-cultural issues but in the upper caste, Brahminical framework. He has also discussed the different festivals and rituals of Muslim community but has failed to take cognizance of religious practices of the Dalit community.

M.N.Srinivas' (1955), 'India's village' is an edited work containing several village studies conducted by different anthropologists like Mckim Marriot, S.C.Dube, David Mandelbaum, F. G. Bailey and others. The problem of unity of village has been the major concern of this edited book. The contributors have mentioned in their studies that despite majority of people being engaged in various sorts of religious activity they display a strong sense of unity, which gets reflected in their acceptance of the overarching theme of the Brahminical Hindu religion. They have concluded that the unity of village is based on the solidarity of 'caste' and religious practices. Hence, both religion and caste are strong unifying factors.³

For Srinivas one of the most important things is the difference in caste-culture of the same caste in different villages. He suggested that 'a numbers of caste live in a single village and each caste has a culture of its own which is to some extent

² Ibid., P. 93

³ Srinivas, M. N. (Eds.) (1955). *India's Village*. India: Asia Publication House.

different from the culture of the others',⁴ the same caste located in the other villages. The book predominantly tends to suggest that religion and 'caste is an institution of great strength'.⁵ The ties is so strong that some sociologist like G. Morris, Eric J. Miller and W.H. Newell in this edited book assert that 'the unity of the village is a myth and that the only thing which counts is caste, but this unity and strength is weakened if not destroyed by caste and it ought to be even weaker in dispersed villages.'⁶ Each caste is divided on occupational line and it is also a major source of rivalry between different groups and castes. The social situations of Dalits in all respects remained at the bottom. Further, this book suggests that religion plays vital role in allocation of position and identity. All horizontal and vertical ties are regulated by Brahminical code of conducts. Following this code of conducts 'the Brahmin is given some respect by virtue of his ritual position'⁷ but Dalits have been given so low identity and ritual position as they are not part of the society. In the same book W. H. Newell asserts that 'caste is the means by which inter-village and intra-village marriage is regulated' to strengthen economic, religious friendships.⁸

Despite the fact that all scholars, whose contribution is regarded great in this book, understand that religion has played major role in caste discrimination to Dalit community and assigning identity like upper and lower, pure and impure, superior and inferior. None of the scholars raised a question as to what Dalits themselves think about their identity in such a degraded social situation meted out to them. Do they have any chance to create their own independent identity to break the hegemonic Brahminical cultural code and to move out of this exploitative and discriminatory fold? One needs to ask them following questions: How does religion and caste works as an agency to preserve and propagate the Brahminical institutions, which manifest into discrimination and exploitation of Dalit communities? Do the Dalit community has any chance to create an alternative socio-cultural institutions and agencies to break this hierarchy?

Moving on to another book titled as *Village India* edited by Mckim Marriott' (1955), we can see that it has examined the concept of caste. Contributors of this

⁴ Ibid., P. 03.

⁵ Ibid., P. 07

⁶ Ibid., p. 36- 89

⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁸ Ibid., P. 60.

work have highlighted the concept of ‘Great’ and ‘Little’ tradition. The great tradition, they have defined is the tradition followed by dominant castes and little tradition is followed by lower castes. Further, they have argued that there is a constant interaction between the great and little tradition based on caste and religious rituals.⁹ Equally emphasizing on culture, this book has raised questions like ‘what elements of rituals and beliefs represent contribution from village life upward to the formation of India’s great Sanskritik tradition?’¹⁰ Marriott have seen ‘*universalisation*’ and ‘*parochialisation*’ as the two processes responsible for the continuous interaction between great and little tradition and it ‘move along a vertical axis of non-Dalit and Dalit society.’¹¹

For him, religion has played a role in ‘sociological horizons of personality formation.’¹² Describing religion in two aspects;

- (a) the extent to which the religion of the little community can be conceived as a whole apart from the religious great tradition of the Indian civilisation and
- (b) the extent to which the religious great tradition of Indian civilization is understandable through study of the religion of one little community¹³,

His whole efforts have reduced to anti-formation and effects of Sanskritization that has been brought by Srinivas. Marriott has come up with the conclusion that religion is the product of civilization and operations of various symbolic activities of religious rituals and festivals help to propagate and preserve the traditional identity of both communities. The interaction of both the traditions is nothing but ‘the spread of Sanskritik rites and the increasing *Sanskritization* of non-sanskritik rites’¹⁴ apart from this all great efforts in this book the question like: ‘to what extent can the religion of the little community be conceived as a whole apart from the religious great tradition of Hinduism’ remained unanswered?¹⁵

⁹Marriott, M. (1955). Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilisation In McKim Marriott (ed.), *Village India*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 211.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. p. 107.

¹³ Ibid. P. 191.

¹⁴ Ibid., P. 208.

¹⁵ Ibid., P. 207.

Having a close look of an another great work on village study done by Andre Beteille, titled as *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Pattern of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*, I have found micro level analysis of caste hierarchy at Sripuram village in Tanjore district. It has focused on the caste structure, economic organization among caste and distribution of power according to Brahminical code of conduct. He explores the religious arrangement of village in which the Brahmin live in 'Agraharam' which is at the centre of village, while the *Adi-Dravidas* live in 'Cheri' which is at the periphery of the village and in between live the Non-Brahmin artisan caste. Brahmins wear vesthi (kurta), which is ritually superior which Non-Brahmin and *Adi-Dravidas* are prohibited to wear it. Only Brahmin way of life is Sanskritised. However, the process of democracy is functioning to turn the table upon them.¹⁶

Beteille is of the opinion that lives of Dalits are very much different from upper castes in terms of way of living, spheres of rituals, ownerships, in terms of identity, social position and social practices. Caste hierarchy is the base of social ranking and 'the extent to which they operate in practices.'¹⁷

This 'micro level' study of village and caste system have touched almost every aspect of discriminations and segregation on the basis of their residential settlement, dresses they wear, language they speak, rituals they follow and utensils they use. He has analyzed that Dalits are victims of the concept of 'pollution and purity' scale, of restriction on commensality and cannubium and of traditional occupation and segregation. He himself accepted that his research is poorer quality to the respect of Dalits and non-Brahmin. Even this hard effort has remained insufficient to understand religio-cultural space of Dalits because Beteille has analysed every relationships through the Brahminical lens working in the domain of Brahminical code of conducts.

In their village studies these leading sociologists have analysed various perspectives of Dalit Community but they ignored or were not able to locate the religious practices of Dalit Community because of the followings basic reasons: they did not belong to Dalit and untouchable caste and therefore could not feel

¹⁶ Beteille, Andre (1969). *Caste, Class, and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*. University of California Press.

¹⁷Ibid., P. 93.

their painful dilemma to resist humiliation, exploitation and segregation based on upper caste hegemonic religious conduct. They failed to observe any possibility of creating an alternative Dalit religious identity or they had different concern as Andre Beteille accepts himself that 'Broadly speaking, our concern is the phenomena of 'caste', 'class', and 'power' mainly with its political aspects and with their changing relations.'¹⁸ Another important cause is that in their efforts these sociologists involved in reformulating Indian society according to their own vision and as they neither visited nor became at least a participant observer of Dalit communities, their accessibility to Dalit Community remained limited. They all have failed to locate and understand the issues of identity construction in general and the possibility of mass political mobilization of Dalit community in particular. They have analyzed Indian society from the Sanskritized upper and dominant castes point of view. Even they failed to analyze whether various processes of upward mobility was in reality Sanskritized or not?

Another celebrated book having title *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980), written by Louis Dumont in this series of village study has great worth. Dumont has put three major attributes of caste, namely hierarchy, separation and division of labour. For him, hierarchy is the essential feature of the caste system supported by Brahminical Hindu religion based on the principle of 'pure and impure'. Brahmins are considered pure and supreme and live at the heart/centre of village whereas the untouchable/Dalits are considered impure and live outside the village. Further, Untouchables are considered so impure that their mere touch severely pollutes members of upper castes. The notion of distant pollution existed in many parts of India where it was practiced in such a humiliated form that mere presence of shadows of an untouchable person was considered polluting and upper castes performed purificatory measures based on rituals. Hence, for him, the notion of caste hierarchy is highly religious, exploitative and humiliating to Dalit community in nature.¹⁹

He explains that hierarchy is the outcome of Varna system and Brahminical Hindu religion. Division of occupation based on birth, which is nothing but a biological

¹⁸ Beteille, Andre (1969). *Caste, Class, and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*. University of California Press. P. 03.

¹⁹ Dumont, Louis (1980). *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implication*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

accident. Caste and religion are the fundamental bases of identity and social status. He deals with several issues such as untouchability, commensality and connubium and relations between castes etc. are the product of Brahminical imagination. Identity, social status and power are derived from this hierarchical system of caste. Religion, rituals and festivals are main components of culture. He defines hierarchy as:

the principal by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole. It being understood that in the majority of the section it is religion which provides the view of the whole, and that the ranking will thus be religious in nature... once hierarchy has been isolated as purely a matter of religious values, it naturally remains to be seen how it is connected with power and how authority is to be defined.²⁰

He studied various relationships from the angle of hierarchy and power, which are based on the religious ranking. This work is a great contribution in social science but it is losing its relevance when we analyze its contribution for Dalit communities. Since, Dumont was Western sociologist, his whole efforts has reduced to understand India from western point of view. He has observed the hierarchy but failed to observe the hidden as well as visible impacts on Dalits of these hierarchical values. He failed to touch life according to Dalit perspectives.

Furthering this understanding of the question of identity of Dalit community, the second type of literature that I have gone through is the available literature based on Ambedkar, Jotirao Phule and Periyar. These three thinkers represented three different social backgrounds advocate different approach to emancipate Dalit community from the Brahminical Hindu religion, Varna system and caste hierarchy. Before looking more closely at the protests against Brahminism and discriminatory caste system launched by Dalits, I think, understanding the following quote will make our task easy. Locating discriminatory nature of upper caste people, a 14 years old girl student of Jotirao Phule, asserted that:

The people who dress themselves up and parade round in their purity have only one intention, and that is to think that they are more pure than other people, and they feel happy at this; but do their cruel hearts ever feel any pity at the suffering that we endure that the very touch of ours pollute them?²¹

²⁰Ibid., P. 66.

²¹O'Hanlon, Rosalind (1985). *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste protest in the Nineteenth –Century Western India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 120.

This excerpt is taken from an essay read out by 14 years old Phule's girl student of an untouchable (Mang) caste that clearly demonstrates the Phule's hard labour for untouchables. The girl had studied under Phule for three years. She located discriminatory nature of Brahminical code of conduct as she had heard it from her parents' own lips. Particularly, she pointed out the discrimination in the Brahminical religious order which constituted a religion that a small section of upper caste community can enjoy their every aspiration while the rest of mankind looks on with segregated/ humiliated faces. I must say her motive was to ask, is this rich religion called Hinduism or it is nothing but just a Brahminical propaganda?²²

According to Phule what I understand, Hindu religion brings exploitation to lower caste by two ways (a) By putting ideological restrictions and (b) It's deep insistence of rituals and religious ceremonies. For Phule, the unreasonable sufferings of the lower castes were not an obvious outcome of social system but the creation of irrational Brahminical religious system. Nonetheless, illiteracy and backwardness of Dalits were equally important cause of their humiliation. He was of the opinion that the Brahminical hegemony was largely responsible for the ignorance of the lower caste and for their outcaste status.

However, he criticized Brahminical Hindu religion as irrational and made humble effort to convince Hindus to change their conduct of behaviour according to the moral principle. He did neither go for any radical change nor suggested any alternative, which could bring equality, self-respect and dignity to an individual by being virtue of a dignified human being. He failed to locate any alternative means in the domain of an autonomous Dalit Movement based on independent Dalit religiosity or any other social, cultural and political mechanism through which Dalit Community can develop an independent identity to emancipate themselves from the scourge of Brahminical Hindu society.

Similarly, Ambedkar himself claimed that 'the roots of my philosophy lay not in politics but in religion.'²³ He meant, the true religion based on universal principles,

²² Ibid.

²³ Naik, C. D. (2003). *Thoughts and Philosophy of Doctor B. R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons Publication. P. 1.

not the 'religion of rules' like the Brahminical Hindu religion. While describing Brahminical Hindu religion as the 'religion of rules, he clarified his position that;

Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing things according to prescription. But principles are intellectual; they are useful methods of judging the things. Rules seek to tell an agent just what course of action to 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 main head of reference to which he is to consider the bearing of his desires and purpose... 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 movement it degenerates into rules it ceases to be a religion, as it kills responsibility, which is the essence of a truly religious act. What is this Hindu religion? Is it a set of principles or is it a code of rules?... What is called religion by the Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibition. Religion in the sense of spiritual principles, truly universal, applicable to all races, to all countries, to all times, is not to be found in them, and if it is, it does not form the governing part of a Hindu's life.²⁴

For him, the 'Religion of rules must be destroyed' to establish a true religion based on the universal principles such as that of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. This will only pave the way for establishing a democratic and egalitarian society, where every individual irrespective of the identity have freedom cultivate their desire and purpose of humanity.

The essence of his philosophy can be materialized in three words i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity. For him, law in society should be maintained in order to protect liberty and equality and liberty and equality are concerned to maintain fraternity. For him, we-feeling i.e. sense of belonging is another name of fraternity and this feeling of togetherness is another name of religion. His goal of life was to construct a society in which all people may have equal opportunity. In the presence of Varna system based on religious philosophy of Brahminical Hinduism, it is almost impossible to reach this goal. So, Varna system has to be abolished by all possible means.²⁵

Ambedkar saw how Dalit community is being forced to live a segregated life in all respect. They are discriminated on every social, economic and cultural aspect of life. They are still religiously segregated. In his time Dalits were not allowed to enter in mainstream locality and a number of discriminatory social restrictions were imposed on Dalit community based on Brahminical code of conduct by

²⁴ Ambedkar, B. R. (2007). *Annihilation of Caste*. New Delhi: Critical Quest. p. 44-45

²⁵ for detail see, C. D. Naik (2003). *Thoughts and Philosophy of Doctor B. R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons Publication

upper caste Hindus. Being a Dalit he felt that the hardships and humiliations faced by a Dalit cannot be understood by a non-Dalit. Hence the remedy to their problems has to be different from those of the upper caste understanding. Ultimately, he gave a call for total conversion of Dalit community to Buddhism.²⁶ This attempt of Ambedkar can be seen as an attempt to construct a parallel religious identity of Dalit Community to challenge Brahminical Hindu religion.

The philosophy of Ambedkar stands for annihilation of caste, high and low, pure and impure by rejecting the Brahminical social and cultural institutions. He appealed to construct alternative social, cultural and political institutions of Dalit community to challenge the hegemony of Brahmins and the Brahminical institutions. But the road to political institution can only be sustainable, meaningful and substantive when it is followed by socio-religious politics. Somehow with his all efforts he felt need of a possible alternative to emancipate Dalit community from their sub-human condition. He wanted to give Dalit community an alternative religious identity, so that they get out of scourge of Brahminical Hindu religion. He wanted to make Buddhism, which is based on the universal principles such as that of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice, as an alternative space where the Dalits could assert their independent identity free from humiliation, exploitation and segregation. Through this he wanted to create a separate space where the Dalits can stand at par with the upholders of the Brahminical Hindu religion as far as the idea of dignity and self-respect are concerned.

His efforts is no doubt very close to my research but he also failed to locate the religious institutions and agencies already functioning in Dalit Community which could be a viable alternative to propagate his mission of emancipation of Dalit Community without taking very radical step of conversion.

Then coming on another Dalit icon Periyar will give another dimension of studying Indian society within the framework of the Brahminical Hindu religion. His movement was concentrated to resist Hindutva discourse of cultural identity, which forms an ideology of cultural nationalism in India, embedded deeply in religious myths, history and irrationalism. For him, Hindutva discourse of cultural

²⁶ Keer, Dhannajay (1990). *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

identity was based on the motive to denounce a Composite culture within the framework of hardcore Hindu nationalism. In this notion of monolithic Hindu nationalism Periyar found no space for Dalit community and he opposed this notion of Hindutva discourse of nationalism. His frustration with Brahminical Hinduism was such deep that he went on to claim for a separate non-Brahmin or Dravidian nationalism. As Ambedkar, his idea was based on three principles i.e. social change, equality and rationalism and his whole fight went against Brahminism and criticism of Brahminical religion. He was an atheist. Dominant feature of his ideology was his vehement stand against religion culminated in annihilating Brahminical Hindu social structure in general and Brahminism in particular.²⁷

He explained that ‘Hinduism is not a religion; it is founded by small group for their own power interests. They built it on ignorance and poverty of the people and exploited them.’²⁸ For him, the bases of Hinduism are superstition, ignorance and irrationality. Brahminical Hindu religion is the cause for all kind of problem in Dalit society. It is responsible to restrict their progress and happiness. As Ambedkar, who born as Hindu but wanted not to die as a Hindu, he wanted to die as a Muslim. One thing noticeable in his idea was the promotion of local cultural resources, which have promoted a sense of history, cultural consciousness and self-identity among lower and Dalit community.²⁹ He stood for promotion of local cultural resources to develop an independent self-identity among Dalit Community but he also failed to see religion as a significant part of even Dalit’s life. It can be viable source to generate self-respect, dignity and independent identity to Dalit communities.

A brief look of the book *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy, Contributions to Indian Society* written by Dipanker Gupta’s (2000) suggests that hierarchy in Indian society is the very existence of caste system based on the notion of ‘pollution and purity’. Dalit Community has never been given space to enjoy their independent cultural autonomy. They have been segregated,

²⁷ Diehl, Anita (1978). *Periyar E. V. Ramaswami: a study of the influence of a personality in Contemporary South India*. B.I. Publication: University of Michigan.

²⁸ Ibid., P. 128.

²⁹ Ibid.

marginalized, and exploited in all aspects of life.³⁰ He has also failed to see contemporary Dalit religious rituals and practices running through their independent institutions as a viable source for generating independent cultural autonomy, identity, self-respect and dignity for Dalit Community to emancipate themselves from the scourge of Brahminical Hindu religion.

Moreover, now the third stream of the contemporary scholars has also made several efforts to analyze and understand Indian social reality from Dalit's life perspectives. These various efforts also have remained far away from the exclusive Dalit religio-cultural discourse. They have failed to include this issue exclusively in their social studies. For instance; Sudha Pai in her book *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Agenda* has analyzed the role of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in empowering Dalits so as to facilitate their upward mobility. She has traced the role of Dalit-Bahujan ideology, programs, and strategies in the mobilization of Dalit communities. She analyses, Dalit assertion and transformation of BSP into mass party is the result of democratization process and the affirmative policies of the government of India. She also explains the Dalit assertion through Cultural Revolution or the glorification of cultural resources of Dalits as the part of Dalit-Bahujan politics to create an independent identity³¹. She questions that 'is BSP political party or is it also a social movement?'³² Her study explains that;

During the early phase of its existence in 1980s, the BSP behaved both as a party and a movement. This was seen in its characterisation of the Indian state and mainstream political parties as *manuvadi*, the creation of the identity 'Dalit and the ideology of Ambedkarism, together with its virulent critique of Gandhi and Hinduism. However, from the late 1980s, when the party entered the national arena of electoral politics, there was a gradual conversion from a movement to a Party, a process that become complete with the failure of the *Bahujan* project and opportunistic sharing of power with the BJP.³³

This clearly indicates that BSP is also just another political party than a movement. It is just a power monger and can take any opportunistic move while compromising the broader mission of emancipation of depressed classes, which BSP defines as *Bahujan*.

³⁰ Gupta, Dipanker (2000). *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

³¹ Pai, Sudha (2002). *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Agenda*. Sage Publication: New Delhi.

³² Ibid. p. 19

³³ Ibid.

It encouraged the process of Dalit-Bahujan assertion not to transform to society but to mass political mobilization against the mainstream ruling establishment. It sub-ordinate the broader mission of social transformation and cultural change to restructure the Brahminical society as envisaged by Ambedkar. However, the process of Ambedkarisation based on Ambedkar philosophy have been observed in the different part of UP in general and in parts of western part of UP in particular, but it remained emphasized only to construct on separate identity and self respect including the dissemination of Ambedkar's ideas. No doubt the dissemination of ideas and writings of Ambedkar have had raised the Dalit consciousness, it as the cultural resources generated a sense of belonging, communal solidarity and unity to organize against their upper caste exploitation but not in the line of transforming the society, rather creating the otherness and dividing the society based on same discriminatory identities fixed by the Brahminical Hindu society. In this act the broader mission of social transformation and liberation left behind the creating otherness for petty political benefit.

Another example in the series of contemporary scholars is Badri Narayan who has done a number of works related to the Dalit communities. In his one of the most celebrated work, *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics* he has attempted to carry forward almost same idea of Sudha Pai that how Dalits in Uttar Pradesh are trying to create an alternative identity by glorifying their cultural resources to counter Hindu hegemonic culture based on exploitative caste system. He analyses, how this strategy of Dalits creates foundation to assert identity, self-respect and dignity among Dalit communities? How Dalit's form of dissent redesign their alternative space to broaden their social, cultural and political networks.³⁴ He has touched Dalits' politico-cultural discourse but he has not explained Dalits' religious discourse exclusively. He finds the great role of religion in creation of independent identity for Dalit Community and finally to mass political mobilization. He failed to examine, is the movement of BSP moving on the track of Ambedkar or is it just an identity politics like other political parties? Are the

³⁴ Narayan, Badri (2009). *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

universal principles such as liberty, equality, fraternity and justice reference point for BSP or is it drawing her reference point from the rules of politics and political parties?

In another book *Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse* Badri Narayan explained that how conflicts are mirrored in Dalits and non-Dalits while constructing alternative Dalit identity through the process of glorifying Dalits' myths, heroes, histories, folk-tales and stories. These conflicts occur due to the difference in the perception of Dalits and the Brahminical perceptions of upper castes. Dalit castes are showing multiple resistances in reply of atrocious attempt by Savarna Hindu castes to stop the process of constructing alternative Dalit identity. This book is completely focused on study of multiple contestations in the various regions of Bihar and UP. This contestation on the question of Dalit identity constructing a counter space to challenge the mainstream society and finally turning to the potent weapons for mass political mobilization of Dalits in support of Dalit identity politics and parties like BSP in UP.³⁵ However, various evidences of contestations between Dalit and non-Dalits in Bihar he presents in this book, but he does not explain why these contestations in Bihar do not help Dalits to organize around their 'social marginalization' and the various forms of exclusion that they face in day-to-day life? It neither brings a sense of belonging, solidarity and unity among Dalits, nor is it transforming into a mass Dalit political mobilization because of the absence of autonomous Dalit movement in the state.

Introducing here two more study conducted by C. Joe Arun and Eva Maria Hardtmann are worth mentioning. In his book *Constructing Dalit Identity* C. Joe Arun examines the process of construction of alternative identity of Dalit community in Tamil Nadu. They are transforming the traditional symbols of victimhood into the assertive identity. He named this process 'symbolic interactionism', which includes, de-construction re-interpretation, counter-symbolism and re-evaluation, re-interpretation of culture, identity, myths and histories 'to revalue unjustly devalued identities' of Dalit community, which are the sources of injustices being done to Dalit community. The identification of

³⁵ Narayan Badri (2001). *Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study

new symbols, myths, heroes, stories etc. is also part of this process. He seems conflict is necessary condition in the way of the construction of alternative Dalit identity. Dalits of Tamilnadu are rejecting the symbols of victimhood and polluted identity, which have been used under the Brahminical Hindu religion and social structure. They are deconstructing or re-interpreting the same symbols of demeaned identities to transform them into the symbols of assertion of Dalit identity. This process helps Dalit community to organize together around their victimhood identity and multiple-marginalization against Brahmiical forces. However, he is not mentioning that whether this process is helping Dalit community in mass political mobilization in the democratic electoral process of Tamilnadu?³⁶

Eva Maria Hardtmann book *Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*, adds another significant contribution to enrich our understanding about a new discourse of Dalit movement in India. Her anthropological study is based on the ethnographic case study of Dalit Buddhist in Lucknow and the study of the identity politics of BSP in UP. She explains the process of construction of alternative identity of Dalits in UP as 'Dalit counter culture' to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream Brahminical Hindu culture. She evaluates it as the process of constructing a heterodox tradition and this heterogeneous character of Dalit movement in UP has broaden the social, cultural and democratic spaces of Dalit community. She argues that the newly constructed Dalit dissenting culture has strengthened the BSP movement though cultivating the alternative ideological relationship among Dalits of the state. It brings a sense of solidarity, brotherhood, a sense of belonging and a sense of security among Dalits to mobilize around the injustices being done to them by the mainstream Indian society. While analyzing the various practices of Dalit Buddhist and Ravidasia of Lucknow, she is comparing with the philosophy of Ambedkarite Buddhism and showing the connection between Ambedkarite of Britain and UP/India. She argued that Ambedkarite Dalits are anti-Gandhian, anti-Hindu, pro-western, and pro-democracy as they follow the Ambedkar's stance. Further, she also criticizes Indian media, on the account of feminist angle, to project female Dalit leaders and female Dalit public figures immoral. She

³⁶ for detail see, C. Joe Arun (2007). *Constructing Dalit Identity*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

questions that why female Dalit public figures are not worthy of same respect in the Indian society? Explaining the various dimensions of Dalit movement in India she is taking the process of construction of alternative identity as creation of 'Dalit counter space' and Dalit dissenting culture, eventually leading to the liberation of Dalit community from the scourge of Brahminical Hindu society.³⁷

So, in the journey of Dalit identity from victimhood to Dalit assertion and finally Dalit counter space to mass political mobilization. Except Badri Narayan, C. Joe Arun and Eva Maria Hardtmann all these literatures have failed to understand Dalit religious discourse. Even they have failed to forecast the possibility of mass movement concerning the independent identity of Dalit community through using their own cultural resources. The Dalit community is still struggling to resist their degraded status in the orthodox caste structure. They have still not been able to break the hegemonic Brahminical religious and cultural discourse. To assert their identity either they reconstructing their alternative identities independent from Brahminical cultural code of conduct or they have to accept the humiliation, exploitation and segregation as destiny. In this context one can understand Badri Narayan's formulation about identity and liberation that 'imagination and memory constructed out of myth and history, is the foundational requirement for the identity, self respect and social existence of marginalized communities in the age of power, conflict and competition.'³⁸ Similar to the Badri Narayan formulation, there is emerging a tendency in Dalit community to formulate their independent religious identity using their imagination and memory constructed out of their myths and histories. Badri Narayan clearly observed this phenomenon in terms of Dalit political mobilization.

Injustices to Dalit Community have different dimensions so it is obvious that the effort to redress and remove it must be a multi-prong approach, which includes recognition and promotion of equal right of dignified citizenship. It also includes protection against the discrimination in location of housing, protection against devaluation and misinterpretation of their culture and histories as well as protection against humiliation, exclusion, marginalization, segregation and

³⁷ For detail see, Eva Maria Hardtmann (2009). *Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connection*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

³⁸ Narayan, Badri (2009). *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publication. P. 13.

exploitation on the basis of caste identity in everyday life. One can observe that the ongoing Dalit revolution in Maharashtra, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh are not the revolution for democratize the undemocratic Brahminical social structure rather it is the revolution to deconstruct this exploitative social structure and redesigned it according to the democratic ethos of democratic society. This is a collective effort to remove the problem of 'the parity of participation' of Indian social structure.

Now coming to the point of the politics of identity of Dalit community in different states such as UP, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Punjab etc., they are not fulfilling the all criteria as envisaged under the ADM. They are not drawing their reference point from the universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity. Neither is they approaching in the direction of total transformation of society, nor their approaches in the broader Ambedkar mission for the liberation of depressed classes. Ambedkar's movement constituted all the criteria of social movement on which the nature of social movements are characterized such as alternative, reformative, redemptive and revolutionary, while the politics of the political parties such as BSP are limited to some specific phenomena through remodeling the rules of Parties according to their own convenience. They lack the reformative and redemptive parts i.e. socio-cultural elements of Ambedkar's movement. Even their revolution is not meant to radical transformation of Brahminical social structure in the direction of all inclusive, democratic and more egalitarian society, rather it is bringing social cleft, enmity, further division to consolidate Brahminical strata within strata. This does not move for the Annihilation of Caste and other discriminatory identities. They are very calculative to gain electoral political benefit, rather than focusing on the broader mission of total transformation of Brahminical society, liberation of Dalits, and establishment of socio-economic justice based on the universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity.

The contemporary Ambedkarite politics of identity are not consistent with the Ambedkar's movement that encompassed all the needs of human society-economic, social, cultural, political and spiritual. He sought a total transformation'

of society³⁹ but he was misrecognized only as leaders of a particular community, notwithstanding the core. Even, he was misunderstood his community having trapped in the Brahminical propaganda to reduce him as the leader of Dalit community only.⁴⁰ He was the liberation theologian, not just a leader who believes in playing politics over victimhood card based on the construction of an alternative identity. The politics of contemporary Ambedkarite parties is nothing different from the right wing politics such as BJP. Both are playing the victimhood card, however, the category Hindutva is the broadest possible political category in India than SC, OBCs etc. The politics of BSP is based on the identity of minority and the politics of BJP is based on the identity of majority. It is another debate that whether BJP is taking care of the Dalit issues such as multiple-marginalities, exploitation and segregation or not? The BSP is drawing her reference point from Brahminical Hindu society to create otherness among Dalit community, the enemy is Hindu society and the politics of Hindutva, however, BJP is claiming her politics as the politics of developing 'Samajik Samarashta' (social harmony), which have been the central idea of the politics of Ambedkar.

One can take it the very logical thing is that the identity of a political party is defined by her reference point. Whether the party is drawing her reference point from the universal principles such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice etc., and social transformation, define its character. What have done this identity politics is once they started drawing their reference point from Brahminical Hindu society and the politics of Hindutva, their politics and identity are now getting defined by the enemy i.e. the politics of Hindutva. It has created a threat to a minority identity in terms of subsuming into the broader and the majoritarian identity, including the reference points and the very struggle of social justice. So, the contemporary Dalit identity politics is not Ambedkarite, particularly in terms of what should have been the reference points and goals of. Precisely, I mean to say that unless the political parties who claim to be Ambedkarite are not following the ideas, principles and goals of Ambedkar, it cannot be an ADM (Autonomous Dalit Movement). The meaningful, substantive and sustainable transformation cannot

³⁹Omvedt, Gail (2001). Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India. In Ghanshyam Shah (ed). Dalit Identity and Politics. New Delhi: Sage Publications. P. 144

⁴⁰Rodrigues, Valerian (2000). Dalits and Cultural Identity: Ambedkar's Prevarications on Culture. Social Action. 50 (1): 1-15

be brought out, and this is the region why even the very existence of these political parties is now in question.

Having a close observation, one can easily understand that the approach of ADM is nothing but assimilation of both politics of redistribution and the ‘politics of recognition’⁴¹ and the politics of socio-economic justice. Even under this broader perspective the question of independent political and religious identity of Dalit Community is still absent in Bihar. The next section explains some reasons of this absence of twin processes of symbolic interactionism and assertion of independent religious and social identity in Bihar? The next section will examine determinants of Dalit politics in Bihar.

2. Determinants of Dalit Politics of Bihar

This section examines the determinants of Dalit politics in Bihar, which includes Dalit leadership in Bihar, a unique nature of the identity politics in Bihar, quantitative representation of SCs, role reversal position, dismantling patron-client system, and a unique polarized situation and divided leadership. It also examines the two other determinants through the comparative study of maps representing the concentration of SCs population in Bihar and UP and the population having alternative religious orientation that is what acts as interconnecting threads to organize a community around their common issues. Let me begin with the literature focusing on the absence of proper leadership in Bihar as one of the reasons for absence of ADM.

2.1 Dalit Leadership in Bihar

Dalits population constitutes 16 percent of the state’s population. There are 23 sub-castes within this category. Despite this, at the political level they do not play any significant role compared to the upper caste. Another fact is that the social and political awakening of Dalits of Bihar started the early 20th century. It is interesting to note that the Dusadh among the Scheduled Castes seems to be the first to grasp the importance of a collective effort to improve lot. Being inspired by Kayastha Mahasabha (1887), Pradhan Bhumihar Brahman Sabha (1905),

⁴¹Taylor, Charles (2002). *The Politics of Recognition*. Retrieved from: http://elplandehiram.org/documentos/JoustingNYC/Politics_of_Recognition.pdf

Rajput Sabha (1906) and possibly first Backward Caste Ravani Kahar Sabha (1906), the Dusadh formed the Dusadh Sabha in 1911. This was followed by the formation of the Ravidas Sabha in 1928 by Jagjivan Ram when he was a student of Calcutta University. Later he became an important Dalit leader. In 1933, when the Indian National Movement was at its peak, 'Anti-Untouchability Association' was renamed as 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' and Jagjivan Ram was appointed its secretary by Rajendra Prasad. He also established 'The Depressed Classes League' in 1935 and in the next year he became the president of this organization.⁴²

Jaglal Chaudhury, a Pasi by caste was made a cabinet minister of the government of congress in 1937. Jagjivan Ram, first Dalit leader in Bihar was appointed as the secretary of the Bihar Congress committee in 1940. He was made Labour Minister in the interim government formed in 1946. After independence, he was the first Dalit leader to become the deputy Prime Minister of India. He is longest serving Cabinet Minister in the government of India. He was very much influenced with Gandhi and the Congress model of politics. He and Gandhi tried hard to discover a politics with the assimilation of Dalits in mainstream society and reformation in Savarna Hindus attitudes towards the Dalits which can be said the 'Bihar model of Dalit politics'. The two other Dalit leaders, Bhola Paswan Shastri and Ram Sundar Das were well representative of Dalits in Bihar. Bhola Paswan Shastri became Chief Minister of Bihar three times between a very short period of time in 1968 to 1971⁴³. It was the time in Indian democracy when the Indian politics were completely dominated by Upper castes and political consciousness of Dalits was almost not remarkable. Ram Sundar Das also became the Chief Minister of Bihar for a shorter duration of April 1979 to February 1980. After that, a new Dalit leadership under Ram Vilas Paswan emerged during the political instability in eighties. He became a minister in the first non-Congress government under the Priministership of Morarji Bhai Desai. In his political leadership, in the legislative assembly election Bihar 2005, however, he did not win a majority, but with just a 29 representatives out of 243, he was in a position to form a government of Bihar

⁴²A brief profile of Bihar's Dalits. Retrieved from: <http://www.nafordalit.org/2011/04/brief-profile-of-bihars-dalit.html>

⁴³Sinha, J.K.P. (1973). Emerging Trends In Bihar Politics. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 34, No.- 4, Oct.- Dec. 1973. Pp. 471-481.

but he lost that opportunity in the larger interests of the people of Bihar, he said. Putting the unacceptable conditions to other parties, he could not able to form the government and this is considered his political demise and the goal of an organize Dalit struggle under the strong Dalit leadership in Bihar came to an end. However, he formed Dalit Sena, Ambedkar Sena to fight with violence and various injustices perpetrated on Dalits of Bihar but his leadership could not able to mobilize Dalits of Bihar to accept him as an undisputed leader of Dalits. Further, the sensational emergence of JitanRam Manjhi as a new sensation in respect of Dalit leader raised an unprecedented hope among Dalit Community of Bihar but his decision to join hand with BJP led NDA coalition not only faded away the hope of the community once again. On the other hand Dalits engagement with left organizations (both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary) remained strong. Their engagement with the mainstream Gandhian or Congress politics and latter on with OBCs politics remained intact. Finally, Dalits and their voices remained scattered. Starting from Jagjivan Ram to Ram Vilas Paswan the all Dalit leaders were in good political position, but none of them tried to unite all Dalits of Bihar to search a common destiny like UP and Maharashtra.

Another important fact is that among the sizeable 16 per cent of the total SC population in the state Chamars constitutes about 31.3 per cent. *Dusadhs* constitutes for about 30 per cent and they are the second largest group among SCs. Other numerically significant SC groups are Mushar, Pashi, Dhobi and Bhuiya.⁴⁴ These six most populous SCs constitute 93.2 % of the total SC population of the State.⁴⁵ They could have played a decisive role to provide a strong leadership like Chamar and Jatav in Uttar Pradesh and Majahabi and Chamar in Punjab. But none of the Dalit leader of Bihar came forward to provide strong leadership to convince and attract wider support base of Dalit community. Either they did not enjoy the benefit of position of 'role reversal' politics and the issues related to the identity of the Scheduled Castes or their efforts were subsumed in the other backward caste dominated identity politics. It clearly indicates the major reason of the absence Dalit politics in Bihar.

⁴⁴Kumar, Sanjay. Alam, Md. Sanjeer and Joshi, Dhananjay (2008).Caste Dynamics and Political Process in Bihar.Journal of Indian School of Political Economy. Jan.- June 2008. pp.- 04.

⁴⁵ Report (2012). SC/ST Welfare Department. Government of Bihar. p. 13

2.2 Identity Politics in Bihar

Identity politics in Bihar were started by backward castes after 1990. Before nineties Dalits were with congress party. Even the popular Dalit leader Jagjivan Ram was the member of congress party so Dalit had never taken any initiative to assert their independent identity in any form in support of their demands. After nineties, when the politics of symbolism and identity were started, Lalu Prasad Yadav made 'Yadavisiation' of the politics of Bihar and again Dalits got subsume in his (OBCs) caste politics. The long rule of RJD (Rashtriya Janata Dal) based on caste politics had a popular slogan that 'vikash nahi samman chahiye' (we need dignity, not development).⁴⁶ Even the RJD supremo Lalu yadav, according to Jaffrey Witsoe, once commented in an interview that it is very true that 'I may not have given them (backward and marginalized) heaven, but I have given them a voice (swarg nahi swar diya)'⁴⁷ but this swar (voice) remained confine to 'Yadavisiation' of Bihar. It had not helped in 'Dalitisation' of Bihar like Uttar Pradesh. Despite it, 'for many Dalits, it was the only occasion in their lifetime when they casted their vote. They reiterated that for them 'azadi' came only during Laloo's regime as now they enjoy a sense of self-pride and that upper-caste people do not encroach upon their independence now. The achievements and change this time was that most of the most deprived sections, the Dalits, were allowed to vote for the first time. Though the Yadavs took the driver's seat in the matter of governing the state, the other backwards and the Dalits remained aligned with the Janata Dal.'⁴⁸ They feel that whatever else may happen, they do have share in the political power in the state.

On the other side Nitish Kumar is doing nothing but 'Koiri & Kurmisation' of the politics of Bihar whereby using their caste identities, both become the symbol of power to deliver the interest of his fellow castes and supporters. Even after more than two decades of backward rule in Bihar Dalits still remain at the margin and a prospect and possibility of 'Dalitisation' of the politics of Bihar where religion

⁴⁶Witsoe, Jaffrey. (2013). Bihar,in AtulKohli and Prerna Singh (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*. New York. pp. 300.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸Kumar, Sanjay (1999). New Phase in Backward Caste Politics in Bihar: Janata Dal on the Decline. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol.- 34, No.- 34/35. Aug. 21- Sept.- 3, 1999. Pp. 2472-2480.

would play symbolic power and liberation politics like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab is still completely absent.

2.3 Quantitative Representation of SCs

The representation of Dalits through reserved seats has no doubt raised their participation in political decision making at a quantitative level, but it has not transferred into the qualitative changes in the political empowerment of these communities⁴⁹. The obvious reason is that the goals of Dalit empowerment will not be accomplished by reservation alone. It needs to cultivate all dimensions of freedom and empowerment like social, cultural, economic and religious independently. It needs political empowerment and assertion of their independent identity simultaneously. Seeing the states like UP, Punjab and Maharashtra, assertion of independent political and religious identity is a feasible apparatus for Dalit empowerment. I am of the opinion that here in Bihar too, to assert an independent identity free from mainstream society for the political gain as well as freedom from all imposed cultural and social stigma, alternative religion may play a very decisive role. There is the need to build new pathways into politics to foster political learning and to create new forms of articulation across and beyond existing democratic spaces. It will enhance the potential of Dalit's political participation. The representation by itself cannot guarantee to represent their interests effectively in the form of policy outcomes like reservation itself cannot bring empowerment because Dalits are constrained by a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political factors.

2.4 Role Reversal Position

Some scholars like Sanjay Kumar, Md. Sanjeer Alam and Dhananjay Joshi are of the opinion that, in Bihar, 'the politics that followed since 1990 is largely the politics of reassertion and reaffirmation of old caste cleavages, deepened further to capture political power. People now tended to vote more for identity (of caste) than for non-parochial issues such as good governance, improvement in the

⁴⁹Ragi, Sangit Kumar (2014). New Social Coalition and Electoral Politics: Trends from Panchayat Elections 2001 in Bihar. Online International interdisciplinary Research Journal. Vol. IV, Issue- I, Jan.- Feb. 2014.

material conditions of people.’⁵⁰ Some other scholars hold that rising caste consciousness amongst the numerically strong backward castes and Dalits against the forward castes is the main factor of ‘role reversal’ in the politics of Bihar. It means, in Sanjay Kumar’s words that ‘the polity has seen a kind of ‘role reversal’ in a sense that the forward caste dominated polity gave way to the backward castes led polity’⁵¹ but here point to notice is that now backward caste were in the majority but not Dalits. However, religion was not the sole motive force behind this politics of reassertion and reaffirmation, which has been seen as a kind of ‘role reversal’, to give way to backward castes led polity in Bihar but the intent and the ends were same as the politics of identity started in UP in the same years. It was based on questions of identity with the end to capture the political power of the state. The second fact is that Dalit Community did not lead this politics of reassertion. It was led by other dominant backward castes and classes including fragmented Dalit communities.

2.5 Dismantling Patron-Client System

If we take the issue of the durable mode of identity politics in India, then on the one hand caste and on the other hand religion is the most durable mode of social identity and has become the basis of both the social and political organizations. Political mobilization in Bihar is itself based on identities of caste and community. It is beyond doubt that the changed pattern of political behavior after 1990 in Bihar was the outcome of partial dismantling the patron-client system of voting which brought backward castes to a ‘role reversal’ position, but another equally important fact I would like to point out here is that the political mobilization of backward castes was weak because of divided leadership among Lalu Yadav, Nitish Kumar and Ramvilas Paswan. The politics of symbolism combined with them gave backward castes a sense of pride and dignity, though in reality they remained on the same social and economic terrain where they were. Even, during this long duration of two decades of backward caste political dominance, Dalits neither got izzat (dignity), nor roti and dhoti what backward political leaders promised to the people. Seeing the new kind of assertion of identity in Dalits of

⁵⁰Kumar, Sanjay. Alam, Md. Sanjeer and Joshi, Dhananjay (2008).Caste Dynamics and Political Process in Bihar.*Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*. Jan.- June 2008. Pp.- 01.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp.- 28.

Bihar which is one more step to dismantle the patron-client system, I am of the opinion that the alternative Dalit politics and religious identity, if cultivated well, has potential to reverse the dice of politics and political representation in Bihar by bringing in hitherto scattered voices of Dalits together to provide them both izzat (dignity) and roti and dhoti.

2.6 A Unique Polarised Situation and Divided Leadership

However, the real shift in the political sphere of Bihar was reflected after the conclusion of 1995 Vidhan Sabha polls ‘the Janata Dal returned to power with an absolute majority winning 166 of the total 324 seats with 27.9 per cent votes’⁵². In intellectual political society, it was seen as a strong democratic upsurge in the politics of Bihar as same what Yogendra Yadav terms when BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) won an absolute majority in Uttar Pradesh in the 2007 legislative assembly election is ‘the second democratic upsurge in India.’⁵³ However, both were considered as strong democratic upsurges but they were very different in nature because in Uttar Pradesh it was considered a complete Dalit upsurge and assertion of Dalit political and social identity, but in Bihar it was the assertion of the backward castes with fragmented Dalits and divided leadership. No doubt that strong democratic upsurge changed the political scenario of the Bihar but it witnessed ‘a unique type polarized situation’. This polarization was unique because it ‘was not on the lines of the upper and the backward caste divide which is usually seen in Indian politics, but it was around the two axes of backward caste politics’. One faction was led by Laloo Yadav and other was led by Nitish Kumar. After the formation of ‘Lok Janshakti Party’ an another faction emerged to add this unique polarized situation of backward castes. Dalits votes were scattered in all three factions. However, Ramvilas Paswan himself belongs to Dalit caste, but he could not bring all Dalits to a common platform of ‘Lok Janshakti Party’. Sanjay Kumar is of the opinion that traditionally Dalits were the congress’ voters, but after 1995 election things started to change. Further,

⁵²New Phase of Backward Class Politics in Bihar (1990- 2000).In Ghanshyam Shah (2002).Caste and Democratic Politics in India. (ed.). Delhi, permanent Black.

⁵³Yadav, Yogendra(1997). Reconfiguration in Indian politics: State Assembly Elections, 1993–1995. In *State and Politics in India*.(ed). P. Chatterjee. Delhi, Oxford University Press. Pp. 177–207.

The State witnessed a slow but constant movement of Dalit voters from the Congress to other parties. While a large number of them preferred voting for Janata Dal and its allies, a sizeable number of them even shifted their loyalty towards BJP and its allies. The split in the Janata Dal before the 1998 elections resulted in a three-way division of the Dalit vote between the Janata Dal and its allies, the BJP allies and the RJD. But things have changed remarkably since the 1999 Lok Sabha election. The merger of the Samata Party and the Janata Dal (U) led to the movement of the Dalit vote towards the BJP allies. The Ram Vilas factor seems to have made a difference for the BJP allies in terms of Dalit support for the alliance. In the assembly elections held in 2000, they managed to regain some support among the dalits, but still a majority of the dalits voted for the BJP allies in the state (Kumar 2008: 12).⁵⁴

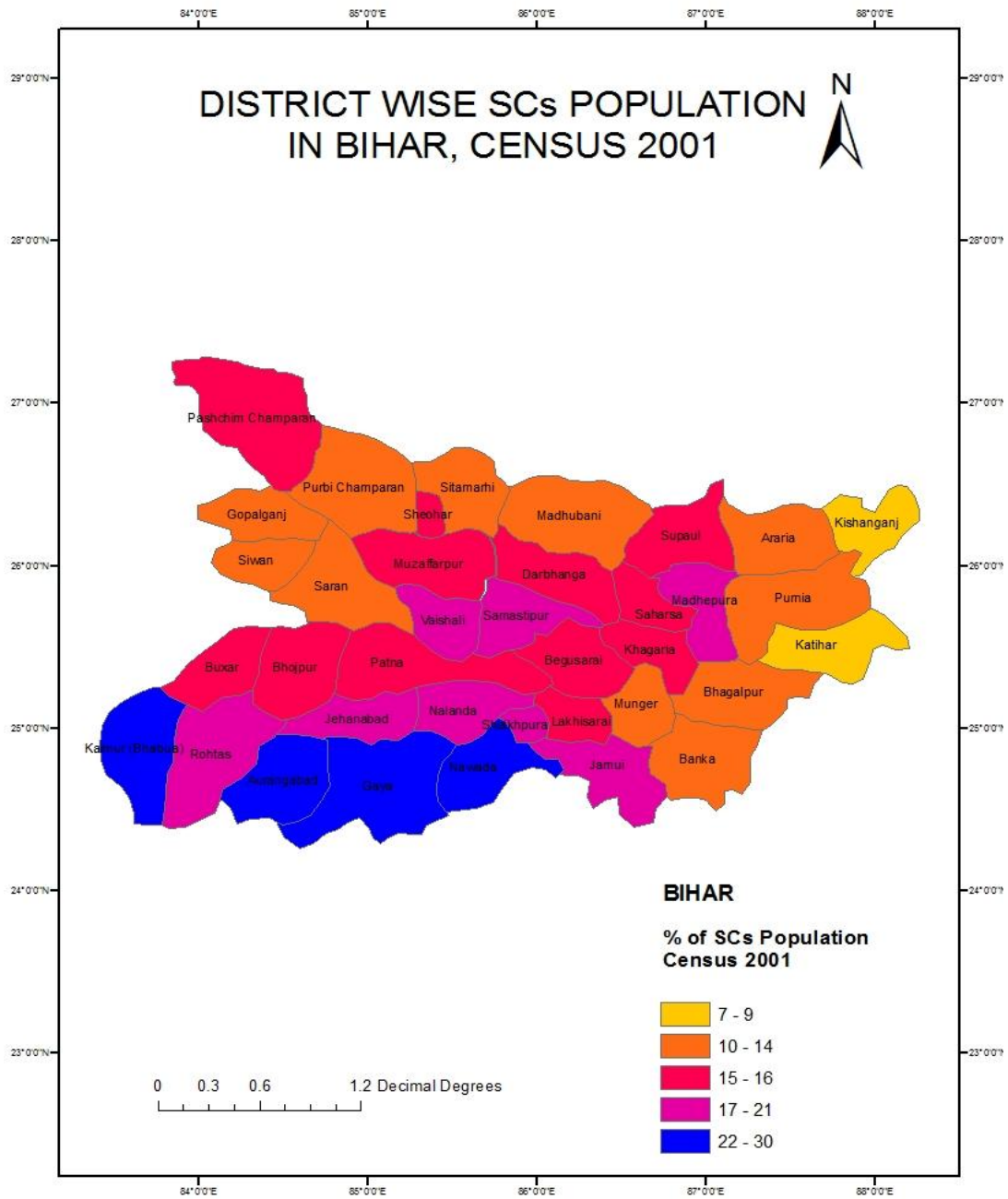
Dalits movement remained subsumed in the domain of this polarization, but divided leaderships. The agenda of assertion of backward castes through which forward caste dominated politics gave way to backward castes led politics in 1990 in Bihar is still continuing but it does never prove fruitful to Dalits in almost all social, political, economic and cultural terms.

2.7 Concentration of SCs Population

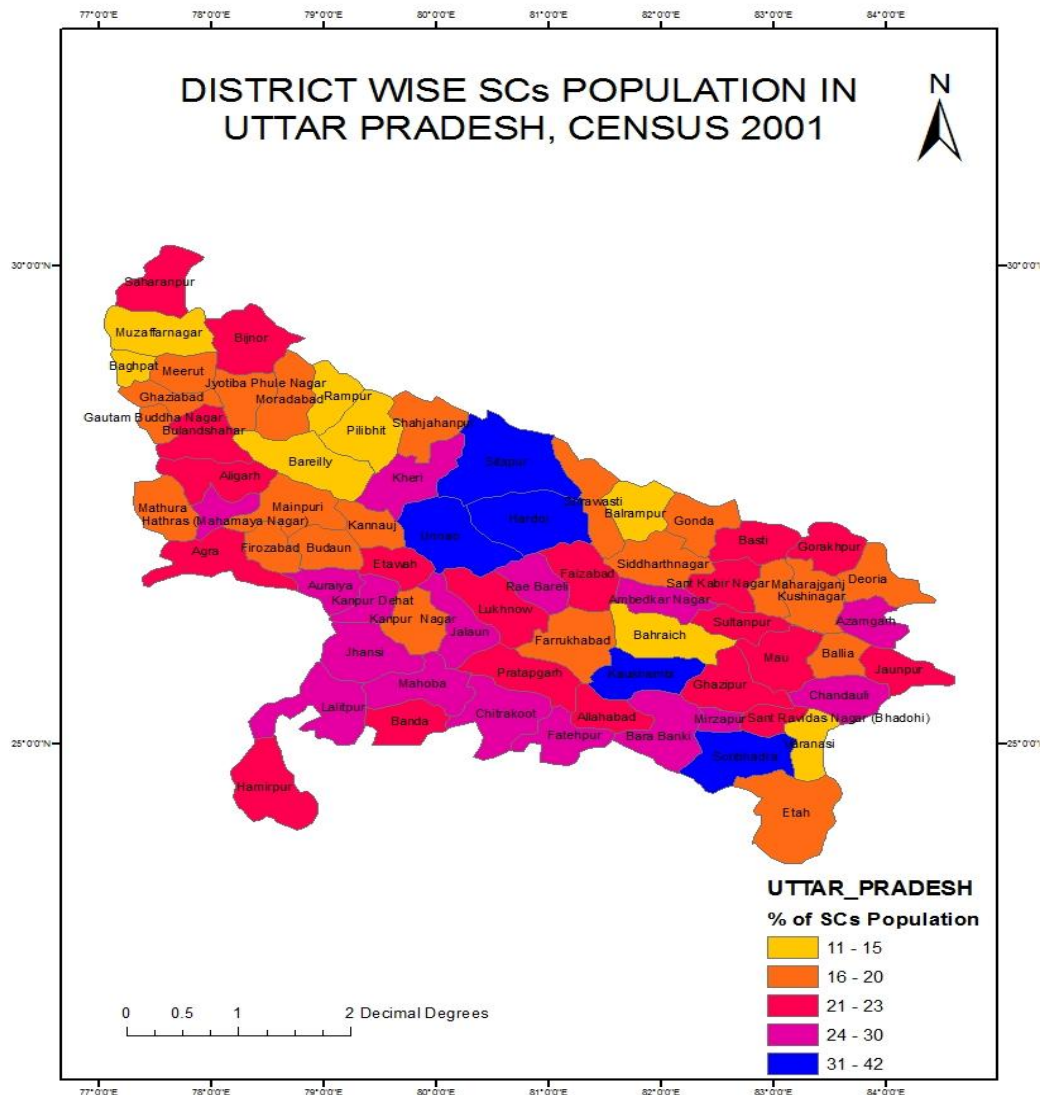
One another important reason for the absence of Dalit politics in Bihar comes out when I analyse the population division/ composition of Dalits in UP and Bihar. Comparatively Dalits in Bihar are scattered than UP. We can see it clearly through these maps.

⁵⁴Kumar, Sanjay. Alam, Md. Sanjeer and Joshi, Dhananjay (2008).Caste Dynamics and Political Process in Bihar.*Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*. Jan.- June 2008. Pp.- 12.

Map no. 1: District-wise SC Population in Bihar, 2001



Map no.2: District-wise SC Population in Uttar Pradesh, 2001



Both the maps reveal different interesting facts. The population division of Dalits in UP touches about 40 percent in some districts but in Bihar the maximum percentage touches not more than 30 percent. It itself give Dalits of UP in advantageous position for the constructions of alternative politics.

2.8 Absence of Interconnecting Threads

Absence of interconnecting threads i.e. alternative social and cultural practices/identity which is very much helpful to establish new patterns of social and political interactions which has potential to broaden a network and generate

an automatic relationship to feel solidarity among Dalits. It generates a sense of belonging among individuals and communities having common feelings of suffering together. It is imbedded in all aspects of life of Dalits and their everyday cultural, social, religious and political engagements. It develops deep engagement with memories, histories, myths and rituals which is very much helpful in construction of new patterns of social and political engagement among individuals as well as communities. This is also helpful not only to generate a sense of security, belongingness and brotherhood, but also a political and social consciousness to fight their rights and use their democratic space independently. It is very effective tool to challenge the social and cultural and religious institutions of exploitative Hindu social structure.

However, today, occupational boundaries have almost been broken through the process of industrialization and urbanization but the cultural stigma are still remain unchanged. This is because Bihar is still in the clutch of the highly orthodox caste system based on the Brahminical code of conduct and their irrational social and religious conceptions. So, to redress or remove this social and cultural stigma that demean the identity and dignity of Dalit community, construction of new independent religious identity is the one of the important suggested ways. One can see it as par with the very radical alternative provided by Dr. Ambedkar to Dalit communities. For him, it would put twin pressure over the Brahminical Hindu society. First; it will enforce a sense of guilt in savarna Hindu upper castes, and second; it would put a moral-ethical pressure to change the attitude towards Dalit community. So, for Dalit community it can be one of the important ways to come out from this orthodox, exploitative, irrational Hindu social order.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding the importance of Dr. Ambedkar's approach, Dalit community of Bihar is not sure that this new attempt to cultivate independent alternative social will widen their space.

The small phenomena observed in different pockets of Bihar but it has not taken the shape of alternative socio-cultural model to broaden religio-political network

⁵⁵Ambedkar, B. R. (1987). *The Hindu Social Order- Its Essential Features*. In Vasant Moon (ed.) *Dr. BabasahebAmbedkar Writing and Speeches.Vol. 03*, (pp. 95-115). Bombay: Deptt. of Education, Govt. of Maharashtra.

of Dalit communities? The point to think here is that why these processes have not achieved a wide success either in terms of creating a sense of solidarity and brotherhood among Dalit Community through developing common practices or in terms of other different pattern of social and cultural engagements? It is neither constructed in term in terms of organizing around their multiple-marginalities, exploitation and other injustices, nor in term of developing a sense of belonging and solidarity and unity cultivating the grass-roots mass political mobilization after reinforcing the sense of share in democratic power of state such as Dalit identity politics in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu Punjab etc. The ongoing processes in that states are also influencing the voting pattern/behavior of Dalit community as well as the general voting pattern of states. This politics of assertion of identity are restructuring the traditional pattern of voting behavior based on rigid patron-client system.⁵⁶

As Badri Narayan observed, in Uttar Pradesh, these efforts of Dalit community have ultimately broadened their democratic space and Dalit Community has now become politically more conscious. They are now more conscious about their rights, opportunities in almost every aspect of life such as dignity, self-respect etc.⁵⁷ Eva-Maria Heartland is of the opinion that their socio-cultural identity consciousness has helped them to broaden cultural and political network and a major chunk of Dalit Community now have started to feel a sense of common security. They now believe in the ‘politics of networking’.⁵⁸ Joe Arun and Ronki Ram are having almost same opinion that the institutionalization of an independent religion, changed patterns of Dalit interactions, social behavior and different socio-cultural practices are today contributing immensely to act as a ‘Cohesive force’ to bind Dalits together, to bring solidarity and unity. This has ultimately proven a major element helpful in broadening their religious as well as political network⁵⁹ and the political parties based on identity politics are getting unprecedented benefits of this broaden network even to capture the political

⁵⁶Narayan, Badri (2009). *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

⁵⁷Narayan, Badri (2001). *The Making of the Dalit Public in North India, Uttar Pradesh, 1950-Present*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁸Hardtmann, E. M. (2009). *The Dalits Movements in India: Local Practices. Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁹Arun, C. Joe (2007). *Constructing Dalit Identity*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

power of the state. I just wonder to see that why has Bihar, where the strong democratic upsurge in terms of identity politics was seen much before Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, witnessing not even a single such initiative by Dalit community. This is one of the major causes of the absence of Dalit politics in Bihar.

However, Bihar has almost similar composition of population of SC communities, but the pace of intensity to search an alternative to challenge the hegemonic authority of Brahminical social structure is slower than Maharashtra Tamilnadu, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh because of the above mentioned reasons. Along with above-mentioned reasons the various new alternative socio-cultural practices like Satsang, Shiv-Shakti, Shiv-Charcha, Kabirpanthi, Ravidasia are found existing, but it is running in a very scattered manner beyond the Ambedkar's mission of emancipation of depressed classes. These are not based on to launch that kind of Ambedkarite consciousness and to develop it into a mass Dalit movement.

Let me now explore, a little, the characteristics of these alternative Dalit counter culture, which are in the process of construction in Bihar. In terms of inclusiveness of their religion and religious practices like Satsang, Shiv-Shakti, Shiv-Charcha, Kabirpanthi, Ravidasia among various others newly cultivated panth/sects are believed to be very much democratic and inclusive in nature, irrespective of identity such as caste, colour, birth, region, religion, community etc. On contrary to Brahminical Hindu religion, which is highly discriminative, undemocratic, intolerant and exclusive by nature and content, they show the level of great religious tolerance and 'mutual respect'. But one fact that must be noticed here is that these all newly cultivated socio-cultural practices are personality cult. They worship Guru and follow their philosophies whole-heartedly. They take their Guru as 'path pradarshak' touch bearer i.e. pioneer. Their philosophies are no doubt very much democratic and inclusive by nature and practice; despite it, their philosophies are not free from criticism in terms of rationality, pragmatism and scientism.

In reply to the question on being democratic and inclusive religion some followers of these new religious practices are of the opinion that since Dalit Community have been getting the taste of being undemocratic religion for centuries. They are

victim of exploitation, exclusion and undemocratic caste structure based on the Brahminical code of conduct. So are the reasons to be democratic and inclusive nature of their religion. ‘They do not want to challenge mainstream Hindu religion or structure in the real sense rather they want equal respect and recognition of their identity’.⁶⁰ They do not want assimilation into major and dominant culture and religion rather they want mutual respect of their distinctiveness of Dalit culture and religion independent of mainstream culture and religion.⁶¹ The thought and philosophies of every Dalit icons starting from Kabir ,Raidas, Phule, Periyar, Ambedkar to Kanshi Ram are based on democratic values and aim to establish a just society. These all icons are pioneer (torch bearer) to them. This could be another reason for being democratic and inclusive nature of Dalit religion. It has provided the space to investigate whether they have developed any sense of making efforts to assert independent identity and ultimately to broaden the electoral base of parties based on Dalit identity politics? Whether they believe in what Eva-Maria Hardtmann calls the ‘politics of networking’⁶² and to establish a new patterns of social and political interactions, to generate a ‘Cohesive force’, a sense of belonging, communal solidarity etc. to bind all Dalits together to start a collective struggle to transform the discriminatory Hindu social order into a democratic and more egalitarian society based on the universal principles such as liberty, equality, fraternity and so on.

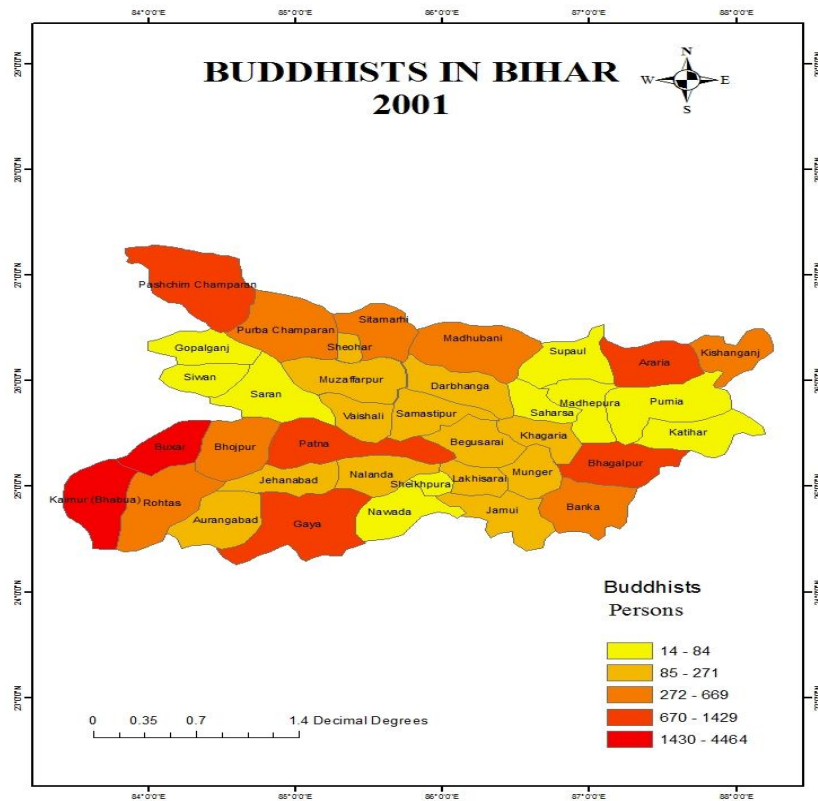
However, other various small alternative religious practices of Dalit Community have emerged in Bihar but data of only Buddhist, Kabirpanthis and Christians are available. The data available according to the census of India 2001, again I would like to present it here through maps.

⁶⁰ This fact was reveal in the conversation with a follower of satsang, named Harishchandra Ram, a retired primary school teacher of this region.

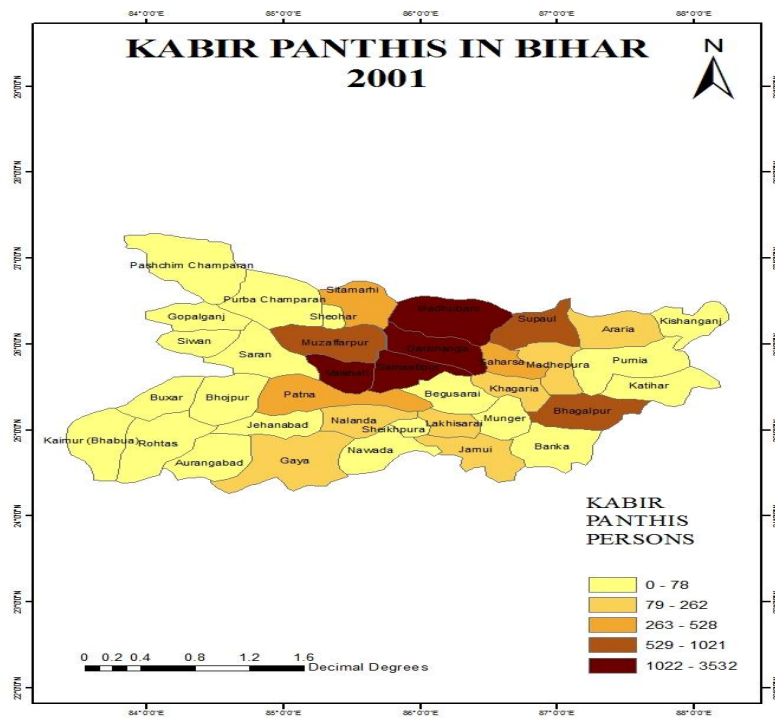
⁶¹Rajkumar, Peniel (2010). *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation: Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.

⁶²Hardtmann, E. M. (2009). *The Dalits Movements in India: Local Practices. Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

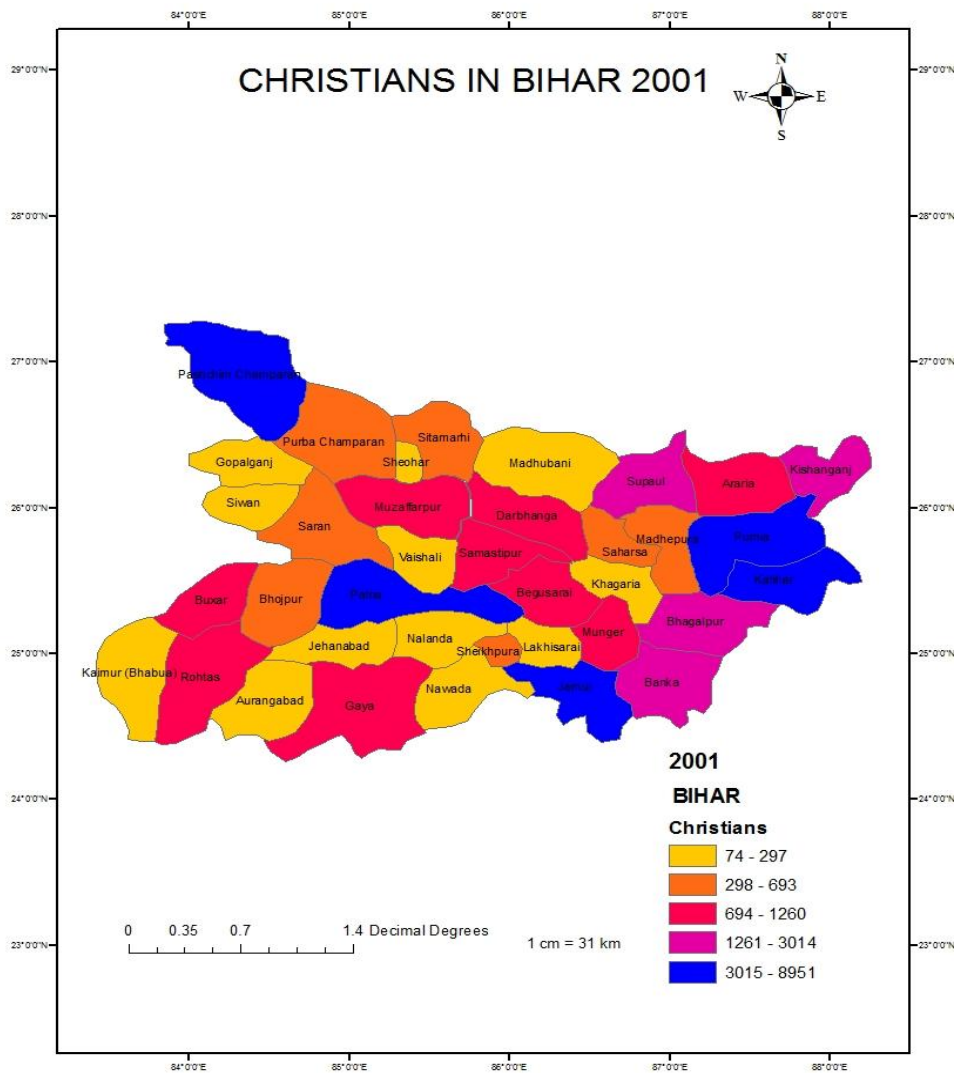
Map no.3: Buddhist Population in Bihar, 2001



Map no.4: Kabir Panthi Population in Bihar, 2001



Map no.5: Christian Population in Bihar, 2001



These maps show a very insignificant number of Dalits are practicing alternative religious practices in different parts of Bihar but in the hegemony of mainstream Hindu religion their emergence of alternative conception is important. This alternative Dalit Religion, if cultivated well, in association with the Dalit Sena, Ambedkar Sena, BAMCEF (Bihar unit) etc. under the guidance of alternative conceptualization of Ambedkar (not Ambedkarite) politics, has potential to reverse the dice of politics and political representation in Bihar. But this has not happened on the religious base. Dalit community of Bihar has also rejected the contemporary Dalit identity politics. So, it indicates a broader possibility to organize hitherto scattered voices of Dalits around their marginalities and exploitation and struggle based on the meaningful, sustainable and substantive social transformation.

Conclusion

The nature of Dalit politics of Bihar and its various determinants suggest that the minority identity always faces a potential threat of getting subsumed under a broader identity. Mere identitarian approach is not the sufficient condition for the liberation of Dalit community. This is why Bihar have witnessed a unique polarization and divided leadership. Thus, Dalit community of Bihar has not accepted the politics of identity, be it Dalit identity politics or the OBCs dominated identity politics. I understand, approaches of Dalit community of Bihar are more oriented towards supporting the issues concerned with their marginalities, exploitation and segregation, rather than supporting only the politics of identity.

The Gandhian Movement and Dalits Engagements in Bihar

This chapter discusses the relationships between Gandhian movement and the Dalit Community in Bihar. The argument I intend to put forward with the emergence of Dalit discourse in India and what were its eventual consequences on the Dalit discourse of Bihar. It deals how does the engagement of the Gandhian movement with the Dalit questions remained within the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism and the Indian National Congress? Consequence of which was the absence of the construction of a separate social, political or religious Dalit identity independent from Hindu society or as an alternative to mainstream politics. This was thought necessary for the consolidation of Dalit Community in Bihar, which remained absent yet, so did the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar. This chapter includes five sections. First section explains the emergence of Dalit discourse in the mainstream political society of India. The different phases of Dalit discourse in Bihar, which includes caste consolidation movements, the ongoing debates in the political and social forums of Indian National Congress and the beginning of Gandhian movement in Bihar. Second section deal with the discovery of Bihar model of Dalit politics based on assimilation of Dalits and the reformation of Savarna Hindu castes attitudes towards Dalits under the leadership of Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. Third section evaluates the role of Jagjivan Ram in the development of the Bihar model of Dalit politics. Fourth section explains the reasons why Jagjivan Ram himself felt the need for an independent movement of Dalit Community in Bihar. The last section concludes the chapter.

After the humiliating failure of the 1857 revolt because of the absence of mass support, among other factors, we speeded up the process of analyzing and evaluating weaknesses of Indian social system. In this process leaders decided to eradicate all social evils which goes against the unity of masses of all sections of society irrespective of their social and cultural identities so that Indian national movement could be welded into a mass movement and put strong pressure on colonial government. The deep intellectual pondering over it gave the birth of different religious and social reform movement in

India and it took almost three decades to form Indian National Congress (INC), an all India social and political forum to discuss, debate and plan the strategy for restructuring Indian society. Although, intentionally it was the political organization, none of the members were interested in debating social issues of Indian society in order to project general interests of Indian masses before the British officers in charge. For example, in the second session of INC (Calcutta, 1886), while chairing this session Dadabhai Naoroji was of the opinion that

Certainly no member of this National Congress is more alive to the necessity of social reform than I am; but, gentlemen, for every work we need proper place, proper circumstances, parties and proper place. We are met together as a political body to represent to our rulers our political aspirations, not to discuss social reforms... How can this gathering of *all* classes discuss the social reforms needed in each individual class?... Only the members of that class can effectively deal with the reforms therein needed. A National Congress must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct participation, and I must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to Class Congresses....¹

This shows the early character of Indian National Congress which is completely political in nature. At the same time our country had deep concern with the divisive forces and other social evils which were needed to dealt with very delicately to bring all the section of society in the single larger unity. Further, Mr. Budruddin Tayabji who presided over the Third Annual Session of the Congress held in 1887, was almost of the same opinion that;

...It has been urged—solemnly urged—as an objection against our proceedings—that this Congress does not discuss the question of Social Reforms... I must confess that the objection seems to me strange, seeing that this Congress is composed of the representatives, not of any one class or community, not of one part of India, but of all the different parts, and of all the different classes, and of all the different communities of India. Whereas any question of Social Reform must of necessity affect some particular part or some particular community of India only and, therefore, Gentlemen, it seems to me, that although we, Mussalmans, have our own social problems to solve, just as our Hindu and Parsi friends have theirs, yet these questions can be best dealt with by the leaders of the particular communities to which they relate (Applause). I, therefore, think, Gentlemen, that the only wise and, indeed, the only possible course we can adopt is to confine our discussions to such questions as affect the whole of India at large, and to abstain from the discussion of questions that affect a particular part or a particular community only.²

Precisely, the big question before Congress was to maintain balance between social and political matters. Whether they leave social matters aside and devote themselves to achieve common consensus on political matters or they leave the social matters on the

¹Moon, Vasant (2014). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. Dr. Ambedkar Foundation. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India. 15, Janpath, New Delhi. Vol. -09, pp. 37

²Ibid. page- 38.

individuals of the particular community. Does our society fits for the political reform without reforming our social system first? However, W. C. Banerjee failed to see any connection between the two but others didn't response the same, certainly not because of the matter of connection rather they were eying over the long run impact on the Indian national movement. So, having seen the deep social cleavages

when the Indian National Congress was founded at Bombay in 1885, it was felt by the leaders of the movement that the National movement should not be exclusively political but that side by side with the consideration of political questions, questions affecting Indian social economy should also be discussed and that the best endeavours of all should be put forth for vitalizing Hindu Society by removing all social evils and social wrongs.³

So, after a long debate it was decided to set up a separate organization that called the Indian National Social Conference. The first session was held at Madras in December 1887 under the presidentship of Sir T. Madhavrao.

Till 1895, after the culmination of Annual Indian National Congress session Indian National Social Conference used to use the same venue and pandal to organize its session and this was getting almost equal importance in society. But very soon, members of both schools of thoughts (i.e. Pro-Social Reform party who were thinking that there cannot be the political reform without social reform and Anti-Social Reform Section who were against the social reform and using the INC venue to argue that that venue was not the proper platform to discuss it) developed strong antagonism. Consequently, in 1895 during the Pune session of INC, an anti-social reform group (Samajik Sudhar Virodhi Sangh⁴) threatened to set the venue on fire, if the same venue would be allowed to use by Indian National Social Conference. That Anti-social Reform Group (Samajik Sudhar Virodhi Sangh) was headed by Mr. Balgangadhar Tilak and INC 'had to submit to unreasonable demand to avert the split'⁵ The obvious reason of their anger was the debate on the problems such as untouchability and other social issues such as Suti, widow re-marriage, age of consent, limitations of age of marriage etc. Whereas the position of INC was that without the eradication of the divisive forces such as castes and untouchability in society,

³Ibid. Page- 41

⁴Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005).Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912 – 2000), Vani Prakashan, New Delhi. P-11.

⁵Moon, Vasant (2014). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. Dr. Ambedkar Foundation. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India. 15, Janpath, New Delhi. Vol. -09. Page- 43

the involvement of this major chunk of population the national movement of India could not be turned into a mass movement. This understanding occasioned the necessity of truly appreciating the deep indignities and poisons inculcated by Brahminical Society in the minds of people to divide them in different caste identities. How orthodox the society was, we can sense, that people could not even tolerate debate on social reform. It seems to me that for them preserving the orthodox and irrational Brahminical social structure was more important than the freedom of India. However, this initiative, after analyzing and evaluating the weaknesses of Indian society were not only the initiative of struggle against colonial power, but it was also taken the shape of a movement for restructuring Indian society.

At the beginning of the idea of restructuring Indian society, that incident raised several questions in intellectual minds. Like, could political movement and social movement go together? Could without restructuring the Brahminical exploitative society and without abolishing inhuman practices of untouchability and other social evils freedom of India be achieved? Whether political movement and social movement are complementary or incompatible with each other in Indian society? Finally, it was thought that without making it complementary India could not end her slavery from British power. This helplessness of Indian Brahminical intellectuals bound them to think that their slavery from the colonial masters would end only after making political and the social movement complementary to each other. National movement and social movement such must go together. This was the first incident when Indian intellectual society took Dalit Community seriously in its political mind. At least they started to act seriously to bring them into the domain of the mainstream of society. In North India, till the emergence of M. K. Gandhi on the floor of the Indian national movement all debates and discussion related to Dalit issues had remained mere rhetorical and politically expedient. No individual attempts were made to understand the condition, situation and identity of Dalit Community except the sporadic attempts by personalities such as Mahatma Phule, Periyar etc. in Maharashtra and other regions of India.

However, in north India, there are some historical evidences of the emergence of some Dalit castes like Kharwar, Dom, Bhar, Chero, Dushad, Bhuiya, Ghatwal etc. in local

power. During seventh to fourteenth centuries there are evidences of local state ruled by Pasi caste of Dalit community in the broader region around Ayodhya in UP. It covered today's Barabanki, Lakhimpur Khiri, Siatpur, Unnav, Lakhnow and Raebareli. Maharaj Bijli Pasi established his capital in Bijnaur and there was a fort in Lucknow. It is said that his period of ruling was 1160 to 1200. Another Hero of Dalit caste Satan Pasi had fort in Unnav and king Suhaldeev was ruler of Bahraich.⁶ In Bihar, Dusadh/Paswan caste of Dalit community was in the center of ruling establishment in the south Munger district. There is also an evidence that in the late 12th century Kshatriya king Vikramaditya established his Giddhaur dynasty⁷ after defeating a Dusadh king.⁸ There are some other evidences of Dalit rulers found in other parts of Bihar like Manjigarh in Saran, Chhapra. In Palamu there was Domdiha, Dhomingarh, Domchanch and Domkila found as an evidence of Dom caste ruling establishment of Dalit community. There are other Dalit heroes like Raja Chuharmal, Sahlesh (Shailesh), Dina-Bhadri established their small kingdom in Bihar.⁹ Raja Chuharmal, Sahlesh and Dina-Bhadri are still famous as Dalit icons and worshipped and glorified by Dalit Community in Bihar.

In addition, there are evidences of some other revolts made by different castes of Dalit Community in different parts of Bihar like Rajwar revolt in Nawada (1857), Dadhi revolt in Munger (1915), Mushar revolt in Etadhi (1916), revolt of Magahiya Dom in Gaya (1913), Bansfod Dom revolt in Palamu (20ties), Chautarwa Dom Basti revolt in Champaran. But all these separate revolts are examples of a little revolt against the exploitation of Dalit castes by the existing Landlords. These were neither the revolt against their highly discriminating, stigmatic and humiliating identity nor the movement for an autonomous Dalit identity to create an independent Dalit religious identity free from Hindu hegemonic religion.¹⁰ It had also never seen in Bihar even during the Gandhian movement.

⁶ Nrayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent, Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institutes of Advanced Study. Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla.

⁷ Giddhaur dynasty (little introduction)

⁸ Ram, Dr. S. P. (1995). Du:sadhya se Dusadh Tak. Noida, UP.

⁹ Narayan, Badri, Vishnu Mahapatra and Anantram Mishra (2006). Upekshit Samudayon ka Atm Itihas. Vani Prakashan.

¹⁰ Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar & Srikant (2005). Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp 50-51

1. Different phases of Dalit discourse in Bihar

If we talk about the different phases of Dalit discourse in Bihar then in the first stage there was a formation of different caste and sub-caste organizations among Dalit Community observed during the second and third decades of the 19th century. These caste organizations consolidated their caste identities or rather we can say that they asserted their caste identities strongly. This had generated some self-respect among Dalit Community and initiated the struggle against different social evils being practiced against Dalit Community by upper castes. Through the experiences of their caste organizations they got to learn that this struggle was not an easy task, it would be a long struggle against not only traditional, orthodox and exploitative Brahminical caste structure but also against the deeply embedded orthodox irrational, unscientific ideas in society.

1.2 Caste consolidations and the Identity Movement: first phase

In the late 19th century different caste/sub-caste organizations of Dalit Community began to take birth. Each and every politically conscious Dalit castes were found busy in their caste identity formation and caste consolidation movement separately with their particular caste identity not as a consolidated Dalit identity. This process was started by Dushad (Paswan) caste, then Mehtar and Mushahar.¹¹ Let me put here some common characteristics of this caste identity, or caste consolidation movement started by different castes within Dalit community.

Every Dalit castes were putting strong emphasis on constructing caste self-respect based on caste identity. This was a kind of identity formation movement because they started the process of constructing their own histories by evaluating and re-evaluating old histories. They started constructing myths and story to glorify their caste identity. The glorification of Dalit heroes was already started by these castes organization tracing their roots from legend in history.¹² What make today's Dalit identity construction movements different from that of earlier one is its distinctive approach to glorifying their heroes,

¹¹ Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar (2001). Bihar me Samajik Parivartan ke Kuchh Aayam. Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.

¹²Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005).Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp 68-67.

history and legends. That is, whereas earlier recognition and recovery of their heroes meant the obsessive attempt towards emphasizing similarity, compatibility, connection and root with the Brahminical way of life, gods, legends and history but today it is the increasing assertion of Dalits of their separate identity myths and legends. So, today more than similarity the difference is emphasized; more than connection and compatibility it is the assertion that is underlined. Far from tracing their genealogy to upper caste, they are challenging it. Nothing would better explain this than the following. In this process some Dalits and backward castes started wearing/having thread (sacred thread called 'Janew' in hindi and have by 'twice-born' Hindu castes). That period was known for the janew/thread movement in Dalit and backward castes in Bihar. Some untouchable castes were also involved in that thread movement.¹³

However, most of Dalit castes were illiterate so this movement was mostly run by Dushad, Chamar, Pasi and Dhobi castes only. Dushads were claiming Kshatriya identity. Chamars were associating their identity with a boycotted Brahmin of the age of Hindu lord Rama. Bhuiya were tracing their roots as the progeny of forest wandering sages and saints of old ages. Dom were claiming their identity related to Supach Bhagat, who according to Hindu mythology, Hindu lord Rama blessed that the soul of every dead body will rest in peace and heaven, only if they would be cremated by the fire handed by you and your progeny.¹⁴ This is why Dom caste was tracing their roots to Supach Bhagat to create their different and respectful identity.

According to Prasann Kumar Chauhary and Srikant the formation of the 'backward' and Dalit caste organizations started almost in the same period. Both started with the consolidation of caste solidarity, tracing the roots from Kshatriya identity and including practices such as 'Sanskritisation'. While backward castes slid along the 'Janew movement', Dalits took their own path of caste consolidation.¹⁵ Nevertheless, both started

¹³Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar (2001). Bihar me Samajik Parivartan ke Kuchh Aayam. Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.

¹⁴Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005).Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. – 68

¹⁵ It was movement to have sacred thread called 'Janew' in local language which is nothing but two threads being weared by twice born upper castes. Some backward castes and Dalit castes also started having this threads to upift and appropriate upper caste identity as same what M. N. Srinivas called it 'Sanskritisation' movement in South India.

criticizing oppressive and exploitative practices of Hindu society in the same manner and this process was known as part of social justice movement. Due to different identity and conditions of Dalit Community and backward caste community this movement did not go together. Dalits were untouchables; most of them were bonded labour and highly illiterate. Thus they failed to create a support base to continue their movement. After the formation of two separate organizations 'Triveni Sangh' in the leadership of Gope/Yadav, Koiri and Kurmi and 'Dalit Varg Sangh' by some Dalit castes in 1933 and 1935 respectively, this movement went forward into two streams. Further, it did not only dilute the emerging concept of social justice among Dalits and backwards, but it also became competitors to each other.¹⁶

1.3 The Beginning Of 20th Century: the second Phase

With the beginning of the 20th century the debate on Dalit discourse took a concrete shape. The question of Untouchability, Dalit oppression and the issues of the depressed classes were being raised forcefully in every speeches, addresses and writings. It was being debated on almost all aspects like social, economic and religious. Every religious, non-religious and social organizations like Christian missionaries, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Theosophical Societies started working for the abolition of untouchability and other social evils. Some liked to focus on inner purification and some other institutions were suggesting for social assimilation through allowing entry into social, religious and educational institutions and sharing other public places. There was an opinion that the government must take some positive steps regarding the issues of Dalits and Untouchability, however, people must not depend on the government because after all this is a social issue and the initiative must be taken from the society to end this inhuman practice. The philosophy and practices of Untouchability are completely against the soul of Hindu Dharma, some argued. Every explanation for the construction of this highly exploitative, discriminatory and oppressive caste structure did not match the rich philosophy of Hinduism. So this practice should not be carried forward endlessly. If this irrational, inhumane, humiliating, and exploitative practices would be carried forward to

¹⁶Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005). Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. – 72-73.

endless time, then none will remain to follow the Hindu religion and Hindu religion will disappear soon. So, the sympathy generated towards the Dalit Community were not spontaneous and true resulting from the feeling pains of Dalit communities; it evoked sympathy due to the fear and challenges from the day to day conversion of Dalit Community to other religions like Christianity and Islam.

Let me put some views of contemporary personalities on Dalit issues. A. C. Mazumdar, a well known Bengali Indian politician who served as the president of the Indian National Congress, was of the opinion that the inhumane practices such as untouchability have been imposed on this luckless and hapless people called Untouchable which has no place in the Vedas and Shashtras. Far from sanctioning it, he opined, Shashtras had clear stand against this practice against any human being under any laws of the land. The real problems with untouchable are not the caste system, but their ignorance, poverty and haplessness. They have accepted this practice due to its continuance for centuries. What we need to do first is to make them understand that for the liberation of this stigmatized life you need to prepare hard to fight against these evil practices, but again, before it, society must take steps for their education to generate a right belief and confidence among them and to end hunger and hardship in their life. A hunger belly would neither allow their body to fight for justice, nor it allow mind to differentiate between right and wrong.¹⁷

Taking the example of 'Submerged Tenth'¹⁸ of England Annie Besant compared Untouchables of India with the hard working and honest people. They constituted one sixth of the total population of India. This major chunk of the population was indigenous population (Moolnivasi) of India, but they were made slave after having been defeated by the Aryan race of people. These Aryan called themselves upper caste, religiously pure and socially uplifted on the ladder of exploitative caste hierarchy. Making them slave these Aryan forced these indigenous people in very hardship condition. It continued

¹⁷Majumdar, A. C. (1910). The Indian Review. Volume XI, Issue 1, January 1910.

<http://www.southasiaarchive.com>

¹⁸ This was the group of communities equal to the one-tenth part of the total population of England and similar to Untouchables, outcaste, and now Dalits in India. They were slowly submerged and assimilated into the mainstream of society after various social, religious and cultural reforms and they constitutes one tenth of total population of England. Hence, they were called 'Submerged Tenth'.

generation after generation to demolish their self-esteem to such a low level that they even cannot think to regain their lost position. Their main problem is isolation, segregation, illiteracy and poverty. What makes them worse are their situation and conditions in which they are forced to live. So, we need to change their conditions and surroundings for the better socialization through their education and assimilation under mainstream society.¹⁹

Lala Lajpat Rai and Gopal Krishna Gokhale had another view on Dalit issues. Lala Lajpat Rai was of the opinion that with the great efforts of the ‘Theosophical Society’ even highly orthodox and traditional Hindus had started thinking about this issue and Dalit question came prominently in the discourse of positive debate. However, some fanatical and extremist section of Hindu society named it ‘anti-Hindu religion step’ which would endanger Hindu religion and its social structure without knowing the fact that Dalit issues are not only the matter of religion and society rather it was the question of ‘social competence’. Moulding India into a nation needs social competence and compatibility both and without the support of Dalit Community one could not imagine this dream of making India into a nation. The social competence, which Lala Lajpat Rai was talking about during the first and second decades of the twentieth century, had two different elements regarding Dalit Community and making India into a nation. First; to make Dalit Community ‘touchable’ by abolishing untouchability, to let them access common water sources, public places and promoting inter-dinning. Second was to include a broader Dalit upliftment project in the national program of Indian National Congress.²⁰ Moreover, he also suggested welcoming Dalits who wanted re-conversion into Hindu religion who had already converted to other religions. For him, promoting education among Dalit Community would play a great role in consolidating Hindu society and their eventual likely enhancement of ‘social compatibility’ within Hindu society.

¹⁹Besant, Annie (1909). The Uplift of the Depressed Classes in ‘The Indian Review’. Volume X, Issue 2, February 1909.

²⁰ Rai, LalaLajpat (1910). The Depressed Class in ‘The Indian Review’. Volume XI, Issue 5, May 1910.P. – 335.<http://www.southasiaarchive.com>

The political guru of Gandhi, Gopal Krishna Gokhale while speaking in the Social Conference in Dharwad 1903 he appealed that;

gentlemen, this is a question of National Self-interest. How can we possibly realize our national aspirations, how can our country ever hope to take her place among the nations of the world, if we allow large number(s) of our countrymen to remain sunk in ignorance, barbarism, and degradation? Unless these men are gradually raised to a higher level, morally and intellectually, how can they possibly understand our thoughts or share our hopes or co-operate with us in our efforts? Can you not realize that so far as the work of national elevation is concerned, the energy, which these classes might be expected to represent, is simply unavailable to us?²¹

Through this speech he made a strong appeal to Indian intellectual society to have deep introspection over this highly exploitative and discriminatory aspect of Hindu society. He was very upset with the lackadaisical approach of the educated class towards Dalit communities. He was of the opinion that any rational society with sensible people would not agree with these irrational, inhuman and shameful practices towards a section of people belonging to same society and sharing a 'common homeland'. Putting certain irrational barriers, practicing inhumane humiliating practices with Dalit Community and forcing them to live such stigmatized and penurious life is nothing but a devil act against the notion of justice. Gandhi himself writing about Gokhale that 'uplifting the 'untouchables' was uppermost in the mind of Gokhale and he initiated and carried on various activities for their welfare'²² because he understood that 'unless we mix on a footing of perfect equality with them all hope for Swaraj is vain'.²³ Further, in the same speech he also appealed educated and intellectual class not to compare the Indian caste system with western class system. The Indian caste system is highly discriminatory, exploitative, humiliating, irrational and inhumane practices based on orthodox illogical religious principles while the western class system is based on liberal, democratic and egalitarian principles. So, better to 'turn the search light inwards' to introspect and understand the rigidity and irrationality prevalent in Hindu society or be ready to welcome a Dalit turned Christian..

²¹ Guha Ramachandra (2011). Makers of Modern India. Harvard University Press. P. 97. He is quoting from Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale by G. A. Natesan 2nd ed. Madras, 1916. Pp. 1045-1059

²² Gandhi, M. K. (1995). Gokhale: My Political Guru. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. P. 58 Retrieved from: http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/Gokhale_MyPoliticalGuru.pdf

²³ Ibid. p. 59

During the beginning of the twentieth century this discourse furthered with the great efforts made by various intellectuals and leaders of Indian National movement and well associated efforts of The Theosophical Society, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, and some Christian missionaries. Some suggested to abolish untouchability and other inhumane practices and emphasized to work for the promotion of education among Dalit communities, inter-dining and cultivation of common spaces such as sharing public places and water sources. Others suggested implementing a plan for the upliftment of Dalit Community into the Indian National program. Some also suggested to learn from western liberal democratic and egalitarian principles to make Hindu society progressive and inclusive of Dalit Community of India, but in no way it can be characterized as the beginning of (independent) Dalit movement. It was movement for inclusion of Dalits in the process of creating a broader base for Indian National movement to end the occupation of India from British colonial power.

After the little experiences they got from organizing and campaigning against caste division, Dalit discourse moved forward and acquired edge in the direction of untouchability abolition movement. To achieve social equality, equal individual rights, dignity and self-respect, Dalit Community had to first get rid of irrational, orthodox religious and social beliefs, understandings as well as cultural practices embedded in society for centuries to exploit Dalit communities. So after the consolidation of caste identity through some caste and sub-caste Dalit organizations, Dalit discourse seems to enter into second stage which can be called Untouchability abolition movement. Just before the Gandhian movement Untouchability abolition movement was concentrated basically on three issues, i.e. temple entry, access to drinking water and Dalit entry into the (Brahminical) educational institutions and construction of hostels for Dalit students. During this period of the movement the issues of education and participation of Dalit Community in the government institutions acquired special significance. However, above movement remained limited both in its ideological emphasis as well as in its reach as it did not question the exploitative social structure; it was also not related to any reformation under the social structure and caste system rather it began the processes of making the Brahminical system a little bit tolerant towards Dalit communities.

The next section explains the detail account of the twin process of Gandhian movement. On the one hand how Gandhi and his hollowers through their constructive programs were trying to assimilate Dalits (Untouchables) into the mainstream Hindu society/politics, on the other hand approaches were so limited that it could not offend the Savarna Hindus castes and their Hindu hegemonic discourses. Gandhi made various approaches including abolition of untouchability a part of Indian National Movement, at the same time he ensured that Ambedkarite movement could not enter into Bihar because on contrary to Gandhin approach this movement thinks that Dalit liberation is impossible in Hindu caste structure and they have to come out from this oppressive structure.

1.3. Dalit issues and the beginning of the Gandhian Movement in Bihar: third phase

There was no legacy of Dalit movement in Bihar like Maharashtra. In Maharashtra Dr. B. R. Ambedkar got the legacy of well organize Dalit movement by Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule and Periyar, but in Bihar Gandhi was the first person who started fighting for Dalit causes exclusively. He captured Dalit faith and Dalit issues both very easily because of two reasons. First; he was the popular member of Indian National Congress that had already started thinking about Dalit causes. Second; he started his first political experiment in India from Champaran, which had a legacy of fighting against British power right from the ‘Sanyasi revolt’²⁴ from late 18th century. No doubt he took very important issues which effected farmers, tilters, labourere but also the common people who were facing famine like situation. In addition, before entering Champaran in Bihar, in 1917, Gandhi had already earned the reputation of ‘Saint’ through his living (ashram culture), working and thinking style. This peculiar aspect and style of Gandhian leadership evoked the same image and memory; people had already experienced and rallied behind their sanyasi revolutionaries. This fact would underline the ease with which Gandhi mobilized them in the national movement with unprecedented enthusiasm

²⁴The history of ‘Sanyasi Revolt’ has history of saintly leadership with well participation of the people of north Bihar including Saran (now Chhapra), Siwan, Gopalganj Champaran and Bettiah. In Champaran and Saran people support was so strong that British establishments were strongly attacked by people during this revolt.

and sacrifice and in other way it had helped him establishing a good association with anti-brahminical and pro-Dalit organizations in Bihar.

Gandhi, because of his understanding of Indian society as well as his engagement with western system of learning and his association with western philosophers like Thoreau, Ruskin bond, and Leo Tolstoy, he established a proper way of communicating the people living in the villages having traditional belief and value system. With the help of Champaran Satyagrah and Untouchability abolition movement in Bihar, he developed a good relationship with all levels of Dalit leaders and Dalit activists also. Through his characteristic engaging technique and ways of interactions he generated deep connection with Dalit communities. With the result that this saintly image of Gandhi may have provided dalits a cue and perhaps even motivation to come closer and even search for the anti- caste, anti-Brahmin Dalit organizations such as Kabirpanth, Shivnarayan panthis and a popular Dalit leader Jagjivan Ram also.

At that time Kabirpanth had already taken the shape of a sect in Bihar. Followers were campaigning against caste system and preaching people teachings of Kabir and his ideas of equality, love, compassion between the people, irrespective of their caste and identity. They (Kabirpanthis) had developed good influence in surroundings. Similarly, there was another sect known as Shivnarayan panth (originated in Balliya region, adjoining state of Bihar, of eastern Uttar Pradesh), which was very popular among Dalit Community of Bihar. It was most popular particularly among Chamar caste. It was founded in late 17th century and it believed in 'formless God'. Followers were mostly from Chamar and Dushad castes. In Champaran, almost all followers of Shivnarayan panth were Chamar. It had wide areas. In Arrah (Ara) the family of Jagjivan Ram, a most popular Dalit leader in Bihar was followers of Shivenarayan panth. The interesting fact was that this sect had not only an alternative and different philosophy having different etiquette, but they had also a separate sacred 'red book' like Geeta, Bible, Kuran etc.²⁵ So, one can take it a part of the construction of an alternative Dalit religious identity independent from the Hindu religion and caste system because followers mostly belonged to Dalit castes only. But after the

²⁵Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005).Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp.- 65-66.

entrance of Gandhi in Bihar all these anti-Brahmin and pro-Dalits movements with the potential of becoming a counter-dominant ideological force in its own right got strangulated. Consequently, Dalits threw their voice behind Gandhi and got subsumed into Gandhian and National movement of India and taking their helps he gained popularity and wide acceptance throughout Bihar in quick time.

Let me put an example to see why Gandhi became so popular in very little time in Bihar. The issue is related to atrocities to the people of Dom caste committed by upper caste in Muzafarpur district. It is the excerpt of a letter written by a congress leader Janakdhari Prasad in 1933 to Gandhi asking for the solution of ongoing Dalit atrocities in a Subhankarpur village in Muzafarpur district. The issue was related to drinking water. A caste called Dom of Dalit Community was forced to drink dirty water of dirty pond out of the village, but they were not allowed to use clean water pond made for common use. Some villagers were taking money from Dalits forcibly for using this pond and water. With his great effort the congress leader Janakdhari Prasad convinced the villagers to allow Dalits to share that pond together. After two days people again started objecting and now it turned to serious issue of boycotting and banning Dalit to share this pond because Brahmins of that village threatened all people except Dalits that if they allow Dalits to share that pond or to drink water from common pond of village the whole Brahmin community would boycott attending all kinds of religious, social and cultural ceremonies including marriage and death ceremonies. That led to a very serious problem to the illiterate, ignorant people of the village.

In this letter the congress leader Janakdhari Prasad asked solution from Gandhi. Gandhi was in Yarvada jail. His reply was worth reading in the sense of challenging untouchability and other orthodox Brahminical practices. In reply on March 04, 1933 he wrote to Janakdhari Prasad that ‘anything done in the name of God and for His sake needs no support from an officiating priest, whether it is a death or a marriage or a shraddha. Anybody can unite a couple in marriage by reciting the sacred mantras’.²⁶ So, to overcome this situation, Gandhi suggested boycotting priests and all other who claims

²⁶The Collected Works Of Mahatma Gandhi. Volume 59, 13 January, 1933 - 9 March, 1933 in reply to Janakdhari Prasad; vide “Letter to Janakdhari Prasad”, 4-3-1933

to be priests; boycotting will force them to bow down before people because they would not afford to lose the income they get from these ceremonies and rituals. The Brahmins are threatening you because they think you will pay more for this ritual and ceremonies because you are in fear. If you stand with your causes firmly, then some reformer will certainly emerge within the Brahmins itself to do these rituals and ceremonies happily.²⁷ In the second reply regarding the deep concern regarding the marriage of daughter in case of poverty and helplessness Gandhi suggested Janakdhari Prasad that ‘do not worry for the marriage of daughters, let them grow into a woman, they will chose their husband themselves. The only thing you have to do is you must have courage to accept her choice.’²⁸ This shows the deepness of influence of Gandhi even in the everyday life of an individual. His clarity of thought and stand against social evils like untouchability, dowry system, etc. made him popular among different sections of people including Dalit communities. It is the example of how Gandhi entered in day-to-day life and their social, cultural and religious practices of Dalit Community of Bihar, which helped him cultivating Dalit issues for the mainstream Brahminical hegemonic politics under the banner of Indian National Congress. What Dr. Ambedkar was doing in Maharashtra, Gandhi was doing in Bihar but with completely different intensions. Before entering in the analysis of Dalit politics under Gandhian phase of the politics of Bihar let me explore different phases of Dalit discourse in the state.

2 Bihar Model of Dalit Politics and the Spector of Dalit Conversion

With the advent of Dalit consciousness in Bihar, the first phase of Dalit consciousness saw caste consolidation manifesting in caste self-respect movement based on some individual Dalit caste organizations and some other movements based on ‘Sanskritization’. The struggle did not bear much fruit for Dalit community’ collective voice, but at least it raised Dalits’ consciousness to ask for although not political but social, economic and religious spaces for them. They came to realize that it would take long and hard struggle to abolish the entrenched social evils, religious segregation and stigmatized identity. It would take a long struggle to Dalit Community for the recognition

²⁷Prasad, Janakdhari (2009). Collection of letter in ‘kuchh apni :kuchh Deshki’ , Muzafarpur.

²⁸Ibid.

of equally dignified and respectful individual identity in society. Meanwhile in 1917 the Indian National Congress had also included the abolition of untouchability program under their mission and working plan. Whatever was the intention behind this and how honest were they towards the interests of Dalit Community one cannot comment on it confidently but I must agree with Lala Lajpat Rai that 'even the uneducated seem to be getting conscious of the inevitableness of the reform within Hindu society. The movement is no longer ridiculed. It has passed that stage'²⁹ and it can be considered a milestone in shaping the way ahead for the struggle of Dalit Community against the orthodox, exploitative and discriminatory mainstream Hindu society. Before this, due to the conscious efforts of Dalit and Non-Dalits leaders and different organisations, Dalit interests got wider recognition throughout the country and finally this movement succeeded to include some other Dalit issues along with abolition of untouchability, such as access to drinking water sources, temple entry and promotion of Dalit education. This was the beginning of the third phase of Dalit movement.

Moreover, in the same year Champaran became the hub of experimenting Gandhian Satyagraha. The wandering Gandhi had soon got the recognition as the champion of Dalit causes. With his conscious plan he included all Dalit causes and Dalit struggles under the banner of the Indian National Movement led by him and the Indian National Congress. Doing this, he easily captured the already prepared ground for Dalit Movement in Bihar. However, there was strong conflict between Dalit movement and some rigid, orthodox and fanatic Hindu religious organizations that used to call them 'enemy' of Hindu religion. These fanatic groups had shown their concern time and again what Lala Lajpat Rai had already mentioned that;

The serious opposition which was made to its being included in the agenda of the first Hindu Conference held at Lahore in October 1909 betokened a healthy and encouraging growth of public opinion in the matter. The opposition, led by a few fanatics of one of the provincial Sanatana Sabhas, expressed dismay not at the subject having been in all probability thrust in, according to them, by the heretics of the Arya Samaj, but at the fact of some amongst the most prominent leaders of the Sanatana Dharma having consented to the programme. The cry of "religion in danger" was raised in all earnestness, resolutions were passed expressing surprise at the conduct of their leaders,

²⁹Rai, LalaLajpat (1910). The Depressed Class in 'The Indian Review'. Volume XI, Issue 5, May 1910. P. – 335.<http://www.southasiaarchive.com>

suggesting that probably they had been imposed upon by the "enemy" and appealing to them to retrace their steps and save the faith.³⁰

So, after joining Gandhi in this movement, it became the mass movement. These fanatic groups, even made violent attack on Gandhi, but due to the strong support of Gandhi and senior Congress leaders to this movement, they themselves had to retrieve.

After taking leadership of Congress and Indian National Movement, Gandhi, through his various writings, started clarifying his vision about Dalit issues. He put three options before Dalit community. First; they can help British government who made us slaves if they are in a hurry to resolve Dalit issues. Doing this would be very disastrous like something is being offered to fire after putting out from frying pan. Second; they can have a mass conversion to other religion from the Hindu religion. I will support Dalit Community without any hesitation if they think that conversion is necessary for enjoying materialistic pleasure, but according to my understanding, religion is a matter of heart and materialistic pleasure cannot force individuals to convert their religion. Further, Gandhi was of the opinion that if exploiting Dalits and doing inhumane practices to them would be integral part of Hindu religion, then certainly conversion would be the only way for Dalit communities. Condemning Hindu religion for the inhumane practices imposed on Dalit communities, Gandhi was trying to convince them that untouchability and other inhumane practices are not the part of Hindu religion. For him, Untouchability is stigma and it should be eradicated in all possible ways. Gandhi was claiming that Congress, Hindu religious reformers and he himself were committed to eradicate this stigmatized identity of Dalit communities. Conversion would not be the perfect solution to get rid of it. And, third and final option was that of Self-Help and Empowerment. For this, all Dalit Community come forward to join hands with all upper castes Hindu communities, who are committed to helping them heartily and with an urgency that goes beyond a sense of duty. This was the promise made by Gandhi in case of cooperation of Dalit Community with upper castes (Savarna) Hindus.³¹

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005).Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. 112-113.

In the case of non-cooperation, Gandhi suggested that ‘Pancham Verna’ (Gandhi used to call Dalit communities) could sever all relations with upper castes Hindus who are exploiting them, can construct a strong movement against the Hindu religion. It needs a well-organized, wise leadership, which, according to Gandhi, was completely absent. He tried to convey a strong message among Dalit Community that according to him there was no leader to win their battle against Savarna Hindu communities. So, only better option they had left is to join hands with Savarna Hindus and the Indian National Movement wholeheartedly to break the shackle of British slavery first.³² Gandhi during non-cooperation movement strongly appealed to Hindu communities also that if they want success of non-cooperation movement then they must change their behaviour towards Dalits. It would be better to eradicate this stigma themselves than appealing Britishers to intervene in support of Dalit communities.

In another incident described by Mahadev H. Desai in Harijan Sevak that Gandhi while discussing the matter of inter-dining with Konda Vaikatppaiya, a Vaishnav Brahmin leader of south India, he urged that if you are not changing your heart to have dinner with untouchables then it would be foolish to have hope of ‘Swaraj’ in this life.³³ Again, in his writing on 29 December, 1920 he warned Hindu communities that if they would not abolish the evil of untouchability, then ‘Swaraj’ would not be achieved even after centuries.³⁴ It means Gandhi was clear that without the support of Dalit Community hoping for independence of India would be impossible. So, it is very clear from the beginning of the Gandhian movement that the real intention of Gandhi was not to liberate Dalit Community from their stigmatized condition in Hindu society based on the exploitative and discriminatory Brahminical social order, rather he wanted Dalit support for the Indian National Movement. Fighting for Dalit causes was the part and parcel of the broader agenda of Indian Independence Movement.

As is now established, this movement in Bihar was no match of the similar movement of Maharashtra and other states where Dalit movements were far ahead and stronger in its

³²Desai, Mahadev H. (1936). HarijanSevak. Volume -4, Issue 1, 22 February 1936.<https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

³³ Desai, Mahadev H. (1936). HarijanSevak. Volume -4, Issue 1, 22 February 1936. Pp. 3-4.<https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

³⁴Gandhi, M. K. (1920). Young India. Volume Number 2, Issue 48..

ideological orientation and character. This despite the fact that all movements related to Dalit issues like the Untouchability abolition movement, temple entry movement, and drinking water access movement were started almost in the same time period. The basic difference was that in Bihar these movements were fought under Gandhian movement whose primary emphasis was not the liberation of Dalits from the scourge of Brahminical social system rather to acquire mass support for the liberation of India. This acted as blockage in the possibility of these movements as well as Dalit Community to acquire autonomous character and perhaps even radical ideological possibility; Since that would have meant allowing Dalits to come out of Brahminical structure, which would have gone against the mainstream of Indian national movement. In Bihar Gandhi did neither support conversion nor did he face any question of construction of any alternative parallel religious or social identity to challenge the hegemony of Brahminical social and religious order. In Bihar, Gandhi occupied all Dalit issues. He along with his followers including all popular Dalit leaders of Bihar under the influence of Gandhi condemned Dalit conversion and rejected all the way suggested by Dr. Ambedkar. Here in Bihar, Dalit movement was led by Gandhi, who was himself a non-Dalit conservative, a devotee of Hinduism and its orthodox irrational Varna system; His uncritical espousal of Hinduism was geared more towards saving Brahminical social structure based on an exploitative discriminatory caste system than the critical self reflection on the deeper malaise and indignities that lay hidden in the womb of this religio-cultural system called Hinduism. What followed was the confrontation between two ways of thinking and struggle, that is, between Gandhi and Ambedkar, in which Dalits of Bihar took side with Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram's model of reform movement for Dalits which was different from Ambedkarite model of Dalit movement in Maharashtra.

2.1 Leaderless Dalit in Dalit Mass Movement

The beginning of thirties witnessed the continuance of Dalit caste consolidation movement, mass mobilization against untouchability through writings and preachings, different Dalit conferences throughout India associated with Gandhian Movement and inclusion of untouchability abolition program under the Congress working plan. It gave stimulus to Dalit Community for gaining momentum and to consolidate against the

various social evils being practiced against them by Savarnas Hindus. In the same period Dalits were being co-opted by Congress with the promise made by Hindus Self-Help Groups to launch a broader movement in support of Dalit causes. In this series various other programs were held in Bihar to make this movement a mass movement. Let me put some examples here.

In 1923, the annual function held in Muzaffarpur celebrated ‘achchhutodhwar sammelan’ (untouchable upliftment/empowerment conference), untouchability abolition and ‘Yjnopavit Sanskar Karyakram’ (purification ritual program). In 1925, on the occasion of the foundation of Arya Samaj, Madhubani started Vaidik Dharma for Dalits and other untouchable upliftment programs.³⁵ In 1927, on the occasion of the 10th Hindu Mahasabha Conference in Patna, the proposal of temple entry for Dalit against untouchability was passed.³⁶ On 25-27 May 1927, in the conference of Arya Samaj held in Mahua Bazar of the current Vaishali district, despite the strong opposition from some fanatic Hindu groups, a Dom caste of Dalit Community was allowed to share water from different common wells present in this area.³⁷ In October 1928 there was a ‘Achchhutoddhar Sammelan’ (untouchable upliftment Conference) held in Danapur under the presidentship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. He appealed Hindu communities to allow Dalit Community to enter in temples and share ponds, well and other public places.³⁸ In the same year, more than four hundreds Dom and Chamars attended the Ramnavami festival and threatened Hindus that if they did not treat them equal then they would convert themselves to another religion.³⁹ So, during this period, in one hand Hindu Mahasabha operating ‘various means to create a ‘unified’ Hindu society-particularly shudhhi (ritual purification) organized through the Arya Samaj’s network, untouchable

³⁵ Vidhyalankar, Dr. Satyketu tatha Vedalankar, Prof. Haridatt (). Arya Samaj ka Itihas. Arya Swadhyaya Kendra, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. Pp. 315

³⁶ Bapu, Prabhu (2013). Hindu Mahasabha in Colonial North India, 1915-1930: Constructing Nation and History. Routledge.

³⁷ Vidhyalankar, Dr. Satyketu tatha Vedalankar, Prof. Haridatt (). Arya Samaj ka Itihas. Arya Swadhyaya Kendra, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. Pp. 315-325

³⁸ The Searchlight; 21 October 1928.

³⁹ Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar & Srikant (2005). Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. 110-124.

integration and caste upliftment programmes'.⁴⁰ It is very clear that those movements are not an example of assertion of Dalit caste or communities.

In the late thirties and beginning of forties this movement continued their momentum alive. In March 1932, a meeting called by Yamuna Prasad Singh, Secretary of Hindu Sabha Gaya, made appeal to Savarna Hindu castes to allow Dalit Community to enter into temples. Before that in 1928, after passing a proposal, Hindu Sabha not only allowed various untouchable children enter into schools but also made possible to share drinking water sources, roads, and to enter into Hindu temples. There were various other examples from various other parts of Bihar like Hajipur, Betiya, Motihari, Raxaul etc. In Chhapra the main gate of a temple was opened to Dalit Community with the condition that they would not touch the sacred statue of God.⁴¹ However, throughout this period Dalit movements were centered on three issues, abolition of untouchability, temple entry, and access to drinking water. In late thirties this movement also included an entry in educational institutions and it was started after Gandhi himself 'set an example for other caste Hindu by accepting untouchable's student into Gujrat Vidhyapith'.⁴² It was nothing like construction of independent Dalit identity to get rid of Hindu religion and Brahminical caste system, what was observed in Maharashtra and other states. It was also not an anti-Brahminical movement. What was difference between Dalit movement of Maharashtra and the Dalit movement of Bihar was that the Dalit movement of Maharashtra was led by Dalit while the Dalit movement of Bihar was led by non-Dalits. In every parts of Bihar this movement was led by either Congress affiliated upper caste Savarna Hindu men or the men affiliated with Gandhian-cum- Indian National Movement or social and religious reform organizations led by upper caste people with the intention that if they would not do this, then Dalit Community would convert into other religion and it would affect the Indian freedom movement badly.

However, after Poona Pact conflict between Gandhi and Ambedkar, the issue of Dalit leadership as well as Dalit movement both became the central issues in the politics of the

⁴⁰ Bapu, Prabhu (2013). Hindu Mahasabha in Colonial North India, 1915-1930: Constructing Nation and History. Routledge. P. 4

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴² Coward, Harold G. (2003). Indian Critiques of Gandhi. Albany: State University of New York Press, USA. P. 45

Indian National Movement. Very soon, in Bihar, Gandhi took the command of Dalit movement in his hand. After the foundation of Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932, the emergence of Jagjivan Ram in Bihar and Gandhian full command of the movement changed the complete scene of Dalit movement of Bihar. To make Untouchability abolition movement a mass movement in state and to decide the further course of action in a very planned and organized way, there was a conference organized in Anjuman-E-Islamia Auditorium, Patna on 06 November, 1932. In the presence of Dr. Rajendra Prasad five proposals were passed. Dr. Rajendra Prasad himself proposed the first resolution. Denouncing Untouchability, he also included other social evils derogatory to Dalit Community and Hindu society. He appealed that it must be abolished through the collective efforts of society. For him, these social evils were destroying the true spirits of Hindu society. These are highly divisive in character and it degrades the image of Hindu society. In the second resolution, appeal was made to Savarna Hindus to open all public places like drinking water sources, Hindu temples etc. for Dalits without any hesitation.⁴³ Jgjivan Ram moved third resolution, to appeal Dalit Community to improve their lifestyle, living standard and other necessary actions in everyday life to support this movement. Proposing this he was doing nothing but justifying the claim of a correspondent made about Dalit Community in Harijan journal that ‘...the Harijans themselves are to be blamed for the disabilities under which they are suffering. It is their dirty habits, which are really responsible for the observance of untouchability. Let them take of better ways; let them keep their persons, cloths and surrounding clean and leave off eating beef, carrion and other undesirable food. Then you can blame others for keeping aloof’.⁴⁴

However, in the name of larger context, it was accepted in that conference but he himself was Dalit and considering the circumstances, one must be sure that he made that statement knowingly in the influence of Gandhi and other Savarna Hindus with whom he was surrounded to show his dedication towards Gandhi and Congress. He would be knowing the fact that it is none but upper castes, the brahminical socio-economic structure and the Hindu religion itself were responsible to force Dalit Community to live

⁴³State archive, Bihar. File number 317/32.

⁴⁴Harijan. Volume-1, Issue-20, June 24, 1933. P.- 3.<https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

that life. At least he would have felt the pain of his communities before moving that resolution but for him interest of Congress and Gandhi proved to be larger than the interest of his communities.

In the fourth resolution an appeal was made to local authorities to help Dalit Community by providing them all the facilities related to the welfare of Dalit Community so that they could improve their faith in the movement. In the last proposal, it was proposed to establish a regional board of the 'Untouchability abolition league' and it was to be linked with all India movement. On the same day of the 'Regional Untouchability Abolition League, Bihar' was found. Later it was named Harijan Sevak Sangh and two non-Dalits Raja Radhikaraman Prasad and Bindeshwari Prasad Verma were elected as the regional president and secretary respectively.⁴⁵

According to the annual report of Harijan Sevak Sangh, between October 1932 to September 1933, within a year of founding the conference, 14 district committees were formed in Patna, Gaya, Shahabad, Bhagalpur, Munger, Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Darbhanga, Santhal Pargana, Saran, Purniya, Ranchi, Hajaribag, and Manbhum(Puriliya) districts including a special center in Baidhnathdham (Devghar) because this district was considered as Devabhumi (the land of God) and had witnessed deep conflict on the removal of Untouchability movement. Brahminical forces were too strong there and it was almost impossible to challenge the traditional, orthodox and irrational Brahminical myths. These fanatic forces of Hindu religion considered any reform movement as anti-religion. Even Gandhi had to face strong opposition and protest against his Untouchability movement. Despite this, six district conferences were organized and successfully held in Chapra, Ara, Bhagalpur, Munger, Jhanabad and Betiya.⁴⁶

There are also references that in 1933 this movement continued with full intensity through the year. It was mentioned in the Journal Harijan that temples opened for Dalit Community in the various places of Bihar like Dumri, Sonbersa, Saherpur, Mhnar Bazar, Sursand, Village Harka, Village Sarai, Mohhalah Begampur Arrah. Well opened in Sonbersa, Saherpur (Shahpur), Chandanpatti, Mhnar Bazar, Raghunathpur. This

⁴⁵State archive, Bihar. File number 317/32. Unpublished

⁴⁶The Annual Report of HarijanSevakSangh, October 1932 to September 1933.

Gandhian movement for Dalit Community had also opened some schools for Dalit children in Purnea, and some other places with the help of Arya Samajist. A note was received showing the progress made in Ranchi during Dec. 1932 to March 1933 mentioned that ‘During the Mahatmaji’s fast 14 public meetings, speeches and mass prayers, and 10 Kirtans processions had been conducted; 9 new schools had been started in the district... they have been supplied with books, slates, etc... 300 pieces of clothes were distributed on 2nd Harijan Day...the increase in the ratio is due to intense propaganda and uplift work during the ‘Epic Fast’⁴⁷ of Gandhi. Gandhi along with several other leaders and organizations, was very much active in Bihar then and due to his active involvement and saintly personality, funds for the welfare of Dalit Community were easily being raised. Having faith in Gandhi, peoples’ participations were increasing day to day except some fanatic Hindu organizations and their supporters. The disastrous earthquake in January 1934 afforded Gandhi another opportunity to achieve the height of popularity in Bihar.

Thus Gandhi recognized that India was steeped in religion and Dalit Community was so ignorant that the idea of conversion and pure rationality would not reach to them. They would prefer to internalize it rather than negating the philosophy of religion. He also believed in the liberation of Dalits but by the mode of assimilation and reformation, not by negating the very idea of Hinduism. He tried hard to destroy the very notion of pollution and purity through the untouchability abolition, temple entry and inclusion in educational institutions of Dalits but at any cost he did not want to divide Hindu society.

2.2 Bihar Earthquake: New Ease to Gandhian Popularity

In January 1934, Bihar faced a high intensity disastrous earthquake, which imparted an atmosphere of sobriety and empathy among all communities irrespective of their caste, community, religion or region. This tragedy only further enabled Gandhi in his strategy to convince people of the scourge of untouchability and he took command of the Untouchability abolition-cum-Dalit movement in his hand, with a relative ease. He explained that disastrous earthquake was a result of ‘calamities such as Bihar only come

⁴⁷Harijan(1933). 17 june 1933. Volume-1, issue-19. P.-2.<https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

to mankind as chastisement for their sin' of Untouchability practiced against Dalit communities. He regarded 'Untouchability as a grave that warranted divine chastisement'. However, he didn't interpret this chastisement as an exclusive punishment for the sin of Untouchability. It is divine wrath against many other sins.⁴⁸ Further, he decided that :

I must use Harijan collection for Bihar relief. I think it would be a clear breach of trust on my part if I listened to the advice. We may not afford to be unnerved in face of great calamities... But I make bold to suggest that, in reconstructing life in Bihar, if the wisest use is to be made of the help that is being sent, the organisers would have resolutely to set their face against reproducing evil customs and habits. They may not encourage untouchability or caste divisions unperceivably based on untouchability. Nature has been impartial in her destruction. Shall we retain our impartiality- caste against caste, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsee, Jew, against one another- in reconstruction or shall we learn from her the lesson that there is no such thing as untouchability as we practice it to-day?⁴⁹

Doing this Gandhi, very smartly, made a good combination between the earthquake relief mission and the untouchability abolition movement. He kept on visiting Bihar for more than a month. However, he had also faced strong protests of fanatic Hindu organizations. He was welcomed by black flags with the slogans like boycott anti-religious Gandhi, death to Gandhi, etc. He was charged with blasphemous, apostate and 'enemy of religion' tags who, for some fanatic Hindu organizations, endangered Hindu religion. In Devghar on the matter of opening the gate of the temple for Dalits, 'the orthodox group was very aggressive and attempts were also made to assault Gadhijee.⁵⁰ Despite this all protests by these fanatic groups, he carried on his mission of eradication of untouchability in Bihar.⁵¹

After completing his one month long first phase of 'Harijan yatra' from 25th March to 08th April, he started his second 'Harijan Yatra' on 22nd April. During this visit he went to Sitamarhi, north Bihar where people were very much agitated about the incident of destruction of a Dom (Dalit) village. In Sitamadh railway compound, where more than fifteen thousand people were gathered to hear him, while addressing the people he appealed that 'no doubt there are good elements in all religions, but I am strongly against conversion'. Despite the continuing atrocities against Dalit Community by Savarna

⁴⁸Harijan. Volume-1, issue-52, February 2, 1934. P.-1. <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰ Jha, Hetukar (2000). Promises and Lapses: Understanding the Experience of Scheduled Castes in Bihar in Historical Perspective. *Journa of Indian School of Political Economy*. July-Dec. 2000. P. 431

⁵¹for detail see, Jha Hetukar (2015) Nathmal Singhaniya Krit: Babuji Ki Devghar Ytra; Bihar Harijan Sevak Sangh (1934). Patna: Jagjivan Ram Sansadiy Addhyayan avam Rajnitik Shodh Sansthan (Bihar Sarkar)

Hindu castes, let's fight to reform it'.⁵² During this time Gandhi became so popular among every section of people, especially among Dalit communities, including women that his each and every visit was welcomed by huge gathering. He achieved such a height of faith of Dalit Community that they started thinking Gandhi as the only liberator of them at least in Bihar.

This was also the time when Dr. Ambedkar was fighting for depressed class communities in Maharashtra. He was the most popular leader of Dalit Community and he had no hesitation to go even the extent of conversion to another religion and construct a parallel religion to liberate Dalit Community from the exploitation and humiliation of Hindu religion. But his movement didn't enter in Bihar because that space was already captured by Gandhian movement and its different approaches to keep Dalit Community an eternal part of Hindu society and Hindu religion. The first phase of the Gandhian movement in Bihar that started with Champaran Satyagraha against the exploitation of farmers and labour class had already established Gandhi as a leader in Bihar. The second phase started with the untouchability abolition-cum-Dalit movement, under the banner of the Indian National Movement in association with other social and religious reform organizations had clinched the whole ground under his control. However, he criticized Hindu religion and the Savarna Hindu castes attitude towards Dalit Community as inhumane act, but he was against conversion and wanted reform within Hindu society. So he made every effort to stop the Ambedkrite movement to enter in Bihar.⁵³

The Gandhian movement against untouchability and other social and religious evils was the twin process. In one hand it was devoted to abolish untouchability, to bring equality by teaching and changing the hearts of sanatanis Hindus and the other hand to stop the idea of Dalit conversion so that Hindu society could be remained intact together and the Indian National Movement could be wielded into a mass movement. Gandhi had different understandings about untouchability. For him, the evil of untouchability was not the issue of Dalit Community alone rather it was the issue of the whole of Hindu society. It was

⁵² Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar & Srikant (2005). Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. 121-122

⁵³ Datta, Kalikinkar (1957). History of The Freedom Movement in Bihar. Volume II, 1929-41, Patna: Government of Bihar.

not the stigma for Dalit Community alone rather it is stigma on all those who call themselves as Hindus irrespective of their caste identity. Since Savarna Hindus were responsible for imposing untouchability and other social evils also, so the responsibility to abolish these evils falls broadly on them. This could be one reason that throughout the second phase of the Gandhian movement the sole leadership was in the hands of upper caste Savarna Hindus strongly associated with the Indian National Congress.

Despite the leadership being in the hands of upper castes, Dalit Community of Bihar got a measure of awareness about these issues, but the local and regional Dalit leaders who emerged during this movement got subsumed under Gandhi and Indian National Congress. Due to the different Gandhian approach this movement not only strengthened Hindu society internally, but it also assimilated Dalit movement as well as Dalit Community under the Indian freedom movement under the banner of Indian National Congress. In Bihar, this movement succeeded to stop the thought of conversion to flourish within Dalits and Ambedkrite movement failed completely to enter there. Dalit Community stood strongly with Gandhin approach of assimilation and reformation of Hindu society and Indian National Congress. This movement didn't only help to general unquestionable faith of Dalit Community towards Gandhian movement but it also blunted the sharpness of caste contradiction between Dalits and the savarna Hindus.

In the next section I will explain how Gandhi, after developing a common understanding about Dalit issues, with his different political approaches succeeded to keep Dalit faith alive in him. However, his entire approach was not anti-Dalit in his view but very orthodox in nature. This section will also deal with Gandhi and Ambedkar conflict on the issue of separate representation of Dalit communities. It was projected wrongly and misinterpreted in the public domain in support of Gandhi and with his political stunt, Gandhi kept Dalit Community against the Ambedkrite movement with the help of his Dalit counterparts.

2.3 Fast Unto Death: A Gandhian Political Drama

Let me start this section with the letter written by Gandhi to the then minister of Indian affairs in the British cabinet Samuel Hoare regarding the separate electorate to the

depressed classes. Gandhi was against the separate electorate to the depressed classes. So, to put the pressure on the British government, he wrote to Samuel Hoare that:

you will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference when the minorities claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorate to the depressed classes. This was said not in the heat of the moment nor by the way of rhetoric... in the event of government decision creating separate electorate to the depressed classes, I must fast unto death.⁵⁴

For Gandhi, separate electorate was harmful for both the depressed classes and for Hinduism. Separate electorate would simply divide and disrupt Hinduism. However, the British government announced the decision on 17th August, 1932 to award separate electorate to depressed classes without giving attention to Gandhi's letter. Seeing the response of the British government, to maintain this pressure against separate electorate to depressed classes, Gandhi on very next day of announcement of the award of separate electorate to depressed classes on 18th August 1932, wrote another letter to British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to mention that

... I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind, save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British government of its own motion or under the pressure of public opinion revise their decision and their scheme of communal electorate of the depressed classes whose representative should be elected by general electorate under common franchise no matter how wide it is.⁵⁵

Again on the 9th September 1932 Gandhi wrote another letter calling his decision 'self immolation' as his conscience had prompted him to do so in the matter of separate electorate to depressed classes because, for him,

the mere fact of 'Depressed' classes having double votes does not protect either them or Hindu society in general. In establishment of separate electorate for 'Depressed' classes I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatsoever to "Depressed" classes."⁵⁶

Further, to cover his hypocrisy he also mentioned in the same letter that let me clear that 'I should not be against even over-representation of "Depressed" classes. What I am

⁵⁴ Gandhi letter 66: to Samuel Hoare. From the selected work of Mahatma Gandhi: Volume-4. Gandhi Sevagram Ashram, Wardha. <http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org>

⁵⁵ Gandhi letter 67: to Ramsay MacDonald. From the selected work of Mahatma Gandhi: Volume-4. Gandhi Sevagram Ashram, Wardha. <http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org>

⁵⁶ Gandhi letter to Ramsay MacDonald, 9th September, 1932.

against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it.⁵⁷

Here in Bihar it was the strong Gandhian influence that Dalit communities of Bihar, within the 48 hours of the announcement of 'fast unto death' by Gandhi, had already extended support to Gandhi in favour of joint electorate system against separate electorate system to 'depressed classes'. Dr. Syed Mahmud, the elder leader of INC, Bihar, was of the opinion that

the government has decided, for obvious reasons, that the communal electorate is good for India. I would contest that it was not the case. Take the case of Bihar. The Depressed Classes Organizations here vehemently asked for joint electorate through its accredited representative before Franchise Committee.⁵⁸

But there are other facts of protest against the decision of 'fast unto death' started by Gandhi on 20th September, 1932. Declaring his decision 'irrational and unwise', certain sections of people were of the opinion that Gandhian decision was nothing but an attempt of suicide for worthless reason. In the pamphlet they distributed on that occasion of protest of Gandhi, it was mentioned that

suicide is sin, Gandhi's fast unto death is worthless; Savarna Hindu castes cannot accept untouchables as their own fellows, untouchables will remain untouchable until the Hindu society would be disrupted. The Gandhian decision to assimilate untouchable into Hindu society is beyond acceptable.⁵⁹

So, in support of the government decision of the separate electorate to depressed classes in Hajipur, the various meetings with Dalit Community were organized. People kept visiting in various villages to bring support for Dr. Ambedkar and in favour of the government decision to separate electorate but Gandhi kept his fast continue.⁶⁰

Despite all the supports extended in the support of the separate electorate to depressed classes, Dr. Ambedkar had to back step on this issue before Gandhian drama to conclude it in the form of 'Poona Pact'. People were waiting to hear Dr. Ambedkar at the conference organized by Hindu leaders in Mumbai on 25 September 1932 for the confirmation of newly concluded 'Poona Pact'. In his speech Dr. Ambedkar was very sad

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Pyarelal (1932).The Epic Fast.Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. P.- 198.

⁵⁹ State Archieve, Bihar. file 23/1932.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

with the double standard shown by Gandhi on the issue of separate electorate before masses in India and in the Round Table Conference held in London.

However, due to the situational crisis, as the life of Gandhi was in danger, he didn't reveal his frustration at that time but it was reflected clearly in his speech in the constituent assembly on 25 November 1949. He said that;

We must hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-co-operation and satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was some justification for unconstitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives. But where constitutional methods are open there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned the better for us.⁶¹

He was of the opinion that despite the double standard shown by Mr. Gandhi he was not convinced that Hindu society would follow the 'Poona Pact'. For him, Hindu society is not a single homogenous unit as Gandhi was trying to project. It is based on rigid caste system having the notion of purity and impurity, touchable and untouchables and different identity to different caste and communities. Even Savarna Hindu castes were protesting against his demand of the joint electorate system and they were not ready to assimilate Dalit Community under mainstream Hindu society. Further, he said;

the fact is that although the Hindus have accepted the basic argument in favour of communal scheme of representation they have not accepted all what the Untouchables are demanding. The Untouchables demand that their representation shall be by separate electorates. A separate electorate means an electorate composed exclusively of Untouchable voters who are to elect an Untouchable as their representative to the legislature.⁶²

So, Dr. Ambedkar was not convinced that the joint electorate system would be the last solution for the assimilation of Dalit Community into mainstream Hindu society. None of the electoral system could be the solution of rigid and orthodox social problems. It would be a political tool to precede a solution for the social problems embedded in society. Apart from this a lot would be required to be done for the liberation of Dalit Community or to make Dalit Community a part of Hindu society what Mr. Gandhi was claiming for.⁶³

⁶¹Vasant Moon (ed.) (2014) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. New Delhi: Ambedkar Foundation Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India. Vol. – 06, Introductory page.

⁶²Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (2016). Mr. Gandhi And The Emancipation Of The Untouchables. Books Written by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Page. 10. Retrieved from: <http://www.drarnbedkar.co.in>

⁶³Dr. BabasahebAmbedkar: SampooranVangmay (2000). Khand- 16. New Delhi. Pp.-112 -120.

Further, on the issues of Gandhian movement regarding temple entry, removal of untouchability and access to drinking water and other public places, Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion that this was the movement of sheer hypocrisy to weaken the political claim of separate electorate to Dalit communities. This temple entry movement was started only to weaken the separate political and social existence of untouchables/Dalit Community and to conclude their demand in the form of 'Poona Pact' without the provision of separate electorate system.⁶⁴ With the fear of complete division with the emergence of separate existence of Dalit Community from Hindu society, Gandhi used these all propaganda of temple entry and so on. D. C. Ahir also points out that 'prior to the fast Gandhi has even opposed to the entry of untouchables into the Hindu Temples. After the fast he ... advocated the opening of the temples well, roads and other public places'.⁶⁵ Its background can also be seen his writings such as, in *Young India* 1920 he criticized practice of untouchability 'not its own right but rather on the grounds that it continued existence obstructed national unity and thus harmed the fight for independence.'⁶⁶ In the same issues he warned Savarna upper castes Hindus that 'non-cooperation against the government means cooperation among the governed, and if Hindus do not remove the sin of untouchability there will be no Swaraj whether in one year or in one hundred years.'⁶⁷ In 1921, the same concern he showed while writing letter to C. F. Andrews. He wrote that 'untouchability is a bigger problem than that of gaining Indian Independence... it is impossible that India may free herself from English domination before India has become free of the curse of untouchability.'⁶⁸ This fear forced Gandhi to develop a cultural, social and religious bonding between untouchables and touchable Savarna Hindu castes so that Dalit Community could not go for conversion or other separate social, religious and political existence. So, it was just an attempt to weaken the political claim of separate electorate to Dalit community, if not then why he started his Dalit mission only after 'Poona Pact'.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ahir, D. C. (1995) *Gandhi and Ambedkar: A Comparative Study*. New Delhi: Blumoon Books P.-44

⁶⁶ Gandhi, M. K. (1920). *Young India*. 29 December 1920.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *The Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi*. (1971) Delhi: Government of India. 19: 289-290

This was the reason Ambedkar called this movement nothing but the Gandhian hypocrisy with Dalit communities. It was nothing but a ‘philosophical justification of Hinduism’. On the one hand he was running the movement of removal of untouchability; on the other he categorically stated that ‘removal of untouchability does not mean inter-marriage between Savarna Hindus and untouchables’. Giving them new name ‘Harijan’ he still kept them as a separate social category which made assimilation of untouchables into Hindu society impossible. According to Dr. Ambedkar ‘the virtue of anti-Untouchability plank in Gandhism is quite illusory’ because there is caste in Hinduism, so does in Gandhism, there is hereditary profession in Hinduism, so does in Gandhism, Hinduism accepts authority of Shastra, so does Gandhism. So, doing this all what Gandhi was trying to cover was the ‘nudity of Hinduism’. He had nothing to do anything substantial for the liberation of Dalit communities.⁶⁹ Despite the fact, Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion that if Gandhi and his followers are serious about accepting Dalits under Hindu fold and temple entry is the first step in this direction then it is appreciable but if Dalits would be Hindu then Hinduism must be a religion of social equality and free from caste discrimination. Just amending some rules do not mean that Hinduism has become a religion of social equality and free from caste discrimination.⁷⁰

Generally, due to the strong influence of Gandhi and Congress, ‘Poona Pact’ (without separate electorate) was welcomed in Bihar but different local journals and magazines strongly criticized it. The strongest criticism published in ‘Mithila Mihir’ Darbhanga, on 5th November 1932. It was read as that ‘this pact was in no means any reform to the current situations of Dalit Community rather it was betrayal to them. No ‘Swaraj’ of Gandhian conception could abolish ‘Varnashrama Dharma’ and caste system of Hindu society.’⁷¹ The then renowned lawyer of Munger Roy Saheb Amulya Nath Banerjee was of the opinion that Gandhi’s threat of ‘self immolation’ by announcing ‘fast unto death’

⁶⁹ Dr. Ambedkar, B. R. Chapter XI, Gandhism, The Doom of the Untouchables in What Congress and Gandhi Have done to the Untouchables. <http://www.ambedkar.org>

⁷⁰ Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Sampurna Vangmay (2000). Khand- 16. New Delhi. Pp.-112 -120

⁷¹ Mithila Mihir. 5th November 1932, in State Archive Bihar. File 28/1932.

was nothing but a 'political stunt' to stop the division of Hindu society. His purpose was served and Dalit Community got messed up into Gandhian net/pact.⁷²

In the last section of this chapter, I will explain how Jagjivan Ram, one of the most popular Dalit leader of Bihar, came with the new model of Dalit politics which was different from the independent identity based Ambedkarite movement.. He was contemporary of Dr. Ambedkar and he kept his stand anti-Ambedkrite throughout his political career, which proved as a strong huddle for independent Dalit and Ambedkrite movement to emerge in Bihar. It is also an interpretation available that, he was used by Gandhi as well as Congress to counter Dr. Ambedkar and his brand of radical Dalit/Ambedkrite politics. So, section will also explain how Jagjivan Ram became the face of Dalit Community of Bihar to pursue the interests of his political party Congress and reducing Dalit Community merely as a vote bank.

3. Jagjivan Ram: Deepening the faith in the politics of assimilation and reformation

In the western India Dr. Ambedkar was an undisputed leader of Dalit Community who didn't only challenge the discriminatory, undemocratic and irrational Brahminical social order based on Verna and exploitative caste system but he also tried hard to construct a parallel religion. He wanted to construct an alternative social and religious identity of Dalit Community to liberate them from the clutch of Hindu religion and its exploitative social structure. He attacked on the authority of religion, which were the root cause of exploitative Hindu caste system, untouchability and the exploitation of Dalit community. On the other parts of British East India, especially in Bihar, Jagjivan Ram emerged as a very popular leader of Dalit Community who believed in Congress and Gandhian politics i.e. the politics of assimilation of Dalit Community into the mainstream Hindu society. So, he was against the construction of an alternative or a separate identity of Dalit Community either through conversion or any other social, cultural or religious means. During his more than 50 years of long political career he showed his faith in mainstream congress politics and in the authority of state which was always in the hands of Savarna

⁷²State Archieve, Bihar. file 28/1932.

upper castes Hindus and he didn't go against the Congress and Gandhi to take independent steps for the welfare and upliftment of Dalit community. He was against the Ambedkrite politics and tried his level best to block the entry of an independent Dalit and Ambedkrite politics in Bihar.

3.1 Dalit Conversion Would Weaken the Indian Freedom Movement

Ambedkar and Babu Jagjivan Ram had a different opinion regarding the independent Dalit movement. On the one side Ambedkar was having opinion that it was nothing but the Hindu religion, its Verna and Caste system which are responsible for the pathetic situation and the penurious living condition of Dalit community. Living with this verna and caste system would never bestow dignity and self-respect to Dalits. According to D. C. Ahir 'Gandhi christened victim of unchouability as Harijan, children of God. Ambedkar, however, wanted to see his people as full flrdged "Children of Soil" with equal rights and priviledge and not merely as "touchables" under the guise of another name.'⁷³ Since, Verna and Caste system cannot be removed from the Hindu religion and the Hindu society, so the only option left to Dalit Community is to leave the Hindu religion to come out of its exploitative and discriminatory social order. On the other hand Jagjivan Ram seemingly agreed with Ambedkar position regarding Dalit community' liberation from the pathetic situation and the humiliating condition. Despite this, he, having strong faith in Hindu religion, he declared him (Ambedkar) anti-Hindu religion, anti Congress and anti-Gandhi.

While addressing people in Anjuman Islamia Auditorium Patna, on the occasion of the removal of untouchability conference in 1932, he further clarified his stand by appealing to the people that he is completely against the conversion of Dalit Community and the separate electorate to depressed classes because of two reasons. On the one hand Md. Ali Jinnah had already provoked Muslim communities for separate nation and on the other hand Dr. Ambedkar provoked Dalit Community for conversion into another religion along with separate electorate. Both, these demands are highly disintegrating and it would

⁷³ Ahir, D. C. (1995) Gandhi and Ambedkar: A Comparative Study. New Delhi: Blumoon Books.

weaken the Indian freedom movement.⁷⁴ He wanted Dalit Community to bring under his model of assimilation of Dalits under Hindu fold and at the same time reformation under Hinduism itself to accept Dalit community. For him, the people who have been socially marginalized for century would be politically marginalized after conversion. Even conversion would not lead Dalit to in much better condition. For him, Ambedkar way of thinking was not practically possible.

No doubt he was himself very much devoted to the upliftment of Dalit Community and also cleared his intention in the seminar held in the Anjuman Islamia Auditorium Patna in 1931, which I discussed earlier but at same time he had great faith in Gandhi and Congress more than anyone. He was against conversion and he didn't want to go against Gandhi and Congress. So, he made an appeal to Dalit Community that 'Untouchables are Hindu. We are born Hindu and shall die so. This is our nation. Mahatma Gandhi has said that Untouchability shall have to be eradicated.'⁷⁵ Further, he said that we must stop Dalit communities' conversion and the practice of Untouchability against Dalit community. According to M. Venkatachalapathy, Babu Jagjivan Ram was more attracted by the congress policy of empowerment of the oppressed class people. He was also attracted to congress because of Congress' vow of gaining freedom from the British.⁷⁶ But this particular move he made to counter Ambedkar slogan that he was born as Hindu but shall not die so. It was also said that his move was very much influenced by Gandhi and Congress.

Within the strong Gandhian influence and as a true devotee of Hindu religion himself, Jgjivan Ram didn't support conversion of Dalit Community to another religion. During 1931-32 he organized conferences of Dalit Community in different places like Danapur, Bhagalpur, Munger etc. to convince Dalit Community not to convert into another religion and Dalit Community were quite seemingly convinced with his appeal. Taking the reference of Gandhi, he appealed to the Dalit Community that he knows that Dalit Community will not go against the will of Gandhi because going against the will of

⁷⁴Paswan, Dr. Sanjay (2014). Rashtnishth Babu Jagjivan Ram.Samvad Media Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi. P.-5.

⁷⁵ Paswan, Dr. Sanjay (2004). Encyclopedia of Dalits in India: Leaders (Vol. 4). Delhi: Kalpaz Publication. P. 77-126

⁷⁶Venkatachalapathy, M.The International Journal Of Humanities & Social Studies (ISSN 2321 - 9203). Vol 3, Issue 5. May, 2015. www.theijhss.com

Gandhi will affect the freedom movement of India. He tried to convince them that we have issue of national freedom as our first priority, Dalit issue as separate issue comes next and it was internal matter of our society, we would resolve it once we got freedom from British colonial power.

Further, he didn't stop here only. He went on doing personal allegation that the approach of Dr. Ambedkar would weaken the national freedom movement and he would do all at his expense, to stop him. In this process, he not only tried to stop Ambedkrite movement from spreading in Bihar but also in other part of the country. For instance, when in the meeting of the working committee of All India Depressed Classes League held on 4 January 1936 under the presidenship of R. L. Biswas. P. N. Rajbhoj and Jagjivan Ram were secretaries of the league. Earlier Jagjivan Ram refused to join that conference because Ambedkar was to discuss there the merits and demerits of all religions to take decision about religion suitable for the conversion to Dalit community.⁷⁷

With the conspiracy of Congress and Jagjivan Ram agreed to join that conference and was decided to move a proposal to oppose the conversion move taken by Dr. Ambedkar. In that motion Jagjivan Ram support the proposal to take the stand against Ambedkar to 'oppose Dr. Ambedkar's proposal of separate electorate and religious conversion as means of Dalit emancipation'⁷⁸ and P.N. Ragbhoj took the side of Ambedkar. However, bringing that proposal was itself the conspiracy of Congress and Jagjivan Ram and this was the one example. According to Dr. Sanjay Paswan, his intention to join Lucknow conference was just to fail the motive of the conference. Again, next year in 1937, when Baldev Prasad Jaiswal organized All India Depressed Classes League Conference on 10-11 April, on the same issue in Anjuman Islamia Auditorium Patna, Jagjivan Ram tried hard to make it a failure. He made the statement before the commencement of scheduled conference that this conference is nothing to do with Dalit Community because this conference is organized by Christian missionary. Participants of this conference are non-Dalits. This conference is not organized for the dignity and respect for Dalit Community rather it is organized to weaken the Indian national movement. He didn't only criticize

⁷⁷Kalhan, Promila (1980). Jgjivan Ram and Power Politics. In Depressed Classes: A Chronological Study. Allora Publication.

⁷⁸ Kalhan, Promila (1980). Jgjivan Ram and Power Politics. In Depressed Classes: A Chronological Study. Allora Publication. P. 576.

the statement made by Baldev Prasad Jaiswal on Gandhi being anti-Dalit but also created the mess to disturb the conference. Finally, he succeeded with his intention.⁷⁹

3.2 Dalits were Dear, Nationalism Dearer

Before the Quit India Movement 1942, the All India Depressed Classes conference organized in the presidentship of Jagjivan Ram prepared a memorandum to submit before British government that All India Depressed Classes Sangh strongly condemn anything like the separate state and separate electorate to depressed classes. Doing this will neither benefit Dalit Community nor the Hindu society? He was of the opinion that any kind of separatism would certainly divide Hindu society. Dalit Community would become a separate category and Hindu religion would be destroyed. He made every attempt to cover the 'nudity of Hindu religion' to show his strong commitment to Gandhi and the Congress. For him, creation of separate electorate would reveal the cruel picture of Hinduism to the world. It would spread the message to the world that Hindu religion is so cruel and inhumane to their communities.⁸⁰ The dignity of Hinduism was on the stake because of Ambedkarite politics and he had to save it at any cost. He was a Dalit, had similar bitter, humiliating and stigmatizing experiences of Hindu religion and Hindu society as well. Despite all this, due to the Gandhian and Congress influence, for him, Dalits were dear to me but Nationalism dearer. However, there are also other interpretations available in respect of his move in the favour of Indian National Congress and Gandhi but his move were more towards nationalist politics than construction of an independent identity of Dalits and an autonomous Dalit politics as well.

3.3 A Call for Reform, Reorganize and Assimilate

On April 24-25, 1937, showing his strong devotion to Hinduism, in his presidential speech on the occasion of Champaran Depressed Classes Conference organized in Chmparan District Bihar, from where Gandhi himself started his political career with the experiment of Satyagraha known as Champaran Satyagraha, Jagjivan Ram speaking on consciousness of Dalit communities, their self-respect, socio-economic rights,

⁷⁹Paswan, Dr. Sanjay (2014). RashtnishtBabuJagjivan Ram.Samvad Media Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi. pp. 7-9.

⁸⁰Ibid. pp. 10-11.

conversion, national movement, and empowerment cleared his vision and intention before Dalit Community that, this organization will keep itself completely aloof from any kind of class-struggle and class-enmity. The goal of the organization is to reform and reorganize society. Conversion is not acceptable to us because this would divide us and weaken our strength in the fight against the British colonial power. Dalit Community is socially and economically different from Savarna Hindu castes, but not culturally. He suggested Dalit Community must try to assimilate into Hindu society. Speaking at the Chmparan Depressed Classes Conference, Motihari, 24-25 April 1937 he appealed to Dalit Community that ‘our differences with the Caste Hindus is only social and economic and not cultural. We are to try for our total assimilation in the Hindu society.’⁸¹ Extending his full support to Congress and Gandhi, he appealed to Savarna Hindu castes to help Dalit Community so that they can become the integral part of Hindu society. Further, he suggested that we need the movement in support of labourers, land ploughers, their enhancement of wages, and against such other exploitations, rather than for conversion. He went on saying that conversion would be a cowardice act.⁸²

In another conference organized by Bihar Depressed Classes Sangh on 12 July, 1937 in Gopalganj district of Bihar and chaired by him, he appealed Dalit Community to decide their course of action themselves without any external influences. This conference was well supported by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Dr. Ambedkar as well and attended by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Srikrishna Singh, and Anugrah Narayan Singh. Speaking in this conference he said;

Socially we are out-castes having our residences, generally outside or at the one end of the village. The doors of Hindu restaurants, hostels, and Halwai shops are closed against us. Hindu wells and even public wells are polluted by our use. There is not a single village in the province where we can use Hindu and even public wells openly, though non-Hindus may use them freely. It is our lot to quench our thirst with the dirty stagnating water of pools, tanks and rivulets.⁸³

This was the conference in the history of the Bihar Depressed Classes League that Jagjivan Ram, first time made an appeal to form a separate and an independent Dalit

⁸¹ Speech of Jagjivan Ram at the Chmparan Depressed Classes Conference, Motihari, 24-25 April 1937. Indian Nation 26 April 1937.

⁸² Ibid. .

⁸³ Depressed Classes: A Chronological Document, Babu Jagjivan Ram’s speech at Gopalganj, 12 July 1937.

organization from Congress in Bihar, so that focus would be given on Dalits.⁸⁴ He had shown his anger before prominent Congress leader against the lackadaisical approach towards accepting Dalits into the mainstream society. However, throughout his political career he left Dalit Community on the mercy of Savarna Hindu castes, Gandhi and Congress. Before it, Harijan Sevak Sangh and Bihar Pradesh Dalit Varg Sangh (Bihar Pradesh Depressed Class League) were founded in Bihar in 1932 and 1935 respectively. Making the assessment of these two organizations, this speech in Gopalganj seminar was taken as path breaking for the Dalit movement in Bihar. He concluded that during the five years period every attempt of removal of Untouchability had failed. We failed to bring any social and religious reform in the Hindu society. Neither the intention nor the attitude of upper castes has changed towards Dalit community. Every acts of establishing common social and religious engagement of Dalit Community with Savarna Hindu castes have failed. Upper castes continued the blockage of temples for Dalit communities; neither had they allowed sharing neither drinking water sources nor the other common places. It meant all attempts of Jagjivan Ram, the attempt for reform, reorganization and assimilation had failed. Now he had to rethink his ideas and strategies to move towards construction of independent space for Dalit community.

4. Towards the Construction of an Independent Dalit Space

Despite all his failed attempts to change the heart of upper castes Hindus in the influence of Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram showed softness toward Congress and upper castes. In the same conference of Gopalganj he urged Dalit Community that it is good to see that now our communities has reduced their interests towards temple entry. If Savarna Hindu castes will open their temple voluntarily, we welcome their generous step, if they don't, we will have to do nothing with those temples. Further, he suggested a very radical step to Dalit Community that as far as Brahmins are concerned to conduct our religious functions, we must develop Brahmins within our own communities. As far as possible we need to

⁸⁴ The Depressed Classes: A Cronological Documentation (1942). St. Marry's College. Lilltle Flower press. Pp. 76-87.

separate Dalit Community from the Brahminical propagandas. He also appealed to construct separate wells/drinking water sources for Dalit community.⁸⁵

Moreover, he was of the opinion that the powers, which hold the social processes, have not been attacked yet. Nothing has changed towards the social and religious outlook of the Savarna Hindu society. Seeing this, he threatened mainstream Hindu society that it would be no surprise to him that the caste contradiction between Dalit Community and Savarna Hindu castes would increase due to increasing self-consciousness and self-respect among depressed classes. This will be very dangerous to Hindu society and they will have to pay the cost due to their rigidity and orthodox approach towards Dalit communities. Due to increased self-consciousness towards their untouchable identity and to liberate themselves from this stigmatized identity Dalit Community may think about conversion. He had now started to accept the relevance of Ambedkar suggestion of conversion Dalit community. He himself accepted that I couldn't deny the fact that conversion would be beneficial to Dalit Community in terms of their dignity, self-respect and liberation from the humiliation in day to day life. Seeing the attitude and rigid behaviours of Savarna Hindu castes, I must say that due to their exploitation some people from Dalit Community convert themselves to other religion. If they don't change their attitudes then it will be dangerous to Hindu society and religion itself. Despite it, he strongly condemned conversion saying that despite it all atrocities being done to Dalit Community I would neither support conversion nor would encourage it because he had political compulsion to show commitment towards Congress and Gandhi.⁸⁶

According to Prasann kumar chaudhary, this clearly shows that Jagjivan Ram was also leading towards construction of independent space for Dalit Community but at the same time he had to face twin potential threats. In the one hand he had the threat to construction of an independent identity based Ambedkrite movement; on the other hand he felt an equal potential threat from the Communists. However, still Communists had not emerged as a dominant force in Bihar but if they would succeed in organizing poor, labour class and farmers on the basis of class politics, a major chunk of Dalit would join

⁸⁵ Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar & Srikant (2005). Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan, Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. 174-175

⁸⁶ The Indian Nation. 13 July, 1937.

them and the effort he was making for the construction of separate space for Dalit Community might have got subsumed under Communist politics. Even, during 1940 onwards, he also raised a very important alternative discourse of Dalit Community called 'Moolnivasi', very much in line with what Dalit and Ambedkrite politics had been doing.⁸⁷ These conditions put political compulsion to remain with Congress and so did the issue of Dalit Community in Bihar. He remained in the clutch of congress throughout his political career, although Congress did barely substantive to Dalit Community except reducing them as a vote bank to Congress.

So, the model of Dalit politics of Bihar that took the shape after the Gandhian experiment of Champaran Satyagraha and further developed under the leadership of Congress, Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. This model has two special features and i.e. assimilation of Dalits into mainstream politics and reformation within the Hinduism and Hindu hegemonic society. Within the deep contestation of ideas and strong challenges put forth by alternative forces to claim over Dalit leadership, this model succeeded with huge responses of Dalit communities. No doubt, this model provided space for the emergence of Dalit leadership like Jagjivan Ram, Bhola paswan Shastri, Mungeri Lal, Ramvilas Paswan and so on but they could not challenge the hegemonic discourse and dominant consciousness of Hinduism with any fundamental transformation. These all Dalit leaders who showed their faith in this model of Dalit politics of Bihar had themselves remained under the hegemonic consciousness of Hinduism. They neither provide religious reforms nor did they go for appropriation of any alternative idea that would be practically viable for assimilation or recognition of Dalit Community of Bihar. These leaders concentrated on political solution and the social and cultural concerns of Dalit Community remained largely unattended. Consequence of which this model has provided only individual recognition and recognition of Dalit community as whole is still remained the dream.

Conclusion

After analyzing entire Gandhian movement in Bihar during Indian freedom movement and the Gandhian approach towards Dalit Community of India I must say that his

⁸⁷Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar &Srikant (2005).Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000). Vani Prakashan, Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp. 177-187.

approach was very much selective regarding Untouchability and other issues related to Dalit communities. Gandhi 'continued to support the Untouchables's demands for access to public place such as temples, drinking water sources etc but he did so in a manner so as not to offend the high castes.'⁸⁸ It focused on assisting the Dalits with a perspective, which had a strong shade of paternalism.⁸⁹ Where Dalits were subordinated and Gandhi guided them in a fatherly way for his own good. It was never to abolish the caste system. Realizing the importance of Dalit community that without their support Indian National Movement could not be turned into a mass movement, however, their role would be nothing more than that of foot soldiers of Indian National Congress, Indian National Congress started taking Dalit issues seriously. So did Gandhi. He started his experiment from Champaran in Bihar. During the entire Gandhian experiment with National Movement, Gandhi had only two goals to achieve. First is to bring all sections of society under the banner of Indian National Congress so that the movement could be made a mass movement to put strong pressure on the British government. Secondly; to save the Brahminical social order based on caste and Verna system, howsoever exploitative and discriminatory it was, didn't matter to him. He was against Dalit conversion and yet his commitment towards Dalit problems remained overshadowed by his undue commitment to save Brahminical social order, shown in by his opposition to Ambedkar.

After constructing a saintly image and establishing disproportionate influence on Dalit Community in northern states Gandhi did not only capture all Dalit issues under his movement, but he also co-opted all Dalit leaders and Dalit voices as well into the Indian National Congress. He made them 'Vector of Hinduism' so that Ambedkarite ideology and the movement could not enter in those states. He felt that division of Hindu society whether by Dalit conversion or any other social, political or cultural means would pose a potential threat to the national movement's ability to turn into a mass movement. Whatever the understanding, but the model of Dalit politics of Bihar emerged under the leadership of Congress, Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram has two special features i.e. assimilation and reformation. Both the special features of the Bihar model of Dalit

⁸⁸ Jafferelot, Christophe (2008). India's Silent Revolution; The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics. Permanent Black, Delhi. P.-17.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.-25.

politics are contrary to the Ambedkarite model of autonomous Dalit politics because assimilation negates recognition and reformation does not allow reconstruction or restructure the traditional hegemonic society. So, what I can say, to quote Dr. Ambedkar, that,

What has Mr. Gandhi done to reform Hindu Society that his work and life be cited by democrats as a witness of hope and assurance. His friends have been informed of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and they continue to ask, Is not Mr. Gandhi working to uplift the Harijans? Is he? What is the object of this Harijan Sevak Sangh? Is it to prepare the Untouchables to win their freedom from their Hindu masters, to make them their social and political equals? Mr. Gandhi had never had any such object before him and he never wants to do this, and I say that he cannot do this. This is the task of a democrat and a revolutionary. Mr. Gandhi is neither. He is a Tory by birth as well as by faith. The work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh is not to raise the Untouchables. His main object, as every self-respecting Untouchable knows, is to make India safe for Hindus and Hinduism.⁹⁰

However, one would not agree with this statement because it may be the one reality and it cannot be the holistic sense of looking the Gandhian movement. It may be true in the terms of Dalit concern and the Gandhian approach. It is really very surprising that the man who devoted his entire life for ‘Swaraj’ self-rule, Democracy etc. failed to be democratic in his approaches. Gandhi talked about ‘autonomous individual’ who must have autonomy and freedom to make their choices be it social, political, religious and cultural whatever but he strongly opposed Dalit conversion to other religion according to their choice. The caste is most anti democratic element in the modern democracy and democratic society but it is beyond understanding that why did he want to preserve ‘Verna system’. Another way of understanding says that Gandhi was champion of his time and attaining National freedom was most important issue for them and any other causes are secondary but with due respect of his causes, it is also equally true that Ambedkarite politics was also more integrating in nature because it talks about annihilation of every divisive forces exist within Hindu society.

Dalit response to the Gandhian movement and the Bihar model of Dalit politics was based on practical understanding constructed under the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism. In term of practicality the kind of Dalit politics seen under the leadership of Jagjivan Ram was more practical and viable in the larger and longer interests of Dalits.

⁹⁰Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (2016). Mr. Gandhi And The Emancipation Of The Untouchables. Books Written by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Page. 25. Retrieved from: <http://www.drambedkar.co.in>

His approach was more realistic, constructive and balanced both in realms of idea and in the field of action. This is what we can call it 'the Bihar Model of Dalit politics'. This model gave space for Dalit leadership to emerge such as Jagjivan Ram, Bholu Paswan Shastri, Mungeri Lal, Ramvilas Paswan etc but none could challenge the hegemonic consciousness of the Hinduism with any fundamental transformation. Due to the lack of any ideological transformation of Hinduism and an autonomous or alternative consciousness of Dalit leaders and Dalit Community as well this movement lost its relevance. This clearly indicates why cultural pursuit is also equally important for the liberation of Dalits and in this way Ambedkar's take is very much justified but at the political realm Ambedkarite model of Dalit politics reduces them in minority. Despite that Dr. Ambedkar was one of the most powerful forces of that time but Jagjivan Ram, also being a mass leader, convinced Dalits that seeking another social status through conversion would not end the injustices that they have been suffering for centuries. Joining the mainstream politics would be better in the larger and longer interests. Thus, he constructed independent Dalit agencies in Bihar who are closer to assimilative and reformative politics than the Ambedkarite politics based on constructing and independent identity.

Communist Movements And Dalit Engagements

In the earlier chapter I have discussed how Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram's 'model of Bihar politics' succeeded to capture Dalit aspirations of liberation through the politics of reformation and assimilation into the mainstream Hindu society. Dalits too rallied behind Gandhi and Indian National Congress. Under this model they did much efforts on various fronts to assimilate Dalits and to bring internal reform to change the Savarna attitude toward Dalits of the state including the introduction of the word Harijan i.e. 'people of God' to refer Dalit category. Both Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram also successfully every efforts to enter Ambedkarite model of politics in the state but it didn't help much to raise the social status of Dalits. On the other hand, Day-by-Day Congress became the party of Savarna Hindu castes and Dalit aspirations faded away. In 1970s the emergence of militant Naxalite groups provided Dalits of Bihar an alternative path to express their anger -cum -rising political awareness and activism against their social and material deprivation. The emergence of identity politics in 1990s further marginalized them because the aims of social transformation, the revolution against their material deprivation, caste questions and genuine transfer of power in the hands of Backwards and marginalized remained unfulfilled. In this situation they had now no option except to support militant communist organizations such as Naxalite and Maoist to break the hegemony of mainstream society.

This chapter will discuss how do left organizations succeeded to capture mass Dalit aspirations to conceptualize the radical transformation of social and economic structure through the communist revolution. It has three sections. The first section explains the theoretical conceptualization of revolution in the domain of collective interests of proletariat class which includes poor, Dalits, Backwards, marginalized and oppressed sections of society. The practical way they apply to develop intimate relationship with these sections, their symbolic practices to earn strong commitment and the caste and class mobilization in the support of left organization. The second section explains how Dalit question emerged in the communist organizations. Third section includes Dalit critique of communist movements. Before exploring the way these left organization establish the intimate social and political engagement to mobilize Dalit community let me start with the way they conceptualize the popular

concept of revolution fascinating to the oppressed communities including Dalits of the state.

Any conceptualization of revolution, according to Charles Tilly's work *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978, p. 189), looks for two basic criteria. First; the 'revolutionary actors and actions should be based on an oppressed class and revolutionary organizations must have a comprehensive programme of social transformation in view'. Second criteria is that revolution should involve a transfer of power'.¹ These both criterias the social transformation and transfer of power are very much subject to the significant proportion of people who are oppressed and marginalized in the modern state. This is also very much consistent with the CPI (Maoist) programme of struggle. The CPI (Maoist) Party constitutions general programme specifically mentions that;

the Communist Party of India (Maoist) is the consolidated political vanguard of the Indian proletariat. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is the ideological basis guiding its thinking in all the spheres of its activities. Immediate aim or program of the Communist Party is to carry on and complete the new democratic revolution in India as a part of the world proletarian revolution by overthrowing the semi-colonial, semi-feudal system under neo-colonial form of indirect rule, exploitation and control and the three targets of our revolution—imperialism, feudalism and comprador big bourgeoisie. The ultimate aim or maximum programme of the party is the establishment of communist society. This New Democratic Revolution will be carried out and completed through armed agrarian revolutionary war i.e. the Protracted People's War with area wise seizure of power remaining as its central task. Encircling the cities from the countryside and thereby finally capturing them will carry out the Protracted People's War. Hence the countryside as well as the Protracted People's War will remain as the center of gravity of the party's work from the very beginning. During the whole process of this revolution the party, army and the united front will play the role of three magic weapons. In their interrelationship the party will play the primary role, where as the army and the united front will be two important weapons in the hands of the party. Because the armed struggle will remain the highest and main form of struggle and army as the highest form of organization of this revolution, hence armed struggle will play a decisive role. Whereas the united front will be built in the course of advancing armed struggle and for armed struggle. Mass organizations and mass struggles are necessary and indispensable but their purpose is to serve the war. The immediate and most urgent task of the party is to establish full-fledged people's liberation army (PLA) and base areas by developing and transforming the guerilla zones and guerilla bases. Just after completing the NDR the party will advance towards establishing socialism without any delay or interception. Because the NDR will already lay the basis for socialism and hence there will be no pause. Thereafter, the party will continue to advance towards realizing communism by continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.²

The idea of struggle against exploitation, imperialism, feudalism and the ultimate aim to establish socio-economic justice is what they named it communist society. Their programme aims to establish it through the radical transformation of power that gives impetus to proletariat class to act together in pursuit of common interests. This ideas

¹ for detail see Tilly, Charles (1978). *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Random House. P. 189

²Maoist Document. Party Constitution. Central Committee Provisional (P) CPI (Maoist). Retrieved from: <http://www.satp.org/satporctp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/partyconstitution.htm>

is very much central to the historical as well as contemporary experiences of masses, particularly Dalits and other oppressed classes who really aspire for big structural changes specially in recent political developments when social movement become the ordinary phenomena of collective behavior of poor, oppressed and marginalized sections of society.

The study of everyday engagements of landless, poor and oppressed Dalits and other marginalized sections in the 'base areas' where the radical left movement has established its own parallel institutions itself raises various questions about the 'skeptical role' of modern democratic state towards these sections. These sections are likely to rebel because of everyday experiences of atrocities, exploitation and injustices and at the same time the worse impact of capitalist market in the relation of agrarian structure, landless poor and wage labourers. They tend to breakdown hitherto exploitative patron-client system, which have been proving highly exploitative to these sections of society. They strongly feel that socialist/communist idea is more appropriate than any other ideas but due to unequal distribution of resources, economic interdependence over landowning classes and other exploitative social and economic organizations they are less resistant to the hegemony of mainstream society. Further, the agrarian relation, cultural capital and political economy add other dimensions to understand the conceptualization of revolution. For instance;

Landless wage earners and sharecroppers are more likely to become revolutionaries...hired labourers, working on farms under more-or-less uniform contracts, are able to make common cause against landlords. Moreover, they risk no significant assets in a rebellion. In contrast, landholding peasants are less likely to rebel as they are isolated and mutually competitive over land and water rights. They are less likely to take risks as many of them are dependent on large landowners for marketing or other services and, therefore, do not want to turn against them.³

It clearly indicates that the exploitative agrarian class relations themselves provide necessary impetus to conceptualize revolution in society. Adjoining with caste relations and everyday experiences of oppressed sections revolution becomes the spontaneous expression of Dalit and other oppressed section of society. Its intensity and mass mobilization depend on the revolutionary leadership, centrality of organization and providing leadership to poor peasants, landless wage labourer and finally extending power to them through their recruitment at key position. Other issues related to 'moral economy' dignity, self-respect, cultural economy, political economy and 'macro-structural relations' at both domestic and international related to

³ Kunnath, George J. (2012). *Rebels From the Mud Houses: Dalits and the Making of the Maoist Revolution in Bihar*. New Delhi: Social Science Press. P. 7-8.

finance capitalism are very much responsible in conceptualizing the revolution in the base areas i.e. rural villages of Bihar (India).

Census of India 2001 reveals that '77.6 per cent of Scheduled Caste constitute agricultural labourer. This implies that more than three fourth of the total SC workers are 'Agricultural Labourers'. This figure is higher than the national average (45.6 per cent).'⁴ It does not only show Dalits' dependency on upper caste but in other term it can be explained as a strong correlation between lower caste status and lower caste occupation. This status-occupation correlation also explains the exploitation of Dalits under existing strong patron-client system and grounded untouchability in villages of Bihar. In this situation Joul (2011, p. 350) says that;

the CPI (ML) idea to address the Dalit problem from a broader perspective including livelihood concerns, political enfranchisement and the social dignity of the rural poor in general, without restricting these to a problem of caste discrimination. At a more pragmatic level, the dilution of caste as part of a more general socio-economic framework,⁵

that gives the conceptualization of revolution into a broader parameter of Class. However, this phenomena is also criticized as left organizations try to ignore the caste problems because of their upper caste character and this has been remained the general feature of all communist parties of India. So, the obvious question emerge here is that then how do they mobilize Dalits under the communist framework.

1. Mobilization of Dalits Under Communist Framework

The conceptualization of the basic movement of left is based on the anti-poor policy anti-Dalit policy of Liberalization, privatization and capitalism. All other social evils and traditional oppressive and dehumanistic forces add to another dimensions of movement. This is the movement for establishing socio-economic justice. The implementation LPG policy in India, on the one hand there is an increase in poverty, unemployment, migration, starvation and exploitation of workers and poor people as the repercussion of the policy. On the other hand millionaires are becoming billionaires overnight, Capitals are concentrating in the hands of few and the gap between rich and poor are broadening day by day. The worse effect falls upon farmers, villagers, Dalits, tribal and landless. Further, land is being taken away

⁴ See Government of India. (2001). Office of the Registrar General & Census Commisiioner, India. Census of India 2001. Table, A-10. (State Primary Census Abstract For Individual Scheduled Caste—2001, Bihar). Retrieved from: http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_sc_bihar.pdf

⁵ Jaoul, N. (2011). Manju Devi's martyrdom: Marxist-Leninist politics and the rural poor in Bihar. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 45(3), 347 – 71. P. 350.

forcibly from poor in the name of development and industrialization. Corruption is ever spreading phenomenon in the system. Right from the PDS rations, MDM (Mid Day Meal) for poor to the cabinet level dealings such as coal mines to defense none of the single welfare program and policies is free from loot and plunder of money. Government torcher and 'babus' (officers) exploitations of poors and marginalized in day-to-day life are other form of corruption. Prices are rocketing sky high. Resources from the villages are taken away to construct multi stores buildings in cities and those who are the real inheritors of the resources are denied from even the basic minimum livelihood. Poor, Dalits, tribals etc. have been denied of education, employment and even minimum wages. Proletariat class has left no option to these people except to take all this silently. If they dare to protest then they have to bear the brunt of the blow of the government sticks and bullets. So, the communist rhetoric of revolution are very much appealing to all, Dalits, tribals, labourers, farmers, hard working people, shopkeepers, small merchants, student and youth. When the police-politicians-criminals nexus left no option to these people then they have only option left is to come and participate in the struggle launched by various forms of left movements, be it Naxalite or Maoist against this nexus and wide spread corruption. Since Dalits, tribals and poor are badly affected sections by anti-poor policies of government. Particularly, after the implementation of LPG model/policy in India, left parties, both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left, sharpen their attack against different anti-poor, anti-Dalit and anti-tribal policy of government. They have also succeeded to mobilize these sections to present the formidable and organized counter movement to the Indian state's policies and economic liberalization despite the strong state repression. Both parliamentary and non-parliamentary left organizations targeted to mobilize these marginalized sections. Their movement speeded into the different regions of India such as West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh etc. and these regions are known as 'red corridor'. According to Alpa Shah (2013: 483);

“These are the remote regions that, on the one hand, house most of India's mineral wealth (reserves of coal, iron ore and bauxite in particular) and that, since Indian economic liberalization in the 1990s, have become the target of investment by multinational companies and large corporations (Mittal, Vedanta, Essar, Posco, to name a few). On the other hand, these are also the regions that have historically been severely neglected by the developmental functions of the Indian state, making them some of the poorest in the country by even the crudest of poverty measures. They have no electricity, no running water, no sanitation, no pitch roads, negligible health care, very low levels of literacy and almost everyone living in mud

houses, relying on forest products, wage labour and a little bit of farming to make ends meet”.⁶

Ordinary people particularly, Dalit, tribals and poor are trapped between the struggle of Naxalite, Maoists and the state. They are ‘sandwiched’ between the two armies of state and Maoists. In addition, Maoists and Naxalite groups are also been accused with several charges such as they are controlling these areas by terrorizing local populations, delegitimizing state institution and revealing their anarchism (Bose, 2010).⁷ They have been continued their non-violent/violent struggle or resistant movement, whatever, through the exploitation of Dalits, Adivasi and other poor people from backward sections. They need people as fuel for their revolution and Dalits, Adivasi and poor are easily convinced to work as flag bearer and foot soldier. It is also the fact that this movement is very much cost calculating because some people have also participated in this movement for their sheer economic greed. Most of the money raised by ‘levy’ was syphoned out by different roots to improve the economic position of Maoist leaders.

Miklian & Carney (2010) argued that ‘the mines are also cash registers for the Maoist war chest. Through extortion, covert attacks, and plain old theft, insurgents have tapped a steady stream of mining money to pay their foot soldiers and buy arms and ammunition, sometimes from treasonous cops themselves.’⁸ Calling them ‘home-grown thug’ they further describe that these extra-parliamentary radical left forces are developing strong intimacy with these poor, Dalits and marginalized sections of society by cultivating various local grievances such as poverty, lack of justice, political apathy and drawing the mass support to delegitimize state institution and democratic electoral processes. Maoists claim that the aim of their movement is to redress socio-economic injustices and to establish a socio-economic equality through the radical transformation of economic structure of society but, in their view, ‘they are less an organized ideological movement than a loose confederation of militias, and many of their local commanders appear to be in it for the money alone’.⁹

However, rejecting this argument some other like Bella Bhatia, Shri Balagopal, and Arundhati Roy are of the opinion that Left movement, Naxalite and Maoists grant

⁶ Alpa Shah (2013). The intimacy of insurgency: beyond coercion, greed or grievance in Maoist India, *Economy and Society*, 42:3, 480-506, p. 483.

⁷ For detail see Bose, P. (Ed.) (2010). *Maoism: A critique from the left*. New Delhi: Leftworld.

⁸ Miklian, J. & Carney, S. (2010). *Fire in the hole: Foreign policy*. Retrieved on 2 May 2017 from: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/08/06/fire-in-the-hole/>

⁹ *ibid*

have been taking up the causes of poor, oppressed, Dalits and tribal. They grant these people the agency and institution of liberation from their exploitation, so they join voluntarily to participate and fight for their causes. 'They are fighting for their dignity, for the right to live and smell like human beings. They are fighting because, as far as they're cornered, "the fruits of modern development" stink like dead cattle on the highway' (Arundhati Roy, 2011, pp. 158-9).¹⁰ A very similar argument but in soft language was presented in the report of the then Planning Commission of India 2008, now it has been changed to NITI, Ayog (National Institution for Transforming India) on January 01, 2015, led by Bella Bhatia and Shri K. Balagopal. Presenting the bad experience of so-called development of the modern state of India from the perspective of Dalits and Tribals, they are arguing that Dalits and Tribals are the main Maoist and extremist supporters. The Indian state has failed to deliver in these 'extremist affected areas'. State has almost neglected these areas by breaking every possible engagement with the people. This act of 'failure, inadequacy or injustice of state mechanisms and institutions created space for the Naxalite activities' (Government of India, 2008, p. 45).¹¹ So, the lack of basic minimum facilities for livelihood, very low literacy rates, absence of employment opportunities, violation of every human right, exploitation and social discrimination adjoining with political marginalization, landlessness, forced evictions in the name of development are resulting in the 'element of discontent of the people' (ibid. p. vi)¹² of these 'extremist effected areas'. Denial of justice and human dignity by state and its mechanism and relief provided by outside the government agencies at the need of hour created alienation and apathy toward state tilted the scale of local people in the favour of Naxalite and other extremist groups.

The close observation and analysis of their various modes of engagements with these marginalized, oppressed and state neglected people reveals the fact, the way they draw moral commitment among these people toward the communist movements. With the continuous engagement and helping hand they make the people understand that their exploitation, marginalization, poverty, etc. are the part and parcel of exploitative economic and social system and government policies as well. Their sufferings are the result of institutionalized exclusion by state and other ruling class

¹⁰ Roy, A. (2011). Broken republic. New Delhi: Hamish Hamilton. Pp. 158-9.

¹¹ Government of India (2008). Development challenges in extremist affected areas. New Delhi: Report of an Expert Group to the Planning Commission, Government of India. P. - 45

¹² ibid. p. vi

agencies and institutions. The deeply generated apathy and alienation towards institutions of state and irresponsible ruling class for their structural inequality, historical injustices and suffering forced them searching an agency for liberation. This consciousness draws moral commitment of people in favour of communist organizations and people feel pleasure to support and participate in these movements be it communist or extremists such as Naxalite or Maoists. Alpa Shah (2013: 486), not particularly about Dalits, is also having almost similar opinion that;

in this context it would seem reasonable to assume that the sustained neglect of these remote regions by the Indian government, combined with the threat of their further impoverishment on the underside of rapid and uneven economic growth, ignited the people who lived in the guerrilla zones to support and join those who were addressing the structural inequality pervading the country.¹³

So, apart from ideological principle and political and non-political organizations the development of intimacy between the mobilizing forces of left organization and the Dalits are very crucial in the extension of support and joining the hands with this movement. Further, she is of the opinion that;

there are also relations of intimacy which are premised on rather different ideological principles from those of competing organizations, such as that of the Hindu right in neighbouring areas. In focusing on the development of relations of intimacy and their ideological tensions. ... the ways in which the contradictions of revolutionary subjectivity formation, with the ties of family and kinship, exchange and its expectations, caste and its manifestations, emerge as crucial tools with which to understand the social dynamics of the revolutionary mobilization. The conflicting tensions between different ideologically influenced forms of intimacy can explain why people support and join, but also why they leave and betray movements of radical mobilization; they help explain what sustains the expansion of radical movements and can also explain their decline¹⁴ (ibid 2010, p. 486).

Most of the time it has been observed that Dalit community increasingly become footballs to kick on the one side by state agencies and institutions and on the other side by these extremists' organizations. Despite that these communities through the continuous engagement of these communist organizations have been inspired to participate and cooperate voluntarily. Especially youth of the village voluntarily carry the flag to administer the desire of these oppressed and marginalized communities at the local level. The level of intimacy is so strong that some time they feel sorry when they fail to join a rally and any demonstration organized by communist organizations. Whatever the nature of state agencies and institutions but coercion has nothing to do with providing good administration and justice to Dalit and poor. So, especially Dalit community along with other poor and oppressed have no choice except to support and

¹³ Alpa Shah (2013). The intimacy of insurgency: beyond coercion, greed or grievance in Maoist India, *Economy and Society*, 42:3, 480-506, p. 486

¹⁴ ibid.

participate the movement launched by both parliamentary and non-parliamentary communist organizations in different regions of the state. In the areas where these considered Naxalite and Maoist foothold very strong, even coercive pressure does not necessarily undermine the revolutionary support of oppressed communities.

Considering their ability to appeal the masses to justify their struggle, unlike the government agencies and institutions they succeed to make poor and oppressed feel psychological compulsion to participate every occasions without compromising their legitimacy. It is also not a matter of surprise to me that in the situation of strong anti-ruling class sentiment and strong apathy towards officers and state institutions coercion actually has contributed to their popularity. When I asked, some local people of Chakai in Jamui district, one of the worse state neglected and Naxalite effected area in the state, argue that even coercive strategies applied by these extremists groups are effective in the sense of bringing solidarity among oppressed castes, however, nobody can ignore that they do criticize and show reluctance to participate in movement, despite that there was overwhelming sympathy can be observed for the movement among Dalits and other oppressed castes. This is why extremists such as Naxalite and Maoist in this region became the legitimate authority. So, the state repressive role extended the extremists' legitimacy in the areas.

1.1 Extremists' Legitimacy and State Exploitative Role

Exploiting the historically exploitative role of government agencies juxtaposed with anti-feudal struggle, struggle for land re-distribution and goal to establish socio-economic justice are some reasons to establish extremists' legitimacy among Dalits and oppressed sections of society. For example, in Chakai, the forest officers prevented local people to use forest products but at the same time outside contractors illegally allowed to load their trucks with not only forest products but felled trees also. They even allowed cutting the tree illegally. On contrary to this extremists groups call a movement in demand that local people have every rights on forest product, if state cannot allow this then at least raise the wages for the collection of forest products. Demands of re-distribution of land of state-owned farm to poor and anti-feudal movements are other issues in the area. In addition, the establishment of Maoist mobile health clinics, schools and other facilities indicating their concern for local people, particularly poor and oppressed are the reasons for winning Dalits, poor and

oppressed people support to Maoists in this region.¹⁵

Further, enlightening Dalits, poor and oppressed in local areas about the fundamental problems and systemic failure of State agencies and institutions help them mobilize the villagers to protest against the struggle, oppression and exploitation related to everyday life of local poor people. With their continuous engagement Maoist cadre able to expose how the exploitative mechanism of state are structured to work against the interest of Dalits and poor. For them, it is nothing but the working style of these structured state machineries produce problems in their everyday life. It works in the interests of ruling class only. On contrary, Maoists leadership work for the poor, by the masses and to the oppressed. This is the way they translate their ideas into the action with the help and support of Dalits, poor and oppressed. The Committee meeting is another effective mechanism that acts as a grievance redressal cell.

1.2 Committee meetings

Focus on the particular issue is raised in the Maoist village committee meeting. The local cadre collect the problems faced by villagers to discuss and forward to upper level hierarchy of leadership. Analyzing these local problems, upper leadership very smartly locates connection between that local problems and the broader structure of state power. Local cadre re-present this problem to people in the way it has been explained by upper leader establishing strong connections with structured state power to convince and organize against the state agencies. For example, the problem of corruption at local level related with bribery are explained like that the MPs and MLAs take bribe to those officials while transferring them in offices where they can make huge money by taking commission from the contractors and so does in case of individuals for issuing ration cards, BPL card or other certificates. So, these officials are forced in that situation to take that money from poor. In the case of corruption in PDS the villagers' immediate anger is against the PDS dealer of village who distribute and sold off their rations and kerosene oil in the black market.¹⁶

The local cadres do not only organize local people against those dealers but they also organize against the state officers who take the commission/bribe to save them. Further, they also explain the role of international institutions like World Bank and

¹⁵ interview with Basudev Yadav, ex- Sarvodaya activists in Chakai on 6 oct, 2015.

¹⁶ Interview with Bajrang Bihari Singh, an independent MLA candidate from Chakai Vidhan Sabha constituency in 2015. Interview taken on 7 oct. 2015.

government responsible for declining subsidies and also the policies such as liberalization, privatization and globalization are systematically promoting the corruption within our system to aggravate our local problems and everyday life. The way they penetrate thoughts and ideas in the minds of people not only questions the local dealers but the very character of the state. Observing this fact, I found Dalit community of this region have more faith in Maoist leaders and communist movement than faith in Ambedkarite movement. However, Ambedkarite movement is also a radical movement to restructure the exploitative socio-economic structure but it is almost absent in this region and mobilization of Dalits in favour of both parliamentary and non-parliamentary radical communist movement is immense. They do not only extend support and sympathies but also join the underground squads.

Various other social relations that have been observed between communist organizations and Dalits explains itself the depth of their engagement with communist movement, particularly the bond of intimacy between Dalits and tribal youth and an upper caste Maoist leader. This bond of intimacy plays great role in construction of new social relationship for which particularly Dalits and Tribal have been aspiring for centuries. The kind of gesture given by upper caste communist leader to Dalits, tribal and poor even at household level led them extend support to the movement voluntarily. However, left movement started considering caste problem very late. A number of examples of inter-caste marriages people narrated during my fieldwork even between Dalit and upper caste, which shows itself the reason of popularity of the communist leaders and the movement amongst Dalit and oppressed communities. So, the inter-personal reasons as well as development of new social relations are very much significant for winning close engagement of Dalits and oppressed with communist movement.

They have established good relations even with the student of different universities of the state. There are student wings of left parties in almost every university and they have been showing strong concern for the Dalits and adivasi's social and economic problems for years. This kind of organizational structures have not been developed and promoted by Dalit leaders neither at the level of movement, nor at party level. Student had great role in the mobilization of poor peasant from lower caste especially Dalits. Many student of left organization had shown strong fighting spirit against the state repression on the issue related to these communities. Even Dalits and backward student are targeted to join the organization because they can stand firmly in the fight

against the landlord. Same the case at the local level Dalits. In Chakai, I found both Dalit youth are as enthusiastic as Tribal youth to join even Maoist armed squads. The youth from upper caste have also found there joining and supporting Maoist movement out of anger.¹⁷

1.3 Extremists and Mass Participation of Dalits

In the context of huge Dalit participation the role of communists' political organization is immense. Mass peasant mobilization and participation has become possible because of the revolutionary character of top leadership. Their ability to translate peasant anger into the movement and dynamic character to penetrate their ideas into the masses play great role to gain the support of peasant class. Suffering continue due to historical injustices and the close engagement with communist cadres culminates into joining the movement and extending huge participation to the party. One of the Dalit peasant from Jahanabad, who came to join the rally in Gandhi Maidan, Patna, addressed by Dipanker Bhattacharya, the General Secretary of CPI (ML), was of the opinion that 'in 1996, I initially joined a local demonstration in my village Ara out of anger and was so convinced that since then I have been working for left organization'. Replying to my counter question –had there been a Dalit or Ambedkarite organization approached to you then, how would have you responded? He replied that 'I am not sure but still, in the area I belong to, Dalits have no option except to join communist organization be it out of anger or in the need of hour because still Ambedkarite forces are not strong enough to fight our battle. Members of both the movement are almost common but the organizational efficiency of communist organizations is better than the Ambedkarite organization in the area. Today my situation is that the close bond of friendship developed after long engagement has drawn such a strong moral commitment to left that I cannot extend my support to other. Now, it is like part of my extended family'¹⁸

In the different regions of Bihar, even today Dalit and backwards retain considerable attachment with the extremists organizations where they run almost a parallel institutions of governance such as Maoist court, panchayat etc. It is very tough to

¹⁷ Interview with Shiv Sagar Sharma, CPI-ML office bearer in Arwal region, 20th May 2015

¹⁸ this fact revealed by a Dalit turned left activists of Senari village of Bhojpur District, Bihar. The interview cum discussion held on February 19, 2015 in Gandhi Maidan Patna when he came to join a rally called by CPI(ML) and addressed by CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya.

differentiate between Maoist and common men because the boundaries between people and Maoist are blurred and not as porous as between state and the people. As above said by a respondent it is 'like an extended family'. Developing new social relationship through inter-caste, inter-religious marriages and inter-community unions they are working to abolish all type of social and economic boundaries. I cannot say that these boundaries have been abolished there but one thing I can argue for sure that the new social engagement constructed by communist movements have blurred this deep looking unbreakable boundaries. Kamlesh Sharma, one of the office bearer of CPI (ML), Liberation is of the opinion that 'even, I am not sure that whether this new social relations are serving the same purpose what Dr. Ambedkar was suggesting to 'annihilate the caste' but for one thing I am sure that it has captured the ground of Ambedkarite movement to emerge in Bihar'¹⁹. It has made the boundary so blurred that even differentiating a sympathizer; supporter or armed cadre is very tough to the state. How much reality exists in this argument one cannot judge with the little experiences but one thing is very sure that particularly Dalit and oppressed castes are deeply engaged with the movement and they have no option except to join the communist movement.

Further, in respect of Dalits and the new social relation he is of the opinion that it is not just the ideology and philosophy but the people particularly from Dalits and oppressed communities, with their hard work bring the party in position to win the credibility of masses. They are the fundamental part of party as well as the new social structure in these areas. However, the significance of ideology and principle of party can not be ignored because ideological premises, principal and philosophy of a political party set the agenda for cadre to work on and shape the character and nature which finally influence the everyday life experiences of masses. Ideology does play big role to develop the new social relation where Dalits feel freedom to cultivate their every rights as equal citizen. 'The kind of social relation communists are trying to develop has itself created the scope to win the heart of Dalit and other oppressed classes who have been denied to enjoy their rights for centuries.'²⁰ To him it is not surprising to observe the sense of brotherhood between Tribal, Dalit and high caste Naxalite youth leader and the role of these relationships in transcending old relation based on caste into new social relation free from caste. The movement is equally

¹⁹ kamlesh sharma, an office bearer CPI(ML) Patna region. Interviewed on 20th May 2015, in Patna.

²⁰ *ibid.*

popular among women and particularly among Dalits women. Some people join this movement due to the inter-personal reasons.

1.4 Symbolism, new Social Relations and its Significance

Significance of new social relations is more specific between communist movement and the local people. Having broken the caste boundaries, the new pattern of engagement and the way of mobilization of local people produce confidence to strengthen their primordial attachment with Jal, Jangal and Jamin (i.e. Water, Forests and Land) along with other issues related to the oppression, inequality, injustice etc. Observing the revolutionary commitment and the mass support of Dalits and poor particularly in countryside of state Communist Party of India-Marxist Leninist (Liberation) (CPI-ML Liberation), (which born in 1974 aftermath of the Naxalbari peasant uprising in 1969 as an extra-parliamentary communist organizations. Fought its battle for two decades as ‘underground Naxalite party’) was forced to participate in electoral politics in 1989. Now, according to Jaoul (2011, p. 1),

the economic struggles, social aspirations and aesthetic values of the rural proletariat are being articulated with the party’s political goal of producing a revolutionary class at the subjective level... The party’s recent emphasis on symbolic politics indicates a greater inclination towards the popular than implied by the Leninist model of intellectual authority.²¹

Similarly, in the case of the Maoists, ‘the relations of intimacy nurtured by the revolutionary party are not simply the continuation of village caste and kinship relations but grounded in a particular ideological perspective which fundamentally seeks to rupture pre-existing social relations’.²²

Various other efforts have also been made to abolish different modes of oppression and to restructure the society, particularly ensuring equality of treatment among Dalits and tribals but the example of symbolic politics like installation of Manju Devi²³

²¹ Jaoul, N. (2011). Manju Devi’s martyrdom: Marxist-Leninist politics and the rural poor in Bihar. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 45(3), 347_ 71.

²² Alpa Shah (2013). The intimacy of insurgency: beyond coercion, greed or grievance in Maoist India, *Economy and Society*, 42:3, 480-506, p. 495

²³ Manju was thirty-three years old when she was murdered by members of the Ranvir Sena militia, walking on a village track on her way back from the preparations of the first AIALA national conference. She had been a highly popular elected representative in the district panchayat of her locality (Karpi, in Arwal district). She gained her local fame on account of her boldness in front of the local administration and the local elite, a reputation that she acquired thanks to her open defiance of a landlord and Congress politician, whose links with the Ranvir Sena she denounced in her speeches. Her courage earned her the reputation of being the local iron lady. Her courage earned her the reputation of being the local iron lady. During my visit to her remote village, Dharnai, her relative compared her to nationally-known female politicians like Mayawati and Mamata Banerjee. After her murder, an exceptionally large crowd gathered around her body and a huge procession was formed during her

memorial in Karpi in Arwal district is a classic example of extending utmost honor to a women cadre from ordinary peasant background. Three other who have been given the same honour officially by party are comrade Chandra Shekhar, the a most popular student leader of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, who was gun downed in his home town Siwan while challenging RJD leader a criminal turned politician Md. Sahabuddin in 1997. Mahendra Singh, a MLA from Jharkhand, who was also murdered and Vinod Mishra, the founder of Liberation faction of CPI (ML), in 1974. After that every year the commemoration anniversaries are organized to salute their martyrdom,²⁴ however CPI (ML) Liberation denies that this is not the politics of symbolism like Ambedkarite and other identity politics but reality is that this commemoration has occupied the symbolic value in the public place and liberation cadres.

They have become icons for the liberation cadres of Bihar. The ML Update 2006 on the 3rd anniversary of Manju Devi claims that ‘Manju Devi provided a role model that would inspire these women into joining the party’s struggles. We must grab the opportunity to build battalions of such fighting women leaders and cadres.’²⁵

Therefore, Jaoul is of the opinion that;

Manju does not just provide the party with a feminine symbol of struggle, or the mere replica of the classic feminine icon of Indian nationalism (Bharat Mata, ‘Mother India’), calling her sons to defend her honour in a manly manner. Rather, she subverts the patriarchal vision of women as ‘sisters and mothers’ that generally prevails in political speeches, as well as the gendered division of political labour that this image sustains. Her martyrology appeals directly to the assertion of Bihar’s poor womenfolk who are seen as a potential reservoir of popular militancy for the movement.²⁶

This is how CPI (ML) Liberation mobilize local people who are particularly poor, backwards and Dalits including women in large number. This kind of symbolism do not only help to make Dalit and poor to understand their role in the struggle for establishing socio-economic justice but also bring a level of commitment to sacrifice their lives in this struggle.

Various other examples are there in local level in Bihar based on creating a kind of ‘class subjectivity’ among the poor, oppressed, backwards and Dalits through the

funeral. The local party committee asked the state leadership to install a statue, a demand that was eventually accepted. This fact is taken from (Nicolas Jaoul, p. 361)

²⁴ Interview with Shiv Sagar Sharma, an office bearer of CPI (ML) Liberation, in April 2015.

²⁵ For detail see ML Update. 2006. 3rd Anniversary of Martyrdom of Comrade Manju Devi. 9 (46) 14–20 November 2006. Retrieved from: http://www.cpiml.org/pgs/ml_upd/vol14/14_20.html.

²⁶ Jaoul, Nicolas. (2011). Manju Devi’s martyrdom: Marxist-Leninist politics and the rural poor in Bihar. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 45(3), 347_ 71. Page 367

classic means of politicization. Even a village level cadre talk about 'Verg Sanghrsh' (class struggle) not caste struggle and after entering in electoral politics in 1989, they use all democratic means of struggle against injustice and inequality such as strike, protest, door to door electoral campaign, rallies etc. They try to capture all the local popular perception where state becomes fail to deliver and the upper level leadership with their intellectual input transform these local issues into class aspirations to get wider support to the party. So their deep engagement with poor, backwards and Dalits and politically engineered class consciousness among Dalits of the state does not leave a easy space to enter caste based an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar.

However, after the intervention of BSP and Ambedkarite politics in Bihar it's became the electoral compulsion to CPI (ML) Liberation and other left organizations to address the caste questions and Dalit questions particularly. However, democratic upsurge of BSP in Bihar was not observed as strong as Uttar Pradesh where it does not only mobilized Dalit but also rural poor from other castes and minority community but seeing the sympathy generated among Dalits and poor cadres towards BSP, left organizations started to change their strategies to address caste atrocities and other injustices based on caste. Historical emergence of Dalits and rural poor in the electoral politics behind BSP compelled the CPI (ML) Liberation to participate in electoral politics so that it can counter the caste-based approach to mobilize Dalits and poor of state. Early 1990s witnessed large-scale defection of Dalits from Congress and the emergence of caste-based identity politics under the lower caste leadership. The sympathy of Dalits and lower caste poor towards identity politics was ever growing phenomenon in north India and in Bihar also the emphasis on caste itself started by Lohia. In 1960s 'the socialists gradually highlighted the importance of caste' and as Jaffrelot claims that in late 1960s 'the former's strategy for social emancipation, which was first articulated by Lohia, put a strong emphasis on caste. Like Ambedkar, Lohia regarded caste as the basic unit of Indian society and amended his Marxist views accordingly.'²⁷

In this situation left organizations had a big challenge to counter the caste-based approach to mobilize votes of proletariat. Jaoul (2011, p. 349-50) also describing this situation that CPI (ML) 'although opposed to such an ideological mixture of caste identities, the cultural critique of Brahminism, ethnicity and progressive liberal

²⁷ Jaffrelot, Christophe (2003). *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics*. Delhi: Permanent Black. P. 301

thought (as represented by Ambedkar and Phule's ideological influence), the party nevertheless adopted a positive approach towards the politicization of the rural poor as conducive to class consciousness.²⁸ Thus, open the space of Dalit questions in the communist movements. Taking the case of CPI (ML) Liberation, which is one of the major left forces in Bihar, this section will explain how Dalit question emerged in the communist movement.

2. Dalit Question in Communist Movements

As above said in the government of India report, Dalits are the major vote bank for communist parties and particularly for CPI (ML) Liberation in Bihar. Without their support the left movement would have no strong base in the state. There is big debate about class parameter of the communist politics/movement in the Indian context and it has been a strong emphasis on class rather than caste as a unit of struggle against socio-economic oppression, inequality etc in the Indian society. For them, taking caste, as a unit of struggle would reduce the communist politics merely as an identity politics, however, caste, in Indian context, is the one of the most important unit of oppression, discrimination and different kinds of inequalities persisting in society. Whether it was the part of broader strategy of communist movements or failure of understanding the Indian society could be a subject of research/debate but Dalit question emerged as an exclusive subject in communist movement only after the phenomenal emergence of BSP in the Indian politics. The Political Organisational Report of the Sixth Party Congress of CPI (ML) Liberation clearly says that;

the dalit question has emerged as a major question, particularly with the phenomenal rise of BSP. The BSP, after a good beginning in Punjab, registered a steep rise in UP, spread to MP and some other states. At one point of time it appeared set to take Andhra by storm and there it got a sympathetic response from various Naxalite factions. Radicals exempted them from their ban on conducting election propaganda in areas of their influence, a certain ML faction declared their open support to BSP in the elections, some ex-PWG stalwarts even joined BSP and a prominent ideologue even credited Kanshi Ram with correctly applying Marxism-Leninism and Mao's Thought to Indian conditions! This is how the so-called dalit discourse entered the ML movement and sought to transform the class parameters of the movement.²⁹

It clearly reflects the duality of left politics regarding their strategy as considering class or caste as a unit of exploitation in India. Once CPI (ML) entered into the electoral politics, it was compelled to think caste and Dalit question seriously. No

²⁸ Jaoul, Nicolas. (2011). Manju Devi's martyrdom: Marxist-Leninist politics and the rural poor in Bihar. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 45(3), 347_ 71. Pp. 349-50

²⁹ Mishra, Vinod (1999). *Selected Works*. New Delhi: A CPI (ML) Publication. P. 192

doubt caste has religious foundation and it is very much responsible for perpetuating social hierarchy but it is very foundation of different kinds of oppression, exploitation and marginalization such as economic, social, religious and cultural exploitation of Dalit and other marginalized sections of society. So before considering the class as a unit of exploitation caste must be annihilated because until castes exist formation of proletariat class as a universal/broader category of depressed is not possible. This is the reason why even Naxalite cadres are very much sympathetic to BSP politics and in the various regions. It got sympathetic response from various Naxalite factions. Taking the example of Andhra Pradesh, Vinod Mishra the founder of CPI (M) Liberation himself claims that ‘a certain ML faction declared open support to BSP in elections, some ex-PWG stalwarts even joined BSP and a prominent ideologue even credited Kanshi Ram with correctly applying Marxism-Leninism and Mao’s Thought to Indian conditions.’³⁰ This clearly explains the impact of strong caste-consciousness over the class-consciousness in India.

This was the premise on which BSP and Ambedkarite politics negated the idea of class struggle. However, CPI (ML) opposed the deviation of his cadres on the ground that it’s true that in India, the genesis of the every kinds of oppression and exploitations are based on caste and the caste is the very element which perpetuate these exploitation further but taking caste as a unit of broader political agenda ultimately becomes the part and parcel of the ruling class politics. For CPI (ML), this is why intervention of BSP in Bihar must be prevented and again this is clearly reflected in the Political-Organizational Report CPI (ML) where Vinod Mishra accepts that;

our Party firmly opposed these deviations and upheld the Marxist viewpoint that expanding the frontiers of class struggle can be the only point of departure for Marxists while they undertake class struggles against caste oppression and for the social equality of dalits. The Kanshi Rams take up these issues on the premise of negation of class struggle and ultimately end up preaching class peace and becoming part and parcel of the ruling elite. In areas of Bihar where dalit movements for social dignity and equality have become a part of the class struggle of the rural poor, BSP elements were truly exposed. They were found hobnobbing with Ranvir Sena, and subsequently the BSP itself made common cause with the feudal-Brahminical party, the BJP, in Uttar Pradesh. In Bihar we successfully prevented the intrusion of BSP into our areas of struggle, and in Uttar Pradesh we have taken up the challenge of restoring the old left bases of CPI which were swept away by BSP, back to the Left fold.³¹

With this conscious effort of CPI (ML), CPI (M) and other parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left organizations the Dalit question and their struggle for social dignity

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

and equality to abolish every kind of oppression, discrimination and marginalization became the part of the class struggle, particularly in those area where extra-parliamentary left organizations are strong. They negate every effort of Dalit, BSP and Ambedkarite politics to intervene with different kind of narration such as;

the BSP's flirting with the Congress and the BJP and its consistent anti-Left attitude has helped remove illusions in progressive intellectual circles including among dalit intellectual circles. It still, however, enjoys considerable support among dalit peasantry and dalit petty-bourgeois sections in Uttar Pradesh. Mayawati's stint in power and her symbolic acts like the Ambedkar Village scheme, installing statues of proponents of dalit liberation, renaming districts etc. after Ambedkar and others revered by dalit community have stood her in good stead. In Punjab, the BSP developed a totally opportunistic alliance with the Akalis, a party of kulaks and reaped a good harvest in parliamentary elections, but in assembly elections when it contested alone it came a cropper.³²

However, BSP enjoy considerable support of not only Dalits but also from other peasantry class in Uttar Pradesh. It does work hard for construction of alternative symbols and institutions to promote a parallel alternative culture so that Ambedkarite and Dalit can counter the mainstream hegemonic Hindutva politics. It is based on very philosophy of Ambedkarite politics but it has very foundation on caste identity. Since, caste identity is the very foundation of identity politics and it is dedicated to construct an alternative culture and independent recognition so falling under the Brahminical trap becomes easy. Establishing a complete detachment from the mainstream Brahminical society/politics and the way of life is not an easy task for activists and leaders of identity politics and this is one reason why BSP faced problem in keeping its MLAs together. The domain of caste based identity politics becomes very limited and in electoral politics. Without forming a formal or an informal alliance with other castes and community capturing the state power is almost impossible. So, making alliance with other and some time even with Brahminical forces becomes necessary. The well cultivated social engineering of BSP in UP i.e. Dalit-Brahmin alliance is the perfect example of explaining the limitation of caste based identity politics.

In the other way it can be explained that this is neither the alliance nor the compromise between two communities in the politics of India rather it is an act of blunting the sharpness of long struggle of dignity, equality and establishing socio-economic justice in India. It is also criticized as opportunistic alliance because they represent two opposite poles in the Indian social hierarchy. Brahmins have been the

³² *ibid.* page 192

oppressor class, they have been perpetuating the Brahminical ideas and structure in Indian society for centuries and at the same time Dalits have been the most oppressed and exploited community by these Brahmins. So creating this alliance is not only against the Ambedkarite struggle of ‘annihilation of caste’ rather it is also against the very idea of establishing communist society. Doing this BSP has not only generated false desire among Dalit community but it has also fallen in the trap of both ‘the Brahminical and elite’ politics of Congress and BJP. The CPI (ML) documents clearly reflect that;

the BSP at the grassroots level has developed a desire among the dalit castes for dignity, equality and share in political power. At the top, however, it developed a class of dalit elites who make a vulgar display of wealth and lead a decadent bourgeois life. The ultimate destiny of the BSP, which essentially represents the class interests of the above-mentioned dalit elites and the petty bourgeoisie, is absorption by the BJP or Congress(I).³³

This is how left and particularly CPI (ML) explains BSP politics to convince Dalits that the Dalit emancipation is possible only through the communist conception of class struggle. The ADRI (Asian Development Research Institute, Patna) report explains that the CPI (ML) idea regarding Dalit problems is to address not within merely a problem of caste discrimination rather they want to address it within a broader socio-economic and political perspectives. Looking in a more pragmatic way this problem has many dimensions such as economic independence and livelihood, the issue of Dalit leadership within and outside the political parties and growing their dissatisfaction about the upper caste monopoly even in the communist organizations in India.³⁴ This is why speaking on ‘The Dalit Question’ at the sixth Party Congress in 1997 the party General Secretary Vinod Mishra argued that ‘the heightened consciousness of the broad dalit masses can definitely be mobilised under the red banner for wages, land, social dignity and political emancipation.’³⁵ So that ‘infiltration of Dalitist ideas in our organization’ can be avoided. This struggle must be ideologically focuses on class parameter i.e. ‘Verg Sangharsh’. The ADRI report also clarifies that the upper caste dominance and the lack of adequate Dalit leadership in the left organizations are one of the major cause of growing Dalit sympathy toward caste based identity politics such as BSP and other parties, however, communist organizations are still the significant Dalit force in Bihar to fight against all kind of

³³ *ibid.* p. 193

³⁴ for detail see the study conducted by Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Patna in 2004.

³⁵ From the Political-Organizational Report of the Sixth Party Congress in Mishra, Vinod (1999). Selected Works. New Delhi: A CPI (ML) Publication. P. 193

caste and class based atrocities.³⁶

It is the reality that, in the absence of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics as a formidable force like BSP in UP, Dalit assertion in Bihar has taken places through the mobilization by the left organizations only. Both parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary left forces have taken up Dalit issues as the dual exploitation i.e. social and economic exploitations including issues related to gender exploitation wages and land reforms. The only difference between the parliamentary left and the extra-parliamentary left organizations on the matters of Dalit issues is the Naxalites and Maoists never hesitate using even violent method to get their demand conceded. The organizations like PWG (People's War Group), MCC (Maoist Communist's Center) etc have played great role in the assertion of Dalits in the state. They are countered by the high castes and landlords' organisations like Ranvir Sena, Lorik Sena or Bhoomi Sena etc. Still even the major parliamentary left parties like CPI and CPI (M) do not agree to mobilize Dalit and even any other caste, on the caste question. For them, Dalits are a section of the proletariat class, who has been facing economic exploitation and material deprivation. The economic disparity and the unequal distribution of resources are the cause of their exploitation. The improvement of economic conditions of Dalits and other poorer classes will end every kind of oppression and exploitation.³⁷ The Party Programme of CPI (M) clearly mentions that;

“the problem of caste oppression and discrimination has a long history and is deeply rooted in the pre-capitalist social system. The society under capitalist development has compromised with the existing caste system. The Indian bourgeoisie itself fosters caste prejudices. Working class unity presupposes unity against the caste system and the oppression of Dalits, since the vast majority of the Dalit population are part of the labouring classes. To fight for the abolition of the caste system and all forms of social oppression through a social reform movement is an important part of the democratic revolution. The fight against caste oppression is interlinked with the struggle against class exploitation”.³⁸

However, in the respect of assertion of dalits, poor and OBCs, due to the compulsion of the democratic electoral politics, even these left parties have reconsidered their position. Like other mainstream or small political parties, they also feel that along with the class issues, the caste should also be given special consideration while devising the policies for Dalits.

³⁶ for detail see the study conducted by Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Patna in 2004.

³⁷ CPI(M)'s Party Programme. Retrived from; <https://www.cpim.org/party-programme#V>

³⁸ *ibid.* para- 5.12

Despite the reconsideration of the communists' position on the caste issue and strong Dalit support for long time there are various reasons for Dalit alienation from the left movements. The last section explains these problems with communist movements regarding the issue of leadership, the character of the movement and reasons to loose its strong both civilian and local mass supports of people.

3. Dalit Critique Of Communist Movements

The various aspects involved in Dalit mobilization and their commitment for the left movement. There are also various reasons for Dalits alienation from the movement. They are not satisfied with the way movement is going against the interests of Dalits. In the beginning movement had completely different character, Dalits supported even the underground Naxalite movement unconditionally but once the movement turned into political party and entered in electoral politics it started showing its 'burgeoning political ambitions for state power'. Due to electoral compulsion it has to broaden the base. So, recruitment of people from the castes other than Dalit and Tribal became necessary. This inclusive policy of the movement turned political party was the first reasons for their alienation because various power bloc started emerging within the organization. Before that these extremist organizations were showing great commitment to Dalit struggle against both upper and middle castes and landlords. Once they recruited the people from middle castes, particularly from Kurmi and Yadava in the party, these commitment became weak and the socio-economic aspirations emerged among Dalits through the long struggle was now looking shattered. The reason is that earlier in 1980s, the Kurmis were also a different 'power bloc' against whom Naxalite and Maoist movement were fighting for. Kurmi did not employ any labourer from Dalits to harass them and they were not allowed to enter in the Kurmis field. There was a long struggle against the dominance of Kurmis under the leadership and guidance of the movement. In 1990s Kurmis also became the part of the movement. So, Dalit engagements with the extremist movement are observed strong but there are various reasons for their discontent among Dalits towards the movement. It was reflected in the various interviews taken during my fieldwork.

Sheetal Das, teacher in Charka Middle school by profession in Chakai pointed out very specifically that in my childhood, during 1980's I had no doubt about the intention of the movement but now its all about politics. None of the organizations or parties is fighting for the interests of Dalits, poor and helpless people. These

organizations, like other mainstream political parties have now become a source of making money. The growing awareness among Dalits is leading to the demobilization from the movement. This is the reason why the Naxalite/Maoists organizations neglected education completely. They are giving arm in the hand of a 13 years old boy but they neither promoted education nor they constructed any alternative for their education. They strategically want Dalits and poor to keep them illiterate. The moment they get aware of this reality, they leave the organization unless they are not forced by other situation such as state repression or any atrocities, oppressions and injustices are being done by landlords and upper castes. Some of Dalits joined the movement in the beginning to resist the upper castes atrocities but due to the increasing involvement of upper castes in the movement Dalits feel marginalized again.³⁹

For Madan bhai, 'the upper caste joined the sangathan (organization) not due to deep ideological commitment to the struggle rather they joined as an agent of landlords and to reestablish their dominance again by weakening the sangathan.'⁴⁰ Kunnath (2012) also makes the same argument that 'Kurmis joined the party not due to any ideological commitment to the poor peasants, but to re-establish their dominance in the region'⁴¹ (P. 139). Slowly, these upper castes have occupied all key position of leadership and the decision-making bodies and Dalits continue to serve as foot-soldiers. The sangathan is now protecting the interests of upper caste rather than protecting the interests of Dalits, poor and oppressed. They are using Dalits and poor to become a strong pressure group and then they compromise with upper castes at upper level. Once the upper caste has established the domination over sangathan/organization the principle, politics and ideology of party became dubious, complex and beyond understanding. Earlier it was very clear to every member of party that it belong to oppressed class, Dalits, poor peasant etc. the class identity of party was very clear to understand everyone. There were no difference between ideology and practices. Party was fighting for every injustices being done to Dalits and oppressed and these classes have also confident about the backup provided by the

³⁹ Interview with Sheetal Das at Charka Utkramit Madhya Vidhyalaya on 04 Oct. 2015.

⁴⁰ Interview with Madan Bhai in Oct. 2015 in Chakai. He is the ex-Sarvodaya activist, worked with Jayprakash Narayan and Vinoba Bhave. Served as the care-taker of Gurmu Sarvodaya Ashram for long time and now he is the member of Panchayat Samiti, Chakai. I spent more than a week with him to during the Vidhan sabha election 2015.

⁴¹ Kunnath, George J. (2012). Rebel from the Mud Houses: Dalits and the Making of the Maoist Revolution in Bihar. New Delhi: Social Science Press. P. 113

party. Now everything has changed. Party does not want to annoy upper castes by raising the issues of wages, land re-distribution, issue of labour, socio-economic justice etc.⁴²

Dalits are also discriminated on the matter of compensation for the damages and on the issue of remuneration. Here it would be worth mentioning the reply of two communist cadres Rajubhai and Murari Singh to Kunnath (2012) when he asked them the reason to withdraw himself from the movement. In the first confessions Rajubhai explains that;

disagreement with the sangathan on the question of honorarium paid to the squad members. Those who left their land and joined the squads were paid more. They were mostly from Kurmi and Yadav castes. The landless in the squad were naturally the Dalits, and they received less payment. I could not stand this discrimination in the sangathan, which professed its commitment to the landless labourers. So I left the squad in order to look after my wife and children (P. 113).⁴³

In the second incident on the same issue Murari Singh replied him that:

the dasta members from the kisan (landowning peasant) families were given more remuneration and I was given less. The Sangathan held the view that the landless labourers are given remuneration according to the wages they received. Whereas the squad members from the landowning classes were given remuneration in accordance with the income they would have received from their land. I protested that it violated the principle of equality which the party professed. Since I did not receive a positive response, I withdrew from the dasta. There are also caste feelings within the Sangathan now. Recently, Manish Pandey (of Bhumihaar caste) in my village, who is a supporter of the Sangathan, sexually assaulted a Musahar woman. But the Sangathan took no action against him. However, if a person from the landless class had done something of that sort against an upper caste woman, the party would have taken immediate action against him. Moreover, these days the accused persons approach their caste men in the party to sort out their problems (p. 141).⁴⁴

Talking from a gender perspective, it is the critical question of subordination/sexual exploitation of Dalit women by upper castes Naxal leaders within the organization itself. How is the communist movement going to engage with this question will decide many things within the organization. This is not only just raising voice against the discrimination regarding remuneration but it also indicates the level of consciousness among locals to ensure equality in treatment with all individuals irrespective of their caste identity while delivering justice on the same matter. This clearly shows that in practice, while conducting the affairs of party communists don't apply the class identity. They mobilize people on class ideology but they too discriminate people on caste while promoting local leaders, delivering different verdicts for same crime to the people belong to different castes and so on.

⁴² Interview with Madan Bhai, Chakai, Gurmoo Sarvodaya Ashram.

⁴³ Kunnath, George J. (2012). *Rebel from the Mud Houses: Dalits and the Making of the Maoist Revolution in Bihar*. New Delhi: Social Science Press. P. 113

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 141

There are various other charges are being made to the communist movements in the state. Let me present an extensive interview of N. K. Nanda Ji⁴⁵ an ex-communist leader. He is of the opinion that there have been some Dalit leaders with 'good stature' in Bihar except in left parties. They too worked honestly but under the banner of Congress because none of these Dalit leaders in Bihar are the product of the grass roots Dalit movement. This is the reason that they couldn't become mass leader and a potential force to bargain the interests of their communities. They remain loyal to their parties rather than showing loyalty to their communities. Jagjivan Ram, Mungeri Lal, Jaglal Chaudhury, Bhola Paswan Shastri are some examples of Dalit leaders in Bihar. Jaglal Chaudhury had great contribution in the Indian National Freedom movement. He sacrificed his both sons in the freedom movement. He had great presence in Dalit community and Dalit community equally responded him with strong support. In Bihar, however, Gandhi had good influence on Dalit community, but the mass Dalit mobilization during the freedom movement became possible just because of leaders like Jaglal Chaoudhary. But all these Dalit leaders lost their identity under Congress.

Dalit leaders who emerged under the communist movement also had never been promoted to central committee of party because the leadership of communist movement is also captured by upper caste Hindus like other mainstream political parties. For example; Ram Naresh Ram and Parbhulal Paswan both remained popular communist Dalit leaders in Bihar. Both were elected as MLA for Bihar assembly but they never had been promoted according to what they deserve in CPI (M). Ram Naresh Ram, who died in 2011, was the person who started Naxal Movement in Muzzaffarpur, but crush out violently by state machinery. It was nothing but his great commitment to the movement that he started it again and finally succeeded to rejuvenate the movement in Bihar but the essence of the movement was crushed out by upper caste leadership. Precisely, he means to say that the leadership of the communist party is completely hegemonized by upper castes and they do not allow Dalits and backwards to take leadership or be in commanding positions.

Further, he is of the opinion that initially the situation was worse and Dalits atrocities, exploitation and oppression by upper castes were rampant feature of Bihar. Under this

⁴⁵ N. K. Nanda⁴⁵ who joined the Naxalite/communist movement during emergency, worked for more than two decades but he left the organization after growing disagreement regarding the growing influence of Brahminical forces in the organization and the movement. Then he joined JD(U), became MLA and now he is the 'Sangathan Mantri' of JD(U).

feudal society and feudalistic mindset Dalits had no believe that the prevailing situation could be changed. So the first important task with us was to generate a believe that the prevailing situation can be changed through our unity and struggle. After putting very hard work on the many issues related to Dalits our 'sangathan' became successful to win their belief in Naxal struggle. Before 1990s, due to underground movement this task was even harder because cadres had to hide their identity, so, people were also behaving like uninterested and unidentified. Sometimes they refused to recognize, despite that 'sangathan' kept its helping attitude to them in all circumstances. Even hardest situation cadres kept helping them so that Dalits could start believing that there are some forces behind them to help, support and fight for them. Now Dalits of Bihar are confident that this situation can be altered, the exploitation and atrocities against them can be stopped through the struggle and social and economic transformation. This is the great achievement of Naxalite movement in Bihar. In current situation they have so strong believe that they can sacrifice their life for the movement and they are sacrificing to change their condition so that their coming generation will not face the same kind atrocities, exploitation and oppression.⁴⁶

Now Dalits of Bihar don't go to attend any upper caste functions without formal invitation. Now none can treat them like untouchables who used to go without invitation to collect 'leftover' in plates in functions. Today, they seat with upper caste in the same 'paunt' पाँत⁴⁷ (line) however, I cannot say that the caste atrocities, now, doesn't exists in Bihar. Certainly, the intensity has reduced, formed has changed and now none can dare to practice untouchability openly. This is the achievement of Naxal movement.

This movement has changed 'the center of power'. Today, all decisions are taken in the villages of Dalits regarding the matter related to almost all aspects of lives. This parallel 'power center' has emerged amongst Dalits of state. They participate equally; take decisions according to the merits of the case. There is no decision being made unilaterally under the dominance of any upper caste and this power center is above

⁴⁶ interview with N. K. Nanda ji at his home Phulwari Sarif, Patna on 21st May, 2015

⁴⁷ Paunt is a line of people when they seat together on the floor/ground to eat food in the function they are invited. It is very general to see even today in villages. Earlier, Dalits were not allowed to seat together with other people belonging to different castes because they were considered 'Untouchables'. They can only collect the 'leftover' in plate from the place the plates were thrown out when people finish eating.

the influence of any dominant person. In the regions where the movement has its good presence no irrational decision can be forced on Dalits. Upper castes, dominant and feudal feel threatened while inflicting atrocities on Dalits. They cannot harass Dalit and backwards for wages and other issues related to land and day-to-day social and economic engagements.

Before the Naxal movement Dalits were not allowed to cast their vote. They were so intimidated that they didn't even go to polling booths. The nexus between police-dominants and criminals, that usually happened to the agents of upper castes politicians and most of them also belonged to upper caste, used to capture polling booths to cast Dalits vote in the favour of their candidates. Naxal movement has given Dalits a level of confidence that they are now neither intimidated nor their vote can be mobilized forcibly in the favour of anyone else. They are now so confident that they are getting their rights by struggle and they understand the importance of the movement. During 1990s, lots of massacres in the state were nothing but the frustration of upper caste in the smell of loosing power and the revenge from Dalits and vice-versa. These movements haven't only helped empowering Dalits and generated the sense of self-respect, dignity, and equality but also empowered them to fight for their every constitutional right. These movements contributed immensely to improve economic condition of Dalits and the most important achievement is that they got their new identity of assertive Dalit to come out from the victimhood identity. Despite these lots of achievement, the communist movements have failed on various fronts.

3.1 Leadership Issue

However, the communist movement in India talks about the class character but their caste character rampantly fascinated regarding the issue of leadership, particularly in respect of Dalits. Due to their hard work and strong commitment to the movement, various Dalits became the leader at grass-roots level, some were extended to state level nominally but not even a single Dalit communist leader was promoted to central committee. On the national level the leadership have always been in the hand of upper caste and despite the capacity for becoming a national leader Dalits were not promoted to upper level leadership, intentionally. On contrary to the Dalit leaders of mainstream parties, these Dalit leaders are mass leaders; they started their career from the grass roots Dalit mobilization and enjoy strong supports of their communities.

Despite that they were never promoted to upper level leadership. Means the organizational structure of left movement in the state been largely undemocratic and unorganized? Upper caste hegemony in communist leadership blunted the possibility of Dalit leadership in 'sangathan'. Some leaders raised this issue to promote Dalit leaders to upper level leadership, but they were killed. For example; Ajay Kanu who is still in the jail. He does not only accept these allegations but also suggests that communist movements of India need to fight with the issues of casteism and Brahminism simultaneously.⁴⁸

Vidyanand Bikkal, Chairman, SC Commission Bihar, who was also a ex-communist supporter is making same charges on the communist movement of Bihar regarding the leadership issue. He says that;

left movement in Bihar has struggled for every Dalit causes right from the grass-roots levels to Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha. This is the reason why Dalits are deeply associated with left movement, but when you study the pattern of leadership it reflects nothing different. Complete left leadership is in the hands of the Brahmins and upper caste. Dalit representation in upper level leadership, in decision making body or polite bureau is almost zero. This raises the serious concern to Dalit communities. Whether left parties or the rights or socialist the pattern of leadership are same. Dalits are only flag bearer and to die and upper always captured the leadership to rule. Once left party in Bihar was in the position of main opposition party, but due to their Brahminical tendency they slowly lost their base and now they are dying.⁴⁹

The same allegation is made by Dr. Kishori Prasad, a member of Vanchit, Mehanatkash Morcha that Bihar is the ground where we can see strong left movement even during the freedom movement and it is one of the most important reasons for the absence of dalit movement in the state. Most of Dalits who were conscious about their identity, politics and their mobilization remained the part of left movement. Dalit movement of Bihar cannot be dissociated with left movement or vice-versa. But irony is that the whole leadership was captured by or in hands of upper caste. Their whole politics depend on Dalit issues, downtrodden, land and they are against the capitalism but they didn't do anything for the development of Dalits. Neither in terms of the education and employment nor they do any thing substantial for their economic independence. Maximum leaders of left are upper caste, feudal landlords and inheritors of same issues they are fighting for. I didn't understand that how they can fight for the same issues which they themselves are inheriting. They have internal nexus with the upper caste leaders of other parties so that issues can't be fought in

⁴⁸ This is the part of conversation between N. K. Nanda and Ajay Kanu while they were in jail together.

⁴⁹ interview with Vidyanand Bikkal, on 20th may 2015. He was the then chairman of SC Commission Bihar.

true spirit and if the leadership is gone in the hands of Dalits then the mission of ‘defending the Brahminic privileges’ may be endangered.⁵⁰

Explaining the grass-roots politics and observing the Dalit helplessness in the reserve constituencies, Nanda Ji says that in the mainstream political parties Dalit leaders remained committed to upper castes and the parties they belonged to. Not to the communities they belonged to because they are not the mass leader, they are nominated and promoted to represent their communities to serve the interests of parties and the interests of upper castes. Had they been the mass leader, they must have represented from unreserved constituencies also. Intentionally, they reduced to the reserved constituencies only and almost the same trends one can find in the communist parties also, then what is the logic of talking about class struggle/politics. Further, he says let me explain the grass-roots level politics. Due to the compulsion of reserved constituencies some Dalits became ‘Mukhiya’⁵¹ but it is their helplessness that they cannot show their loyalty and commitment to their communities. Compulsorily they can’t be, because they are not the obvious leader of Dalit community. In reserved constituencies the votes of Dalits are divided among various candidates and the upper caste vote become the decider. It is the irony that the constituencies are reserved for the betterment of Dalits but the upper caste dominates and takes all the benefits because their votes became decider.

Upper castes never support Dalit candidates who are the obvious leaders of Dalits, who are committed and can be loyal to their communities. So, the leaders who win the constituencies are Dalits but the agents of upper castes. They always remained in grab of upper caste because they are not the mass leader of Dalits and they can win only by the support of upper caste. Upper caste cannot vote to educated mass Dalit leaders because they won’t remain in clutch of upper caste and they will work for the betterment of Dalits and backwards. Once Dalits and poor will be empowered, it will end the sense of upper caste supremacy, dominance and the strong patron-client system at grass-roots levels. In Bihar even at the state level politics neither Ramvilas Paswan nor Jitan Ram Manjhi is the mass Dalit leader. Obviously they are not, because they are neither the product of grass-roots Dalit movement nor are they enjoy the height because of Dalit politics and the strong party organizations. They are

⁵⁰ Interview with Dr. Kishori Prasad, a member of Vanchit, Mehanatkash Morcha and an office bearer of PUCL

⁵¹ In the grass-roots level politics the Panchayat level representative is called ‘Mukhiya’ in Bihar.

promoted in the interests of upper castes in the mainstream political parties. They are Dalit leader by caste only not the 'Leader of Dalits'.

The mass leaders of Dalit amongst Dalit in Bihar emerged under the movement led by Naxalites but they were not allowed to cultivate/cast their independent identity as Dalit leader. It seems that Bihar witness no Dalit movement yet. But the question emerged here is that, are the all movements led under the banner of Naxalite and Maoists in Bihar not Dalit movement? Of course, it is. These are Dalit movement because Naxalite and Maoist (communist) movements and Dalit movements in Bihar cannot be separated from each other. In Bihar Dalit movements and communist movements are synonyms, however, irony is that the leadership were captured by upper caste and it failed to bear the expected result.

3.2 Major Problems with the Movement

Communist movements launch no formal movement against Brahminism and the Brahminical social structure. Like other mainstream political parties the communist movement leadership is also hegemonized by upper castes. Dalit and backwards-communist leader had never been promoted to upper leadership and this is one reason that the communist movement also remained in the clutch of Brahminical forces. Had this movement raised strong voices against Brahminism, Brahminical structure and religion the history of communist movement could have been different. The communist movement of India has not attacked the Brahminical forces very consciously because launching attacked on Brahminism means an attack on religion and caste. Abolition of caste means the negation of Brahminical religion and finally the negation of the hegemony of upper castes in the various aspects of everyday lives in society.

When some communist activists like Nanda ji realized this intention of communist movement of India, they left the movement. Nanda ji says 'after leaving the movement when I read writings of Phule, Ambedkar and other Dalit literatures along with mainstream literature of Hindu society then I realized why the communist movement failed in India.'⁵² Many others like Nanda ji realize that the reasons of communist movement failure are nothing but casteism and their hypocrisy with the commitment to the transformation of society and establishing socio-economic justice.

⁵² interview with Nanda ji

When castes are not abolished, orthodox Brahminical social structure is not transformed, religion and religious forces, religious agencies and institution which maintain the hegemony of so-called upper castes based on purity and pollution are not destroyed, how can the socio-economic justice be established?

The communist movements always talk about class-struggle but throughout the history of the movement it remained in clutch of casteism and Brahminical forces. They call 'religion is opium' but they promoted religion consciously. For example; the Bengal where communist have history of longest rule in the world, celebrates 'Durga Puja' more enthusiastically than any other community in India. The communists' engagements are also more enthusiastic than any other activists, parties and organizations in Durga puja celebration. When questions were raised regarding this function they made an excuse that 'Durga Puja' is not the religious function, it is cultural gathering to unite the people of Bengal. It was started as a political tactic against the colonial forces. These all excuse, he says, 'are nothing but bullshit because all religious rituals and caste discrimination on the ground of occupation are being operated openly in this function'. If it is the cultural function then how many Dalits operate religious functions? Why only Brahmins perform the religious rituals to worship Durga in 'pundal'⁵³? Only Brahmins perform religious rituals in Durga Puja, backwards and Dalits are involved only to work for the construction of pundal. As they claim, some members from the Muslim communities are also the members of Durga Puja club i.e. local level Durga Puja celebration committee but reality is that this religious function is in no way the cultural function only because both casteism and religious ritual are operated strongly and Muslim members have no role except holding the membership card of the club. However, the intensity of casteism is comparatively lower in Bengal than other state of India but the practice of casteism in all left ruled states are found.

So, the left that is especially concerned about a genuine class war, especially in light of the fact that there have been serious allegations regarding the dubious character of the participants, where in spite of their declared ideological opposition to religion as an institution there have been repeated practice of Brahminical rituals and practices. One important example in this regard is the Durga puja celebrations where though

⁵³pundal is the stage and the decoration in surroundings where the statue of Durga installed during the Navaratri.

there has been the participation of Dalits, but the power of conducting the ritualistic ceremonies during puja interestingly still remains within the hands of the upper caste. This is the very serious allegation to the Communist movements in India that it finally turned into an agency to save Brahminism and Brahminical forces, if it is not an agency to promote Brahminism. They themselves are Brahminical this is why, he says, communists in India have never attacked Brahminism. Since, they enjoy all privileges in society due to their upper caste status, so they don't want to abolish this caste system, however, they are so hypocritical that they maintain communist life style in public smartly. His claims seems to me very true because still even after the 91 years of long history of CPI and more than 52 years history of Communist Party of India (Marxists) there is not a single Dalit leader is the member of communist 'Polit Bureau'⁵⁴ and the last 21st Congress of the CPI (M) held between April 14 and 19 2015.⁵⁵ However, the CPI (M) was born in 1964 'in the struggle against revisionism and sectarianism in the communist movement at the international and national level, in order to defend the scientific and revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism and its appropriate application in the concrete Indian conditions'.⁵⁶ If this party was born in the struggle against revisionism and sectarianism in the communist party of India then it is obvious that CPI is more Brahminical than CPI (M).

During the conversation N. K. Nanda Ji further revealed an interesting analysis. RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and CPI (Communist Party of India) were born in the same year 1925. While RSS represents orthodox, conservative and undemocratic forces, CPI represents progressive and democratic forces but RSS has never divided to form the different independent streams. RSS constructed its political wing BJP successfully and it has seen no bifurcation even in its political wing, while CPI is divided many times to split into many parts. All parties do have internal differences regarding different issues and understanding. RSS, its political wing BJP and other bourgeois political parties while keeping their differences asides, they reach on a

⁵⁴ Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is the highest policy-making body. The members of the Polit Bureau are elected by the Central Committee in the immediate aftermath of a National Party Congress, which is held every three years. Retrieved from: <https://www.cpim.org/leadership>

⁵⁵ The 21st Congress of the CPI(M) held between April 14 and 19 2015 at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh elected a 91 member Central Committee. There are also five special invitees and five permanent invitees to the Central Committee. The Central Committee at its meeting held on April 19, 2015 at the conclusion of the Congress elected a 16 member Polit Bureau. The C.C. also elected Com. Sitaram Yechury as the General Secretary. Retrieved from: <https://www.cpim.org/leadership>

⁵⁶ for details visit <https://www.cpim.org/about-us>

common minimum understanding/unity but these so-called progressive communists fail to reach at those points on which they can develop a common minimum understanding/unity. For them the points of differences are more important than the points on which a common minimum unity can be developed. The reality is that the character of the communist movements in India is also Brahminical. Intentionally, the leaderships of the communist movements were captured by upper castes to misguide the movement. This is why the communist movement failed to attack on different fronts of Brahminical agencies.

Further, he went on sharing his experiences that the move of the movements remained highly calculated in the sense of liberal attitude towards Brahminical agencies. They also maintain a good relationship with the leaders of mainstream parties. So, having in touch with government and administration they jailed those communist leaders who belonged to Dalit and backward castes after branding them either Naxal or Maoists. Their cases were also not fought seriously by the upper caste communist advocates. Many of these capable and committed Dalit communist leaders were killed in jail while upper caste communists leader granted bail and cases were finalized by wining verdicts in their favours. Precisely, I can say that to turn the communists' agencies and institutions into another agency to save the Brahminism, upper castes leaders captured the communist leaderships. Intentionally, they weaken the struggle of social justice and the communist goal to establish socio-economic equality in India because this goal can only be fulfilled after demolishing the Brahminical forces, agencies and institutions. So, these upper caste communist leaders are also the agent of Brahminism. They are not the agent of the movement to establish socio-economic justice.

Nanda ji put another argument to prove his point. The best weapons of Gandhi were 'satya aur ahimsa' (truth and non-violence). He himself started his political career from Bihar, which is the land of Buddha, and Mahavira. Do the broader face of 'Satya aur Ahimsa' exists in the world than Buddha and mahavira? Both were from Bihar but why Gandhi did not take them as his source of inspirations? There is a valid reason behind it. The most important reason behind it was that both were anti-Brahminical and Gandhi himself was Brahminical. Had Gandhi taken them source of inspiration then it went against the Brahminism and 'Verna system'. So, it was very calculated move of Gandhi to take European philosophers instead of taking Buddha and Mahavira as the source of his inspiration using his weapons of 'Satya and Ahimsa

(truth and non-violence). He indianized the European philosophy according to his political need. On the other hand, on the same tone Lohiya and Narendra Dev brought both communist and socialist ideology from outside India and they made it 'Lohiyavad'. They neither took the reference of Europe, nor they felt its need to advocate that from where they were bringing that ideology but it became the Indian ideology. RSS also takes its fascist ideology from Hitler and Mussolini but it never advocates their reference. They are Indianising it in Indian culture according to its political need and programme of turning India into a 'Hindu Rashtra' and people are accepting it overwhelmingly.

On contrary to this what communists of India do is without advocating the name of Marx and Lenin they cannot raise even a single slogan, a single step and they cannot take a single bite of food. Even without advocating Marx and Lenin, the movement can be preceded but for them Marx and Lenin are more important than communist movements. They had to learn from Gandhi and these fascist RSS that how can you Indianise the communist philosophies of Marx and Lenin in the Indian circumstances. These Brahminical communists will not do it because had they follow Gandhi and RSS to bring communist philosophy in India they must have to fight against Brahminism in true sense. They had to accept the truth that Indian circumstances and social structures are different from the other countries. Here the issues of class struggle are very much interlinked with caste struggle. There are many fronts to fight against Brahminism such as social, economic, cultural and religious together.

In India the economic disparity is the product of social disparity followed by Varna and rigid caste system. The only philosophers suitable for abolishing these interlinked disparities are Buddha and Ambedkar in India. Had the communists of India been serious about abolishing these disparities and to establish socio-economic justice (what they call it is the communist society) they would have followed Ambedkar and Buddha along with Marx and Lenin. They did nothing like this because they are Brahminical. On contrary, what they have been doing for decades, is putting all efforts to weaken the Ambedkarite movement. Resultantly, the Marx-Lenin style communist movement in India without inheriting philosophies of Ambedkar and Buddha has never been accepted by depressed classes of India overwhelmingly. It remained divided and upper caste leaders in Naxalite and Maoist movement used Dalits for their own benefits such as to generate money and using them as foot-soldiers. To discredit the movement these upper caste Maoist leaders threatening the

civilians also for 'levy' (ransom) so that the common people get the message that the organization is nothing but just a source of extracting levy (money) from civilians. Due to this irresponsible act the movement is losing its hard won credits among civilians.

Nanda ji says that there are evidences that 'in Patna district, more than 150 Dalits were killed in the fight between the battle of supremacy between various communist organizations such as Naxalite, Maoists, MALE, CPI, CPI (M), Sangram Parishad'. Another incidence of same district shows that Maoist itself for not fighting with upper caste landlord burned more than 120 houses of Dalits and in another village 75 Dalits were killed by Ranvir Sena. So only Dalits are targeted either in the battle of supremacy between communist organizations or the battle between communists and Ranvir Sena and other feudal forces.⁵⁷ So, how are the Left forces going to reconcile with the hard realities such as the killing of Dalits by some left cadres on their reluctance to fight against the Ranvir Sena, (an upper caste militia) is the tough question to deal with.

Further he says that after the long experience in 'sangathan' I felt that the issue of the education and reform in education system seems missing in the communist agenda. They neither promote education among Dalits nor they make any alternative arrangement for the cadres who deeply involved in communist movement. Inspiring Dalit parents to send their children school and to make education system affordable to those are not in the communist agenda. Kunnath (2012) also points that 'an educated Dalit man pointed out that the Sangathan completely neglected education, and that they should have put pressure on teachers, local government and parents to provide better education in the villages' (p. 138).⁵⁸ These are the reasons why Naxalite movement in the state is loosing civilian supports.⁵⁹ This charge is also accepted by the new left sensation Kanhaiya kumar that 'a total dearth towards the creation of alternatives institutions for education was the great failure of communist movement in India.'⁶⁰ This shows that the communist politics in India is another form of the

⁵⁷ Hans, Buddha Saran (1998). Daliton Ki Durdasa. Patna: Ambedkar Mission Prakashan. P. 30

⁵⁸ Kunnath, George J. (2012). Bebel from the Mud Houses: Dalits and the Making of the Maoist Revolution in Bihar. New Delhi: Social Science Press. P. 138

⁵⁹ Bhattacharya, Srobana (2013). Changing Civilian Supprt for the Maoist Conflict in India. Small Wars & Insurgencies. 24 (5), 813- 834 retrieved from:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2013.866421>

⁶⁰ this fact come out with the conversation with Kanhaiya Kumar, ex-JNUSU president and this can be easily seen in his speeches available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogbXyOO4jTM>

politics of Brahminical forces. This is why they don't want the working class unite into a major force against these forces. These various splits in the communist party of India indicate nothing but to promote Brahminical agenda and keeping working class divided into different streams. This is the reason why the communist party of India has not become the mainstream party. These communists and so-called socialists betrayed the working class of India.

The emergence of identity politics in the state further marginalized Dalits. Ambedkarite organizations were still not in position to become alternative for them so they had no option except to organize on caste line as an agency in relation to other power blocs. Thus, started Dalit assertions around their caste identities within and outside the organizations. However,

the caste-specific identity assertions of Dalits, however, need not be seen in opposition to or as an alternative to the Maoist Movement... both caste mobilization and Dalit participation in the Maoist Movement represent multiple ways in which Dalits express their agency and their growing 'capacity to object' to and negotiate power and dominance... Dalit attempts to maximize their positions in the field in relation to the distribution of various capitals, including economic, political, social and symbolic resources (Kunnath, 2012, p. 137).

The emergence of independent Dalit agency within the communist organization was taken as the unwelcome phenomena and these Dalit agencies were so radicalize that they even developed a differences with Ambedkarite philosophy and activists. However, that differences were not too big to bridge and the processes were started by Ambedkarites of state but this initiative faded away its significance in the emergence of OBCs dominated identity politics.

So, with the emergence of identity politics, Laloo Yadav and now Nitish Kumar easily cultivated whatever the achievements made by the Naxalite and Maoist movements in Bihar. Both have taken the benefits of the achievements made by all left movements in Bihar. In the beginning of their political career neither Laloo nor Nitish were the mass leader. The empowerment brought out among Dalits and backwards sections by Naxal and Maoist movement were gone in the favour of these leaders emerged out with the emergence of identity politics. On the other hand, feudal forces of the state were badly needed the new agents to use them against the Naxalite and Maoist movements and both Laloo Yadav and Nitish became the new agents of those feudal and Brahminical forces in the state. Both these leaders weaken the struggle of social justice launched by communist movements. However, they got the mandate to fight against Barahminical forces but both used their state machinery to

weaken the struggle of social justice as well as Naxal and Maoist movement in the state.

To conclude this section, I can argue that, however, lots of charges are made to the communist movement in the state regarding their functioning, attitude and intentions but it is equally true that whatever the empowerments Dalits have got are made possible by Naxalite and Maoist movements in the state. The role of state and other agencies cannot be ignored but a victimhood Dalits turned into assertive Dalit because of the great contribution put in by the communist movements. It is true that the communist movement have failed to apply class based certain postulates of Marxism and Leninism to articulate the aspirations of depressed classes under the dynamics of caste based subaltern history creatively and scientifically but it does not signify the upper castes/class bourgeois project. It neither signify a Brahminical project to engage subaltern class to weaken the movement of socio-economic justice, nor it reflect, in any sense, promoting the colonial or imperialist project like other mainstream parties in India. It is also true that the support bases of communist movement are declining, certainly they need to introspect but the great achievements of communist movements cannot be undermined in respect of empowering depressed classes in India. So, while dealing these questions and particularly Dalit engagements with the communist movements under the framework of class-struggle we certainly need deep introspection about the relation between the ideology, understanding of masses and current working principle of the communist parties.

Conclusion

In the different regions of Bihar, even today Dalit and backwards retain considerable engagement with the communist organizations where they run almost a parallel institutions of governance such as Maoist court, Committee Meetings, Panchayat etc. It is very tough to differentiate between Maoist and common men because the boundaries between people and Maoist are blurred and not as porous as between state and the people. As above said by a respondent it is 'like an extended family'. They have become just as large part of communist movement and social democrats who do not only endorse class struggle, they also lead anti-caste struggle rather than accentuating it. Developing new social relationship through inter-caste, inter-religious marriages and inter-community unions they are working to abolish all type of social

and economic boundaries. I cannot say that these boundaries have been abolished there completely but one thing I can argue for sure that the new social engagement constructed by these communist movements have blurred this deep looking unbreakable boundaries. Even, I am not sure that whether this new social relations are serving the same purpose what Dr. Ambedkar was suggesting the ways to 'annihilate the caste' but for one thing I am sure that it has captured the ground of Ambedkarite movement to emerge in Bihar. It has made the boundary so blurred that even differentiating a sympathizer; supporter or armed cadre is very tough to the state. How much reality are in this argument one cannot judge with the little experiences but one thing is very sure that particularly Dalit and oppressed castes are deeply engaged with the movement and they have no option except to join it against anti-caste, anti-feudal and anti-Brahminical hegemony.

In respect of Dalits and the new social relation it is not just the ideology and philosophy but the people particularly from Dalits and oppressed communities, with their hard work bring the communist movement of the state in position to win the credibility of masses. They are the fundamental part of party as well as the new social structure in these areas. However, the significance of ideology and principle of party can not be ignored because ideological premises, principal and philosophy of a political party set the agenda for cadre to work on and shape the character and nature which finally influence the everyday life experiences of Dalits and marginalized. Ideology does play big role to develop the new social relation where Dalits feel freedom to cultivate their every rights as equal citizen. The kind of social relation left is trying to develop has itself created the scope to win the heart of Dalit and other oppressed class who have been denied to enjoy their rights for centuries. It is not surprising to observe the sense of brotherhood between Tribal, Dalit and high caste Naxalite youth leader and the role of these relationships in transcending old relation based on caste into new social relation free from caste and hegemony. The movement is equally popular among women.

It is true that the communist movements of the state failed to develop an alternative universal and broader class based culture around the working class movement against the ruling class, which was seen as more emancipatory egalitarian theory, it is also true that the issues like caste and religion were neglected by them but the assertion of Dalits in the state is not the unintended consequences of the communist movements. The hard work of communist cadres captured Dalit political imagination to replicate it

into communist model. It was intended to take Dalit issues more seriously, however, not in the same line of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics, despite that the communist-Dalit bonds are still so strong in the state that Dalit parties itself find tough to connect with their own constituents.

Chapter-04

Ambedkarite Model of Politics and Dalit Response in Bihar

The first chapter analyses the nature of Dalit politics in Bihar through different streams of literature and the determinants of the Bihar politics on which the engagements of Dalit community of Bihar can be examined. The second and third chapters have discussed Dalit engagements with two different models of politics i.e. the Congress and Communist models. This chapter will discuss the Dalits engagements with the third model of politics in the state i.e. 'Ambedkarite Model'¹ of Dalit politics. The previous two chapters clearly indicate that both the Indian National Congress and communist politics have consistently ignored the political aspirations and expressions of broader emancipatory mission of Dalit Community of Bihar. They have ignored despite the fact that Dalit Community of Bihar through their continuous engagement with assimilative and reformative politics of Gandhi, Congress and Jagjivan Ram and the class politics of communist movement have been throwing the potential challenges to the identity politics in the state. It is true that the post-Ambedkar identity politics perceive that the political power is the only master key to solve all the problems of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. It has consistently ignored the cultural issues of political significance in the everyday lives of those marginalized sections. Despite that, Ambedkarite movements are, in its principle and goal, more inclusive, independent, all encompassing, universal, complete and more emancipatory than the assimilative and reformative politics of the mainstream politics. However, due to the multiple hegemonic mechanisms of the mainstream Brahminical society and the electoral complexity and compulsion they could not become the ideology of masses. It couldn't turn into a mass party and capture the state power like UP.

This chapter explains whether Ambedkar's model of socio-cultural politics based on the mission of liberation of 'Depressed classes' is reducible to an identity politics? Or this identity politics is the part of broader mission of establishing socio-economic justice, a more inclusive, more democratic and egalitarian society in India? What are

¹ Here the terms used Ambedkarite movement and the post-Ambedkarite movements have different connotation. The Ambedkarite movement was the movement lead by Ambedkar himself, and the post-Ambedkarite movement is the contemporary politics of Dalit identity, which claim to be Ambedkarite. However, they are not. Neither in their spirit, nor in their approaches.

its impacts on Dalit community in India? And how is the Dalit community of Bihar responding to the Ambedkarite politics?

The philosophy of Ambedkarite politics, led by Ambedkar, says that identity politics of oppressed class should be liberating in nature and it should approach to establish an egalitarian society as envisaged in the constitution of India through the radical transformation of society based on the universal principles such as liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. India has witnessed this model of politics in two phases i.e. the Ambedkarite politics led by himself Ambedkar and the Post-Ambedkarite Dalit politics led by his (so-called) followers. I have attempted to explain the idea through the Ambedkarite philosophy and strategy of liberation of Dalit community and literature available on the Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite politics in India.

1. Ambedkarite Movement: A Mission for Emancipation

Ambedkar himself claimed that ‘the roots of my philosophy lay not in politics but in religion.’² The essence of his philosophy can be materialized in three words i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity. For him, law in society should be maintained in order to protect liberty and equality and liberty and equality are concerned to maintain fraternity. For him, we-feeling i.e. sense of belonging is another name of fraternity and this feeling of togetherness is another name of religion. His goal of life was to construct a society in which all people may have equal opportunity. In the presence of Varna system based on religious philosophy of Brahminical Hinduism, it is almost impossible to reach this goal. So, Varna system has to be abolished by all possible means.³

Ambedkar saw how Dalit community is being forced to live a segregated life in all respect. They are discriminated on every social, economic and cultural aspect of life. They are still religiously segregated, socially marginalized and economically exploited. In his time Dalits were not allowed to enter in mainstream locality and a number of discriminatory social restrictions were imposed on Dalit community, based on Brahminical code of conduct, by upper caste Hindus. Being a Dalit he felt that the hardships and humiliations faced by a Dalit couldn't be understood by a non-Dalit. Hence the remedy to their problems has to be different from those of the upper caste

²Naik, C. D. (2003). *Thoughts and Philosophy of Doctor B. R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons Publication. P. 1.

³ Ibid.

understanding. Understanding the rigidity of the Brahminical Hindu society and its irrational code of conduct, he took a commitment in 1936 that although he born as Hindu but he would not die as Hindu. He took almost twenty years to reform the Brahminical Hindu society. Ultimately, he gave a call for total conversion of Dalit community to Buddhism.⁴ This attempt of Ambedkar can be seen as an attempt to construct a parallel religious identity of Dalit Community to challenge Brahminical Hindu religion.

For him, Vedas, Puran, and Manusmriti are originator of caste system, Ramayana and Mahabharata preserve it and Bhagavad-Gita justifies and supports it. All Hindu religious books were directed to make propaganda of Brahminical Hindu religion and they eulogized Brahmanism, priesthood to maintain caste system. Ambedkar felt that 'Manusmriti' is the beginning of Brahminism' and caste system. He burned Manusmriti and gave a call to the entire Dalit community for conversion into Buddhism. For him, Buddhism was based on the philosophy of liberty, equality and fraternity and inclusive to all. It did not believe in the concept of caste, class, priesthood, Vedic rituals and Brahmanism. No community would be segregated, humiliated and exploited in Buddhism.⁵

Hence, the philosophy of Ambedkar stands for annihilation of caste, in toto, and the discriminatory practices such as high and low, pure and impure by rejecting the Brahminical social and cultural institutions, these institutions are the base of preserving, propagating and practicing these discriminatory practices. He appealed to construct alternative social and cultural institutions of Dalit community to challenge the hegemony of Brahmins and the Brahminical institutions. Somehow with his all efforts he felt need of a possible alternative to emancipate Dalit community from their sub-human condition. He wanted to give Dalit community an alternative religious identity, so that they get out of scourge of Brahminical Hindu religion. He wanted to make Buddhism an alternative space where the Dalits could assert their independent identity free from humiliation, exploitation and segregation. Through this he wanted to create a separate space where the Dalits can stand at par with the upholders of the Brahminical Hindu religion as far as the idea of dignity and self-respect are concerned.

⁴Keer, Dhannajay (1990). *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

⁵ Ambedkar, B.R. (2007). *Annihilation of Caste*. New Delhi: *Critical Quest*.

The concept of socio-cultural identity politics of Ambedkar is very much consistent with the post-modern critique of the concept that the 'Enlightenment project of Europe' brought out in 18th century⁶ to question the process of universalizing the idea of liberty, equality, freedom, justice, development etc. under the project of constructing grand 'Meta-narrative'⁷. Ambedkar was not sure that whether these principles are equally applicable to the diverse society in India where the society is governed not only by state but also religion. Differentiating 'the religion of rules' and 'the religion of principle' he advocates that the 'Religion of rules must be destroyed' to establish the values of democracy and the universal principles such as equality, liberty and fraternity in society.⁸ The Indian social system is based on the essentialised notion of nation, culture, caste, religion etc. as far as the Brahminical meanings and knowledge are concerned. All these categories are understood in essentialized and totalized sense with the interpretation of the Brahminical scriptures. The Vedic knowledge system is highly biased to a particular society. It is against the spirit of the democratic principles, rationality and scientific outlook and the modern values are silent. The modern values such as liberty, equality, freedom, justice and democracy itself are meaningless unless the religion based caste system and discriminatory Hindu social order are not altered. These are the solid bases to critique the existing social structure. While criticizing it, Ambedkar seems to project the universal and broader unity in society through radical transformation of society.⁹

In his writing 'Buddha or Karl Marx', he clearly explained that Marxism is very dear to him. He was very much fascinated with the Marxist idea of working class unity because of its concern of widespread inequality but he was not in favour of their means to establish socio-economic equality as envisaged in the Marxist framework. For him, the revolutionary means propagated by Marxist framework is violent and based on the bloodshed of people. He wanted bloodless revolution based on social and cultural reform with the unity of depressed classes or labourer/working class. The

⁶For detail see Stephen Eric Bronner (1995). *The Great Deicide: The Enlightenment and its Critics*. [from *New Politics*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (new series), whole no. 19, Summer 1995] retrieved from: <http://nova.wpunj.edu/newpolitics/issue19/bronner19.htm>

⁷see Lyotard, Jean-Francois (1993). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translation from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Lyotard-PostModernCondition1-5.html>

⁸Ambedkar, B. R. (2007). *Annihilation of Caste*. New Delhi: Critical Quest. P. 44

⁹see, Valerian Rodrigues (2000). *Dalit and Cultural Identity: Ambedkar's Prevarications on Culture*. *Social Action*. 50 (1): 1-15.

idea of stateless society and the 'dictatorship of proletariat' were also not acceptable to him. The dictatorship and anarchy is anti democratic.¹⁰ The state is necessary and it should be run under democratic government based on electoral process and adult franchise to ensure the representation and participation of every section of society.

Further Ambedkar is of the opinion that communists of India misunderstood Marx and his idea of revolution. They ignored caste and religion in India, which are the great obstacles to the communist revolution in India. He suggested communists of India that 'If Lenin had been born in India he would first eradicate casteism and untouchability from among workers, for without this they could not get the concept of revolution.'¹¹ Analyzing the liberal notions of Ambedkarite Movement Vidhu Verma is also of the opinion that his ideological framework is very close to the Marxism and proletariat revolution based on class but he suspects that whether without 'Annihilation of Caste' the class based revolution would be possible? For Ambedkar, all universal, scientific and modern values such as liberty, equality, freedom, justice, democracy etc. are of no use unless annihilation of caste takes place. His real quests are for distributive justice and participatory democracy.¹²

Sociological theorist categorized social movement as alternative, reformative, redemptive and revolutionary. Gail Omvedt quoting Macdonis defines that;

Alternative social movement sees limited change among specific individuals, largely through remodeling lifestyle and behavior (e.g., the hippie movement). Redemptive social movements try to change certain spheres of society (e.g., religious conversions). Reformist social movements attempt to change the entire society, but in limited ways, while revolutionary social movement finally attempts radical change in the entire society (Gail, Omvedt, 2001, p. 144).¹³

She further says 'Babasaheb Ambedkar did indeed give birth to a movement that encompassed all the needs of human society- economic, social, cultural, political and spiritual. Ambedkar sought a total transformation' of society (ibid)¹⁴ but he was misrecognized only as leaders of a particular community without understanding the core. They even saw it as divisive politics against the nationalist idea of the

¹⁰For detail, see B. R. Ambedkar (2009). Buddha or Karl Marx. Delhi: Siddharth Books.

¹¹Omvedt, Gail (2008). Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals. New Delhi: Navayana. Pp. 264-5.

¹²See, Vidhu Verma (1999). Colonialism and Liberation: Ambedkar's Quest for Distributive Justice. Economic and Political Weekly. 34 (39): 2804-2810.

¹³Omvedt, Gail (2001). Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India. In Ghanshyam Shah (ed). Dalit Identity and Politics. New Delhi: Sage Publications. P. 144

¹⁴ibid.

mainstream politics.¹⁵ They missed the ‘core transcending values’ that Ambedkar was trying to uphold. Scholars reduced him to being ‘just a leader of Dalits and a legal luminary’ but he has emerged now as the ‘social conscience of modern India’.¹⁶

So, the Ambedkarite movement started by Ambedkar was not just an identity politics. In its principle and goal, it was more inclusive, universal, complete and more emancipator than the post-Ambedkarite Dalit identity politics. Which is exclusive, limited and calculative to power centric. So, I think, seeing its political vibrancy, cultural homogeneity and philosophical strength including the issues such as politics of recognition, parity of participation, socio-economic justice etc., it is to be described as the democratic conscience of modern India.

The Ambedkar’s movement was less a political than social and self respect movement based on an independent Dalit leadership.¹⁷ However, Harish Wankhede is of the opinion that the contemporary Dalit movements, which claim themselves to be Ambedkarite, are confined to personal understanding and political calculation of Dalit leaders such as Kanshi Ram, Mayavati etc. Although, they understand the importance of cultural change but they focus on political electoral gain. They didn’t underestimate the importance of socio-cultural move of Ambedkar but they are calculative to this part with the compulsion to turn it into a mass political movement. It is definitely a self-respect movement but its success cannot be judged only in terms of socio-cultural programmes. Certainly, the contemporary Dalit movements are lagging behind the criteria fixed out by Ambedkarite ideology and movement such as in UP, it is more a political movement than social and cultural and at the same time in other state like Maharashtra it is more a socio-cultural movement than a political movement but the consciousness brought out among the Dalit community of UP is unprecedented in the history of India.¹⁸ India does have the history of close association between politics and religion and it is very prevalent in the contemporary politics of India also, but what we lack is developing ‘morality as a common signifier’ as a supplement to the great ideals of a ‘secular political establishment’. Ambedkar do agree with this by saying that;

¹⁵Rodrigues, Valerian (2000). Dalits and Cultural Identity: Ambedkar’s Prevarications on Culture. *Social Action*. 50 (1): 1-15

¹⁶Narendra Jadhav, Ambedkar’s role is being belittled. *Times of India*, 13 April 2013.

¹⁷ Kumar, Vivek (2006). *India’s Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion and New Horizons*. New Delhi: Gangadeep Publication.

¹⁸Wankhede, Harish (2008). The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 43 (6): 50-57.

Religion as a social identity should propose a common and proud legacy of cultural past, social relationship with dignity and liberty to every individual to acquire profits out of his/her labour. For the dalits, such essential components of public life were absent in Hindu religion but were granted by the modern Constitution. His respect for western modernity was to its commitment to individual liberty, human rights and scientific progress of human civilisation. He also imagined that these moral principles were enshrined in the teachings of the Buddha. Ambedkar visualised Buddhism not as a ritualistic religion but as a social doctrine to establish morality in the society. By proposing “Navayana Buddhism” to dalits, Ambedkar tried to bridge the gap between the new born political ideals and the societal norms under which the dalits were living a wretched life (Wankhede, 2008, p.52).¹⁹

So, Ambedkar wanted to establish a ‘relationship between religion and politics by making morality a common signifier’. He wanted to bridge the gap between political ideals, religious universality and social norms. The meaningful social transformation was his priority than mobilizing masses including Dalit community for the political transformation. For him, a meaningful social reform itself brings a required secular political establishment. His entire political carrier revolved around bringing a meaningful social change and to establish a true essence of religion as a collective mode of resistance against the discriminative and perverted form of Hindu religion. Without scientism no social progress can lead to the secular democratic establishment based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

The next section intends to explain, are Ambedkarite models of socio-cultural politics based on the mission of liberation of ‘Depressed classes’ an identity politics? Or these identity politics are the part of broader mission of emancipation of Dalit community through establishing socio-economic justice and a more inclusive democratic and egalitarian society in India. I consider, seeing its impacts on Dalit community will help to appreciate and explain the above concern.

2. Socio-Cultural Movements and its Impacts on Dalit Community

For religion to perform truly the task of cultural and civilizational progress, it must get rid itself of metaphysical and theological baggage and be adapted to the demands of both science and democracy. Dalit alternative religious imaginations to a large extent meet the conditions led down by their suffering. So, Dalit alternative religious practices are in many ways, itself the product of the protest from both at once too much emphasis on theology and metaphysics in mainstream religious traditions and at the same time too graded and superstitious to be compatible with science and

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 52

democracy. This is finally culminated in the post-Ambedkarite Dalit movement and political mobilization with the significant feature of the sense of security in Dalit community. This movement also suggests mainstream society to change their traditional attitude under pre-existing hegemonic Hindu religious agencies towards Dalits. It helps them reviving, renovating and rejuvenating their energy to attain certain goals which finally culminate into the mass political mobilization of Dalit Community to ensure self-respect and dignity in life. Its impacts on Dalit community can be seen in almost every aspects of Dalit lives such as psychological, social, political etc.

2.1 Psycho-Spiritual aspects of Ambedkarite Movement

Religion is also a part of human culture that is defined as a 'way of life'.²⁰ It is integrated with values, beliefs, myths, histories, traditions and symbolic system of meanings which is very much particular to the community which practices it. It influences deeply the thoughts and feelings of human being which reflects in their actions. It defines human situations and the conditions of action for the members of community. 'Members of community share values, beliefs, myths, histories and ideas and the orientation emerged out from their shared common beliefs and values affecting their behavior.'²¹ Notwithstanding the fact that the contribution of religion to community and society as a whole is immense, given the Religion being the creation of society, some section of society use and propagates it as a means to achieve certain vested ends. In the history of the evolution of all major religions the aforementioned characteristics are invariably found to reside with or without any realization of the fact. When it comes to Hindu religion it becomes most pronounced. Hindu religion prescribes a universal hierarchical, exploitative, oppressive, indignant and inhuman social code of conduct placing Brahmins and Dalits into a dialectically conflicting categories assigning on former ritually superior position and striping the later off of any position by naming them as outcaste/ untouchables. It prohibits not only to participate into the practices and rituals of mainstream Hindu religion but also it lays down the rules and regulation for inhuman punishment for the violation of the code of conduct based on the notion of *pollution and purity*.

²⁰ For detail sees Williams, Raymond (1989). Culture is Ordinary. In *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. (Pp. 03-14). New York: Verso Press.

²¹ Ibid., p. 05.

In the view of Ambedkar to maintain this exploitative hierarchical caste system Brahminical social order associated the division of labour according to the capacity and talent of the individual. But in actual practice, this original principle of division of labour based on latent function of Hindu religion is manipulated in such an irrational way that even the most ignorant Brahmin continued to be regarded as someone next to god. Whereas a man from the lowest class, however high his qualifications and talent may be he is condemned as a degraded, untouchable and impure person. Its original aim is to promote organic unity among the Hindus, to perpetuate their hegemony and to exploit people belonging to lower strata.²² In this process of perpetuating their hegemony upper caste always try to maintain the Brahminical code of conduct and whenever any attempt made by Dalits to at least search their identity and feel the pain of Dalit community, it is regarded as breach of this discriminative code of conduct and they are punished severely.

When Dalit Community try to reject the hegemony of discriminatory society based on caste and other irrational mechanisms to establish a more democratic inclusive egalitarian society. In spite of introspecting and appreciating their move they were severely punished while taking law and order in hand to inflict more atrocities and crime on Dalits. This senseless reprimand germinates flames inside Dalit community to alienate them from Hindu religion. This does not reflect the sense of alienation from Hindu religion against this feudalistic mentality but also a sense of revenge inside Dalit community. Even in the intellectual discussions whenever the question arises that what historical reasons lie behind this hatred and malice. Who find the Verna system ideal and take fake pride in Hindutva? Instead of replying directly, the rightwingers either avoid this question or get angry. So, seeing this continuous oppression and discrimination to Dalit community by Hindus the hate to Hindu religion, tradition, myths and ultimately to Hindu religious system are deeply imbedded within Dalit community.

Thus in practice, this social and religious behavioural pattern of social relationship freezes itself into the caste behavioural pattern permanently, based on social, religious and cultural supremacy of one caste over the other which amounted to a denial of what had brought the Hindu social ideal into existence based on functional theory of

²² Ambedkar, B. R. (1987). *The Hindu Social Order- Its Essential Features*. In Vasant Moon (ed.) *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches*. Vol-03, (p. 95-115). Bombay: Dept. of Education, Govt. of Maharashtra.

religion. That is to say, it became the negation of its original meaning and purpose. The scourge of Untouchability, too, emerged against Dalits. This oppressed class, then, 'began to suffer most terribly in almost all context of life because of the Varna system.'²³ and society are still divided along the lines of touchability and untouchability even after 70 years of independence.

Since, Hindu religion imposed restrictions on ritual freedom to Dalits and do not allow them to enter into Hindu temples. Religion is the base of their stigmatic identity and caste atrocities. Now their is growing understanding among them that their liberation is not possible while parcticing Hindu religion. This is the reason why Dalits are moving closer to other religion such as Buddhism or whatever alternative they find to challenge the mainstream religion and to satisfy their anger. And the new alternative religious institutions of Dalits are acting as an agency for their liberation from the exploitative mainstream society.

Alternative religious practices of Dalit Community allow them to unshackle themselves from the clutches of social inferiority and indignity imposed by mainstream religious tradition in a way no other strategy can match its efficacy. In so doing this (alternative religious practices) not only help them shed the prejudices of past, incapacitating them socially as well as individually but also give them a new sense of dignified freedom, in the universe of their own, which is a precondition for any creative pursuit. This free condition helps them achieve social mobility, a dignified fraternity, a sense of security and freedom to make their choices including the political mobilization.

Given the social 'ethics at the core of religion' and as well given the motivational and emotional power it embodies, if cultivated steadily and systematically in a given religious community it can bring about cultural and civilizational transformation as envisaged by Ambedkarite politics. Dalit religion, given its subordinated and oppressed background and its aspiration to achieve all the dignity and glory, life canget in religion, it (Dalit religion) can potentially scale cultural and civilizational height hitherto unknown.²⁴

Psycho-Spiritual aspect of alternative Dalit religion reflects that the oppression as a consequence of hierarchical caste system may manifest in multiple dimensions. It

²³Jatava, D. R. (1997). *Social Philosophy of B. R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication. Pp. 07-09.

²⁴Webster, John C. B. (2002). (2nd ed.).*Religion and Dalit Liberation: An Examination of Perspectives*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors. P. 39-40.

may fracture and immobilize the oppressed (Dalit) socially, culturally, economically, spiritually and psychologically. In fact very often than not oppressed may come out of aforementioned some consequences of oppression, to be precise, socially, culturally and economically, if we radically alter the existing customary framework of social intercourse into a concrete politico-legal framework which vanishes hitherto existing unequal indignant social life of oppressed. But it may be, indeed it is as so many research have shown over the years that, the altered egalitarian formal political promises may only touch the superficial level of thoughts and psychology of oppressed, 'there depth of experience'²⁵ which has gone century into making it may remain untouched. As a result every little hurt may act as a mirror of their past wounds of oppression and it is more profound in term of empowered Dalit-Psych.

2.2 Dalit Psych and the Post-Ambedkarite Movement

In attempting to explain the consequences of oppression of Dalit psych in hierarchical caste structure, as Webster, referring to J. C. Heinrich, argues that 'there is a universal urge for self-expression and superiority inherent in human nature.'²⁶ It is this universal urge which is choked by hierarchical caste based social relation resulting in a chronic sense of inferiority, insecurity and meaninglessness which further produces anger and rage which may be either suppressed, expressed openly and directly, or expressed in directly in a passive aggressive manner according to circumstances.

Another relevant analysis is provided by Roland and Kakar. For them, peculiar Indian child socialization into household and its attendant social traits of love and respects among superior and subordinates extends far beyond this primary group into the secondary social environment of Jati where the same role they exhibit. But this socialization is highly asymmetrical among the upper caste Hindus and Dalits. For upper caste Hindus, they can be benign connections between their Home nurturing and the secondary socialization into the caste hierarchy. But for Dalit the same socialization is an experience of oppression. To explain this C. B. Webster elucidating for Roland and Kakar, remarks that:

The hierarchy into which by nature they have become immersed and emotionally (as well as economically) dependent upon is at the same time source of constant humiliation to their 'we-self'. The result can only be a seriously conflicted inner world where a deep sense of once own worth and lovableness rooted in a mother's nurturing and the happy early childhood is fighting

²⁵ Ibid. p. 35-53.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 131.

with constant feeling of shame about the status of once 'we-self' ascribed by the outside world, where a deep dependence upon 'superiors' for validation and status are at war with an equally powerful anger at those 'superiors' for withholding these, where a deep desire to prove once 'merit' to those to deny with is mixed with a sense of helplessness. Hierarchy, dependency and conflict seem to be built into the inner world of Dalits as much as into the external world with which they must deal²⁷ (Roland and Kakar in Webster 2002:136).

There is another explanation of distinctive experience of Dalit psych of oppression called trauma which results from all kinds of violence and atrocities unleashed upon Dalits within the operation of hierarchical caste based social relations. Now the question that begs is that through what mechanism can this 'depth psychic experience of oppression of Dalit be healed?'²⁸ How the alternative religious practices can help Dalits to the new sense of freedom and dignity not something as superficial truth but an experienced reality?

Increasing diffusion and deepening of democracy in India has one salient impact on Dalit psych and esteem and that is they are increasingly becoming self-conscious about their identity. It is now being felt among Dalits that they have distinct identity and if they have to gain respect and dignified life it can only be done through recognizing and practicing their distinctive religio-cultural lives. It is the recognition of this fact that today more and more efforts are being employed not only to recognize and celebrate their available distinct religion but also to discover their forgotten and buried symbols, myths, heroes and histories. Those symbols and practices which were/are denigrated by the Brahminical religious discourse, far from being discarded, are acquiring new and progressive meaning. These symbols are now being renovated, reinterpreted and even glorified.

In the above proactive exercise on parts of Dalits, it has brought forth the obvious shift in 'distinct Dalit psych'. In a very much realistic assessment of Dalit's situations it is very tough to comment on about how much their wounded psych has been healed in the process of developing alternative religious identity but one thing can easily be observed that the sense of self respect, level of empowerment, dignity and freedom has been uplifted. This perspective of creating alternative Dalit religious identity can be seen as an instrument of structural change, which is very close to Ambedkar's sociological approach to religion. For him, religion is essentially social phenomenon and it is an instrument of structural change. Religion has immense power for social transformation and Dalits hope that through this process they can get rid of their

²⁷Ibid.p. 136.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 137.

inferior identity and they will surely come out from negative social conditioning provided by Hindu religion. Religion is the 'moral signifier'.

As we have seen above that ultimately 'self' is the product of interacting factors of familial socialization and outside secondary environment of, in case of Dalit, unequal hierarchical oppressive caste structure. It is this 'nurturing environment' which creates and sustains the distorted and degraded notion of 'self' among 'Dalit psych' which has to be confronted with. This 'nurturing environment' can be altered, in my view, as Ambedkarite movement envisaged, through a distinctively radical religio-universe of imaginations and practices. This is precisely what alternative Dalit religious practices is all about. As Webster rightly put it 'the ethos of the nurturing environment is altered primarily by the introduction of a new religious ideology (e.g., egalitarian *bhakti*, 'engaged' Buddhism, Dalit theology) and its incorporation into the rites, rituals, customs and practices of the religious community.'²⁹

Dalits have had considerable influence of post-Ambedkarite Dalit movement in emancipating them from the shackles of dominant religio-cultural discourse of Savarna Hindu. Dalits have till now dominantly focused it in expressing and sharing of the pains and sufferings they have undergone by the oppressive hands of Hindu religion. Given the liberating potential of post-Ambedkarite movement, Prof. Vivek Kumar of the opinion that;

The BSP under the leadership of Kanshi Ram has brought the most significant change in the psyche of dalit masses by providing an umbrella identity, futuristic vision, myths, social ideology and a political strategy to become one of the most significant players in the game of power politics in contemporary India (2002: 168-69).³⁰

After the Kanshi Ram, it has shifted its focus away, from hitherto victimhood self to a more assertive self, where they are not only the passive victims of the Brahminical onslaughts but as well as the active agent of a new dignified socio-cultural and religious life. This is very much fact today that on the one hand dominant Hindu religious discourse is still wrecking havoc on Dalits, the alternative fact that Dalits have steadily been gaining respect in changed socio-political and cultural space. This fresh self-respect of Dalits has as much been the product of changed political landscape, as the new discovery of their own forgotten (or perhaps buried by Hindu religious priests) histories and heroes, rites and rituals, legends and leaders. This

²⁹ Ibid. p. 141.

³⁰ Kumar, Vivek (2002). Dalit Leadership in India. New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.

emerged assertive socio-cultural impacts among depressed classes and particularly among Dalit community has had deep social and political impacts.

2.3 Socio-Political impacts of post-Ambedkarite Politics

This discovery on part of Dalits have given them not only a vindictive sense of dignified empowerment, they have started challenging the Brahminical hegemony with new vigor and agility with new weapon alongside the old. This has necessitated a logical shift in their mode of expression from earlier resistance to that of assertion in toto. It is hence, imperative on part of Dalit movements that they should shift their focus from mirroring only victimhood self of Dalit to the active assertive self of Dalit. Further, celebration being one of the central to any community lives. One of the offshoots of Dalit discovery of dignified life has been their new found celebration in community life. This changed aspect of Dalits' lives are making complete sense of changes taking place among Dalits as well as to make the mandate of Dalit liberation comprehensive and substantive.

The various movements in the history of the Indian 'tradition of protest'³¹ (Hardtmann, 2009) of Dalits are labeled by different names like social reform movement, protest movement, anti-caste movement, alternative movement etc. Since, the sole motive of this movement (alternative Dalit religious identity movement) is to create an alternative Dalit identity. This movement can be labeled as anti-Hindu religion/anti-Brahminism or counter Hinduism/ counter religious movement. They see Hinduism as the base of the caste system and aim complete separation of Dalits from the Hindu religion. It is the complete liberation movement for Dalits from Brahminical cultural code of conduct in India. It is aimed to carve out a broader 'Dalit public sphere' to counter general 'Hindu public sphere'. The religious and social institutions (local, trans-local, regional etc.) are the agencies to generate a new pattern of social relationships within Dalit 'counter public sphere'.

This attempt of Dalit community to create a 'counterpublic discourse' conveys a message that they are capable to launch a parallel 'discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interest and needs.'³² Through these

³¹Hardtmann, Eva-Maria (2009). *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. P. 45.

³² Ibid., As Nancy Fraser is quoted by Hardtmann. P. 88.

process leaders of Dalit Community want to turn Dalits, what Alvarez, Dagnigo and Escobar call, 'movement-based public' or 'movement- inspired public' or they may be called 'alternative social movement public'. Once this counter-discourse public is created the Dalit movement will turn to a mass movement automatically. The fate of each and every Dalit movement perspectives lies in creation of same alternative counterpublic or what Nancy Fraser calls it 'subaltern counterpublic' be it the perspective of Dalit Buddhism, led by Ambedkar, the perspective of Dalit (Christian) Theology led by others and the perspective of Dalit politics lead by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). As such, attempt to create an alternative Dalit religious identity (religio-cultural universe) has same motive that is to create alternative counterpublic or 'Subaltern CounterPublic'.

This leads them to the emergence of another strong Dalit movement perspective. It is well accepted fact that religion embeds daily individual life. This is well and easily cultivated common sphere where people holding different perspectives may interact regularly with each other without making an extra effort. This is helping to broaden Dalit network at both 'interpublic'³³ and 'intrapublic'³⁴ levels.

Apart from all above mentioned ways of broadening the Dalit *counterpublic space* the role of modern technologies is equally important. For instance, Hardtmann asserts that 'Dalit discussion groups on internet have become the forums that most clearly show that the three movement perspectives belong, among others, to one and the same counterpublic.'³⁵ The recent example of Saharanpur, UP is perfect example of it.

Does this attempt to create an independent Dalit religious identity is not an attempt to create a countertheology in relation to Hindu religion? Of course, this will take time to develop a complete theology. Here, in this process the complete emphasis of Dalit Community is not on the choice of religion but to use it as an agency for their liberation. They want to use Dalit religious discourse to develop an independent identity. However, in this process success in both these spheres (Dalit theology and

³³ The words Intrapublic and interpublic are taken from Eva-Maria Hardtmann (2009, p. 03). Where, she has taken from Nancy Fraser (1992, p. 121). The meanings of these words differ in qualitative way. Intrapublic means relations within a public, and interpublic means relations between public. Here the word 'Intrapublic' deals relations within the Dalit counter public sphere. It is exclusive in the sense that differences are expressed and debated.

³⁴ Interpublic relations, on the other hand, she explains, are built on the premises that the Dalit activists are excluded from the debates in public sphere that they are silenced in a unilateral way and for that reason have formed their own public.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

Dalit identity) together will be another milestone and durable achievement in the assertion of Dalit community.

To understand this new dynamics of social relation analyzing the case of Uttar Pradesh state of India is very much helpful. To show their grievances Dalit Community are spending even their hard earned money extravagantly. They are performing expensive function following their own ritual practices. In fact, the performance of these rituals and religious practices have widen today significantly to include not only the old and ancient deities but also by enmeshing in and celebrating the birthday of their contemporary heroes like Ambedkar, Periyar, Phulle, Kanshi Ram, Jhalkari Bai, Mayavati and other Dalit iconic figures. Analyzing this development Pradeep Kumar and Sudha Pai aseert that:

The portraits of Ambedkar, Phule, EVR, Shahuji Maharaj;etc, in its rallies are a tribute to those who fought against untouchability and caste system. From the speeches of BSP leaders and their use of symbols like the 'Ashok Chakra' and 'Blue Flag', we can logically conclude that dalit politics propagate non-Hindu symbols. The carving out of new districts during Mayawati's chief ministership, and naming them after Gautam Buddha, Shahuji Maharaj, Jyotiba Phule, etc, categorically points towards a cultural revolt against the brahminical tradition of naming districts Rampur, Laxmanpur, Sitapur, etc. This strategy created apolitical fervour and sensitised the Dalit masses on these issues (Pradeep, 1999, p.25).³⁶

These personalities represent antibrahminical ideology due to their movements against caste in particular and the hierarchical varna system in general and the symbols of the BSP reflect revolt against brahmanism in Indian culture. This has generated in UP, a socio-cultural process of 'Ambedkarisation', i e, tremendous growth in the consciousness among Dalits about the life and ideas of Ambedkar(Pai, 1997, p. 13).³⁷

The socio-cultural process of 'Ambedkarisation' in UP is not a new phenomenon. During Mayavati regime tremendous growth in the social, cultural and political consciousnesses among Dalits about Ambedkarite politics were observed. The schools, libraries, committees, reading of Dalit literatures, installation of statues, and construction of alternative social and religious institutions were the part of gaining self-respect and dignity among Dalits, 'but voting for the BSP is seen as a political offshoot'.

The various dimensions of Dalit's religious belief system and existing theological concepts and patterns of thinking are very much political as mainstream politico-religious conception but not to hegemonise other identities in India. Now Dalits realise its importance in their life and the life of their coming generation. Further, the notion of

³⁶Kumar, Pradeep (1999, April- 03). Dalits and BSP in Uttar Pradesh: Issues and Challenges. *Economic Political Weekly*. 34(14), Pp. 822- 26.

³⁷Pai, Sudha (1997, Sept. 13). Dalit Assertion in UP: Implications for Politics. *Economic Political Weekly*. 32 (37), 2313-14.

God or relation with supernatural power or Supreme Being who is accessible and approachable to Dalit community is not easy to comprehend. Indeed, such a notion of God & Goddesses is in complete contradiction to Hindu religion. What I understand after analysis of Dalits religious belief system through Dalit writings is the existence of a Supreme being is acknowledged by them but they believe that they too are capable of approaching Him themselves be it Buddhism or whatever. Their conception of religiosity is nothing but to break their religiously sanctioned degradation and to gain dignity, equality and self-respect in society. How their mission of emancipation has gained momentum? What are the roles played by Ambedkarite movement to break discriminatory Hindu religious code of conduct based on rigid caste system and notion of purity and pollution are another subject of research but the objective is very clear and it is nothing but to liberate Dalit community from the scourge of exploitative Hindu social structure based on caste hierarchy. Certainly, it has put great psychological impact on Dalit Community and construction of alternative religious, social and political institutions are acting as an agency of their emancipation.

To conclude this section precisely I can say that the social significance of Dalit alternative religious identity pervades every aspect of Dalit's life right from their empowerment to a better and dignified life. It brings out the better adjustment between individual and society. It does not only give the emotional motivational social security but it also gives independent identity, solidarity and self-respect. The institutionalization of norms, values, rituals and symbols create new patterned network of social relationships at both 'intra-public' and 'inter-public' levels which manifests itself into broader sphere of religious grouping. This patterned network of social relationship is the part and parcel of Dalit's 'bottom-top-movement' to create independent Dalit religious identity in their everyday ordinary lived experiences free from supernatural, metaphysical, transcendental and otherworldly reference.

Embracing their own rituals Dalits also derive spiritual privilege establishing relationship with supernatural and natural powers according to their own imagination. From the available sources it is not entirely clear how widespread these theological beliefs are but the political mobilization is ever widening to challenge the mainstream politics and the exploitative Hindu social structure. It does not matter that their religious conception and beliefs are practical in the everyday life or not but it is acting as an interconnecting thread to develop solidarity, we feeling and brotherhood to organise and fight against the injustices being done to them by upper castes Hindus. To

clarify my further understanding regarding the Ambedkarite politics, in the next section, I am taking two models of Dalit identity politics who claim to be Ambedkarite, which can be taken as the post-Ambedkarite models as examples. One is being practiced in Maharashtra and other in UP.

3. Post-Ambedkarite Models of Dalit Identity Politics

According to Ambedkar we need to intervene at two spheres of society simultaneously for total transformation of society. First; political intervention at the level of state and government. Second intervention need at social, cultural, religious and moral level.³⁸ We have two partially successful models available in two different states i.e. UP and Maharashtra. UP represents the partially successful model of political assertion of Dalit community, while Maharashtra represents the model of social, religious, cultural and moral intervention. One another model has been practiced in Bihar by Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram based on the idea of assimilation of Dalits into mainstream society and reformation in the attitude of so-called upper caste Savarna Hindus towards Dalit community. It cannot be taken as an independent Dalit identity movement like Maharashtra and UP, but it is neither successful in terms of assimilation and reformation, nor in the term liberation of Dalit community.

There are different dimensions such as social, cultural, economic, political etc. to measure the impacts of a movement. The first/UP model depends on addressing the 'core issues' such as education, economic status, poverty and reducing the number of atrocities committed on Dalits based on their demeaned identity and material deprivation. This model perceived that without addressing the 'core issues' the real development of Dalit cannot be achieved.³⁹ The second model (Maharashtra model) conceives that the 'core issues' does not lay in economic deprivation rather it lies in social discrimination and cultural-religious segregation. The economic exploitation and political marginalization are offshoots of it. Their deprivation lies in the stigmatic lives and degraded identity.⁴⁰ However, cultural movement is equally important to political movement to establish socio-economic equality in society, particularly in respect of Dalit community.

³⁸ See, G. Aloysius (2010). Identity & Politics Among the Scheduled Castes of Contemporary India: Some Critical Reflections.

³⁹For detail see, Vivekkumar (2006). India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion and New Horizons. New Delhi: Gangadeep Publication.

⁴⁰See, Christophe jaffrelot (2005). Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

The post-Ambedkarite identity politics of BSP is though subordinating the socio-cultural agenda but it is far ahead in terms of political movement (assertion), and infusing the sense of share in democratic power among Dalit community. BSP has the understanding that Ambedkar understood clearly that Dalits are equally treated as untouchable in the realm of political domain also. They have been facing cultural segregation, economic exploitation, and social discrimination for centuries and even after independence they have been reduced to just into the status of second citizens, which have role to represent their community merely from the reserved constituencies. In the political realm they are still untouchable to lead the political discourse of India. Therefore BSP advocated 'the capture of political power as one of the main objectives for emancipating the lower castes from elite domination- a prerequisite for social reform and redistributive justice'. Therefore, BSP think that, her approach 'to politics has much in common with that of Ambedkar' (Jaffrelot, 2006, 423-24).⁴¹

On the other hand the model of post-Ambedkarite Dalit identity politics in Maharashtra is more focused on socio-cultural politics but it lags behind the electoral success and political movement. According to Jaffrelot, Ambedkar's 'core idea' is to make the socio-cultural reform more meaningful and sustainable. In this case the case of BSP is justified, in one and other ways, in the sense that infusing the sense of power and empowerment through the way of political movement is serving the same purposes as envisaged by Ambedkar. The political consciousness and empowerment generated among Dalits of the state through the successful political movement is itself bringing the social and cultural reform in society. The only difference in these two models is selection of 'core issues' but their goals are same i.e. the emancipation of Dalit community.

However, Badri Narayan does not endorse this socio-cultural change as envisaged by the Ambedkarite movement based on conversion and the principles of 'Navayana Buddhism'. For him, as far as the politics of BSP is concern, it is caste based social and cultural assertion, not reform. It is based on glorification of local Dalit heroes, myths, memories, histories etc. It is the glorification of caste identity and taking pride

⁴¹Jaffrelot, Christophe (2006) *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

for nothing. It just helps nothing but to broaden the BSP electoral base.⁴² However, it is completely contradictory to the core agenda of Ambedkarite movement but it is assertive in the sense of constructing independent identity of Dalit community, and certainly, the politics of BSP has transformed the Dalit's relations with the state. So, both models of Dalit identity politics are just a part of Ambedkarite politics (led by Ambedkar) and there is no perfect embodiment of Ambedkarite politics in India in the post-Ambedkarite Dalit identity politics. The construction of the identity-based movement is the part of Ambedkarite movement but it was temporary mechanism. The sole purpose is to establish socio-economic justice through promoting the critical questioning of undemocratic Brahminical Hindu social order and stigmatic identity of Dalit community.

Gopal Guru is of the opinion that the BSP in UP by going in for opportunistic alliance and whatever tactically naming it, social engineering, Mayavati to some extent has compromised with the Ambedkarite values and the soul of the true Ambedkarite movement⁴³. On the other hand the post-Ambedkarite Dalit identity politics of Maharashtra forged an opportunistic alliance to be co-opted by the Congress. They failed to capitalize on cultural capitals created by Ambedkarite movement in the state. They hardly tried to protect their independent identity. Their desperation to remain the part of power structure fragmented them into different parts leading eventually to the insignificant force in the Maharashtra politics. They failed at almost every front of Dalit movement such as cultural and political assertion. They were easily co-opted by Congress and other political parties and this is the reason they failed to mass mobilization of depressed section on the issues related to the segregation, exploitation and marginalization of Dalits and depressed sections of society.⁴⁴ However, the unprecedented electoral defeat of BSP in UP has also raised several questions on her opportunistic social engineering model and the leadership. The upper leadership of party is being charged with failing under the 'Brahminical and elite' trap to reduce party into dust. However, having seen vote share (even after the worst electoral performance), this charge is too heavy to put on BSP, but destroying the core institutions such as BAMCEF and not concentrating on the Ambedkarite politics based

⁴²For detail see, Badri Narayan (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies.

⁴³

⁴⁴Gopal Guru (1997). Dalit Cultural Movement and Dalit Politics in Maharashtra. Mumbai: Vikas Adhyan Kendra.

on the grass-roots mobilization as followed by Kanshi Ram, certainly cost her immensely.

Despite the above bleakness and despondency with respect to the avowed goals and aspiration of post-Ambedkarite politics and movement, all is not deadwood. The most important contribution of the post-Ambedkarite Dalit identity politics is infusing the sense of share in power among depressed classes. Breaking the existing culture of dominance, hegemony in all the cultural and political institutions and penetration of threat among the ruling class that if they are not provided their due share in power and various institutions they might revolt against the ruling class hegemony, that certainly lead to anarchy. So, to stop this possible anarchy the participation of all community according to their share must be ensured. The intense contradictions between depressed classes (working classes) and ruling classes must be minimized.⁴⁵ This forced ruling class to change the traditional political strategy to some extent progressive and democratic strategy to establish a harmonious/common culture in India as envisaged by Ambedkarite politics. Hence, the conception of harmonious/common culture of Ambedkarite politics is to be seen as a source of democratic development in society.

This is the reason why Harish Wankhede is of the opinion that;

Formulating a dignified social and political identity for dalits is always valued as one of the essential tasks of modern social movements in India. Among all such movements, one can witness a conflicting relationship between “the given” identities and the identities carved by the “dalit self”. The non-dalit identities of the self in general imagine or construct a meta-narrative of cultural identity based upon highly parochial and xenophobic ideas. This idea is further propagated among the masses to encompass all the “cultured self” as one and this identity is used for preserving the traditional dominance of some particular ethnic groups over others. The imaginary political Hindu, the modern liberal- secular citizen, Marxist proletariat, parochial Dravidian, etc, are some of the modern entitlements which seek to form a “common universal identity” surpassing the internal differences based on religious, social and class status (2008, p. 50).⁴⁶

To challenge this hegemony Ambedkarite politics are standing tall in the way of the ‘Manuvadi’ propagandas. It is aimed to transform the existing oppressive and undemocratic traditional social order to construct a modern democratic and egalitarian social order with their alternative conceptualization of social and religious Dalit identity. This conceptualization also includes abolishing Dalit degraded caste identity as well as the misrepresentation on several social, cultural and political fronts. In this

⁴⁵See, Jane Garnett (2006). Matthew Arnold: Culture and Anarchy (ed.). New York: Oxford World Classic.

⁴⁶Wankhede, Harish (2008). The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today. Economic and Political Weekly. 43 (6): 50-57. P. 50

respect Ambedkarite politics has followed different routes and the BSP politics of UP and the socio-cultural politics of Maharashtra which represents two different discourses (i.e. social and political) are the best examples available in the politics of India. Dalit politics of UP represents the mode of more an economic and political assertion of Dalit. However, 'the post-Ambedkar political leadership, especially in Maharashtra, failed in asserting themselves as the true heirs of Ambedkar's socio-political legacy'.⁴⁷ However, the movement is transcending a silent but equally assertive Social and Cultural Revolution among Dalits of the state. These two discourses represent two separate modes of Dalit struggle. By doing this, Sudha Pai says that;

The dalit political discourse has produced a concrete alternative to the mainstream nationalist formulations in all the realms of public reason. The discourse legitimises the thirst for political power, as it is one of the prime instruments in bringing a radical change in social relationships (1998, p. 40).⁴⁸

This newly discovered political discourse has opened the scope to claim the due share for the benefit of the cooperation of society and to exploit the fruits of modern democratic state, which has been very skeptical to the depressed sections of society and particularly to Dalit community. It has opened the space to transform the institutions of hegemonic cultural production to institution of harmonious culture production guided with the liberal democratic values. It is transforming the traditional class and caste relationship, the political, social and economic relation including the agrarian relationship at the local levels.

However, Ambedkarite movement was in its principle and goal more inclusive, independent, universal, complete and more emancipatory than the post-Ambedkarite caste based Dalit identity politics. It didn't become the ideology of masses. His political parties didn't turn into a mass party and he could not capture the state power. On contrary post-Ambedkar Dalit movement is 'floundering without a total vision'⁴⁹ (Omvedt, 2001, p. 144), not independent and inclusive in nature, has turned into a mass movement, a mass party to capture the state power. But it does not mean that asserting the caste and sectarian identity has an easy take on transcending the idea of total transformation of society, rather it need to understand retrospectively.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 52

⁴⁸ Sudha Pai (1998). The BSP in Uttar Pradesh. Seminar, November 1998, Issue no. 471: 38-42. P. 40

⁴⁹ Omvedt, Gail (2001). Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India. In Ghanshyam Shah (ed). Dalit Identity and Politics. New Delhi: Sage Publications. P.144

Understanding the broader impacts and importance of invention of new power relationship in the context of the changing dynamics and emerging paradigm of Dalit identity politics, I understand that Ambedkarite politics is not just an identity politics rather it is based on idea of 'total transformation' of society. It has twin approaches. On the one hand it want to inflict the guilt in the mainstream society for the discriminatory attitudes towards Dalit community, on the other hand, it try to empower the Dalit community through the empowerment of cultural and material conditions of Dalit community. The two models of Ambedkarite politics, which are practiced in Maharashtra and UP can be considered as successful in their different perspectives. The Maharashtra model of post-Ambedkarite politics, however, subordinating the political mobilization of Dalit community is successful in term of socio-cultural assertion of Dalit community. On the other hand so-called Ambedkarite politics of UP, which can be taken as post-Ambedkarite model of Dalit identity politics, however, subordinating the socio-cultural mobilization of Dalit community is also successful in terms of political assertion of Dalit community. But the changes brought out by them are not meaningful, sustainable and substantive as far as Ambedkarite model of politics is concerned. Despite this, Dalit responses to all existing models of Ambedkarite and post-ambedkarite movement is different in different states and it raised an obvious question to understand Dalit response to these movements in Bihar. The next section examines Dalit responses to Ambedkarite as well as post-Ambedkarite movements.

4. Dalits Responses to the Ambedkarite Movements in Bihar

For a true and egalitarian democracy as envisaged in the constitution of India, Ambedkar is of the opinion that the Hindu social order and society need to be reconstituted. The Brahminical Hindu society is based on the 'graded inequality' and it is against the true spirit of the principle of democracy i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity- Which he took from Buddha's philosophy based on reason, freedom, justice and equality and made it the 'core of the Indian democracy'. It advocates equal recognition of different identity and every individual have equal right to cultivate reason-based justice driven society. In the state like Bihar the Gandhian model of assimilative and reformative politics had strong influence on Dalit community, which

in turn completely halted the scope for the start of the movement for the construction of independent Dalit identity.

It was the influence of Gandhian and Jagjivan Ram model of Dalit politics in Bihar, which I named it 'the Bihar model of Dalit politics' that even Ambedkar was not allowed to address a meeting organized by the president of Backward Classes Association R. L. Chanrapuri. Jagjivan Ram along with Bhola Paswan Shastri pelted stones on Ambedkar and his supporters when B. R. Ambedkar and his supporters were on their way to Gandhi Maidan, Patna to address the public meeting. Both (Jagjivan Ram and Bhola Paswan Sashtri) along with some Congress supporters gave slogan 'Go Back Ambedkar' and forced him to return to Maharashtra without attending that meeting scheduled in Gandhi Maidan, Patna.⁵⁰

However, we also observesome examples of enthusiastic responses from Dalit community of Bihar such as the Bihar Harijan and Adivasi Student Union (BHASU) in 1980sfor Ambedkarite politics. On 14 April 1989 student from Bihar under the leadership of BHASU organized rally followed by Masaal juloos from Ashok Rajpath to Ambedkar Golamber/square. They burnt the copy of Manu smriti and took oath to follow Ambedkarite philosophy.⁵¹ The potentiality of BHASU reflects with the example when state government had deployed Border Security Forces in full alert to control the situation when they organized a procession from Engineering College Patna to Baily Road. Times of India reported that 'BHASU today took out big procession and demonstrated near Baily road railway crossing in protest against non-fulfillment of its six point charter of demands'.⁵² On 25 September 1989 'BHASU threatened to launch a state-wide agitation from September 30 if the state government failed to implement their long pending demands'.⁵³ Their demands included various issues such as education, hostel welfare, caste discrimination with the teaching staff in the Netarhat school etc. and they had a formal schedule like on 28 Sept. organizing sate-wide 'Prativad Divas' (protest day), 30 Sept. locking offices of District

⁵⁰ This incident happened in November 1951, when Dr. Ambedkar was invited by the president of Pichhda Verg Sangh (Backward Classes Association) R. L. Chandrapuri to address the people of Bihar in Gandhi Maidan Patna. This fact has been revealed with the conversation with Dr. Rajeev Ranjan, an office holder of BAMCEF, Bihar, Keshari Prasad, office holder of PUCL and Dalit social activist, Buddh Saran Hans (Dalit Babu), former I.A.S. and chief editor, of Ambedkar Mission Magazine, and many other people of Bihar during my field work for PhD when I was trying to explore the reasons for the absence of an autonomous vibrant Dalit Politics in Bihar.

⁵¹ Hindustan (14 April 1989)Ambedkarke Raste par Chalneka Sankalp.

⁵²Times of India, Patna (22 September 1989).BHASU stage protest rally.

⁵³ Hindustan, Patna (26 September 1989), BHASU stir from Sept. 30.

Education Superintendent, 21 Oct. state-wide SC &ST Arthi Joolus (procession with effigy of dead body) to spread the message that the then government was anti-SC&ST.⁵⁴ BHASU had also good presence in Patna and surrounding districts and we were working hard to make it state-wide strong organization but we didn't get good response from Dalit leaders of Bihar- said Sharawan Kumar,⁵⁵ the then president of BHASU. The same also found reporting in newspapers such as Times of India on 5 Oct. 1989 which reported that 'Arrah observes near-total bandh'. 'The town observed a band ... against the attack on a harijan student hostel... the band was organized by BHASU and All Bihar Student Union (ABSU)'.⁵⁶

It (1980s) was the period when Dalit assertion was started independently with the commitment towards Ambedkarite philosophy under the independent Dalit agencies like BHASU but seeing the lackadaisical response of Dalit leaders it moved towards the class politics and established connection with communist movements of the state. It is clearly reflected in the BHASU encounter with Kanshi Ram, when he was on a visit of Bihar. Saptahik Janadesh, a magazine mentioned a conversation between Kanshi Ram and BHASU general secretary Vidhyanand Ram, when he asked a bundle of questions related to class struggle. He asked various questions on behalf of BHASU. "Can Dalit achieve political rights without destroying the feudal and caste system in villages? Is it not true that when Dalit community is fighting for their rights, castes such as Yadav and Kurmi are behaving like feudal and Brahmanical forces same as Rajputs, Bhumihar and Brahmins do? Can Dalit community, in this situation, achieve self-respect, dignity, and socio-political and economic rights without forging the class unity? Exploitative feudal, landlords, capitalists and bureaucrats are the real rulers of India, can Dalits and Backwards castes achieve complete development without initiating total revolution to destroy their hegemony? However, expressing his happiness for the emergence of BSP as a strong political force in Uttar Pradesh he raised another question that why BSP has not started a chain of struggle in villages against the feudal exploitation of Dalit and other depressed communities? Do the criticism of Janata Dal and not extending support to Janata Dal to defeat Congress

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Interview with Shrawan Kumar at his residence in Railway colony near Patna railway station on 12 April 2015. He is now railway employee.

⁵⁶ Times of India, (5 October 1989). Arrah observes near-total band.

party not reflect the BSP intension to save the Congress party?” (Translated from Hindi).⁵⁷

This conversation between a Dalit agency (BHASU) of Bihar and BSP leader Kanshi Ram clearly reflects that the Dalit agencies of Bihar, by that time, had gotten influenced by the class politics of communist movements, at the same time they were unable to see the possibility of subsuming Dalit identity politics under the OBCs dominated identity politics of Janata Dal. This was the period of beginning of an independent Dalit assertion in Bihar but Dalit agencies of Bihar was not mature enough to understand that this need to be governed by the politics of identity which demands independent mobilization of Dalits from the grass-roots level. However, with the intervention of radical communist agencies and after the emergence of OBCs dominated identity politics in the state Dalit agencies became independent but not radical enough to establish complete break up with the mainstream Hindu society/identity. The obvious reason for this is that neither the alternative Dalit cultural aspiration emerged out in Bihar, nor did it get a support of even post-Ambedkarite political parties like BSP in Uttar Pradesh within the framework of identity politics. So, Dalits of Bihar are lacking in all social, political and cultural fronts in respect of challenging their subordinate and inferior status within the Brahminical social system.

On the other hand Gail Omvedt is of the opinion that;

The post Ambedkar Dalit movement has had revolutionary practices. It has provided alternative ways of living, at some points limited and some points radical and all-encompassing, ranging from changes in behavior such as giving up beef-eating to religious conversion. It has focused on changes in the entire society from radical revolutionary goals of abolishing caste oppression and economic exploitation to the limited goals of providing scope for members of Scheduled Castes to achieve social mobility... this movement has been reformist. It has mobilized along caste lines but made only half hearted efforts to destroy caste; it has attempted and achieved some real though limited societal changes, with gains especially for the educated sections among Dalits, but it failed to transform the society sufficiently to raise the general mass out of that is still among the most excruciating poverty in the world (Omvedt, 2001, p. 144).⁵⁸

The Dalit politics of Bihar cannot be separated from the Naxalite and Maoist movement. Dalits have had their engagements on different fronts. OBCs dominated politics in the state is identity politics but it is limited with just the political engagement and not any religio-cultural engagements.

⁵⁷Saptahik Janadesh, from 28 January to 3 February 1990, Patna. This page was provided by Shrawan Kumar, the then General Secretary BHASU, now a railway employee in Patna.

⁵⁸ibid. P. 144

What has emerged as new phenomenon in the contemporary identity politics in India is- except the reformatory part of the Ambedkarite movement all other parts of the movement such as the redemptive, alternative and revolutionary social movements are being practiced, simultaneously in one and other ways. When the politics of identity has become the mainstream mode of political participation of the marginalized sections of society, people are also converting to other religions and at the same time they are following the philosophy of Ambedkar rather than showing their sole dependence on the contemporary post-Ambedkarite caste based identity politics. In Bihar Dalits are fragmented into different streams. They are with the extra-parliamentary communist organizations, which believe in the radical transformation of social and economic structure through revolution, and at the same time the followers of Ambedkarite movement and numbers of Buddhists are increasing day by day. They are with OBCs dominated identity politics, and at the same time they are endorsing the Gandhian politics, BSP, left parties and I cannot deny the possibility of Dalit orientations towards BJP led NDA. The only phenomenon i.e. reformation of Savarna Hindus at movement level is not taking place because it is inwardly oriented tendency like 'changing the heart' as conceived under the 'true Gandhian politics' has become inefficient or in some extent defunct.

Dalit leaders of Bihar have the understanding that even the culture and religion are also governed by the state power; therefore capturing the state power would solve all the problems produced by the multiple-marginalities, but they miss out on the fact that only political assertion of these marginalized communities is not the sufficient condition to capture the power of the state. Dalit assertion in the Ambedkarite framework is neither a casteist phenomenon, nor a particular identity based mission. The assertion of Dalit community is not only a political phenomenon; rather it is the part of a broader framework of total transformation, which also includes reformation, redemption and transformation of society. So, the post-Ambedkarite caste based Dalit identity politics goes against the Ambedkar philosophy of total transformation of society. It was all about forming a larger democratic casteless homogeneous cultural group that would lead to the politics of total transformation of Brahminical Hindu society. His mission of 'Annihilation of Caste' was the core to Ambedkarite philosophy of cultural politics. It was a part of his complete political agenda. It is complete and fulfills the criteria of different types of social movement i.e. reformatory, alternative, redemptive and revolutionary. It was complete in the sense of

having all social, economic, cultural, political and spiritual issues, which need to act collectively while transforming an orthodox undemocratic society into a highly inclusive, democratic and egalitarian society. The post Ambedkar Dalit movement while mobilizing on caste and particular identity doesn't only undermine the richness in Ambedkarite philosophy of total transformation of society but also undermines its potential to liberate the whole 'Depressed classes' from the scourge of the Brahminical society.

Dalits of Bihar through their various political, social and cultural engagements have raised two doubts. First; whether caste based politics of identity is alone the sufficient condition for Dalit emancipation or it has to be played in consonance with other parts such as redemptive, reformatory and revolutionary social movement. They are complementary and supplementary to the universality of the Ambedkarite movement. This itself suggests that a contemporary active Dalit politician can make a call for social and religious reformation including redemption that may be conversion through an autonomous alternative political movement to launch a total revolution for the total transformation of society in respect of establishing socio-economic justice. None of the Dalit leaders of Bihar dared to construct an alternative politics through the grass-roots mobilization of Dalits. Neither they advocated for reformation, redemption nor they made a call for revolution for the total transformation of society for the emancipation of Dalit and other 'Depressed classes'. They just want to be a subordinate partner of mainstream politics, which doesn't even give a space for advocating reformation within the mainstream society. Doing this they didn't just ignore the importance of socio-cultural identity politics but they also ignore the important role played by identity politics in the way to emancipate of Dalit Community in India. It may be the temporary political phase for the emancipation of depressed classes, which have been well cultivated by OBCs' dominant identity politics to empower OBCs in Bihar. However, it has rather consolidated the Brahminical cultural and religious hegemony of Savarna Hindu dominated society by reinforcing the same Brahminical ideology among OBCs. Thus, the genuine concern for the emancipation of every oppressed community is the multi-pronged approach. It doesn't matter which approach comes first to start with.

The obvious concern emerges here is that while studying the Dalit movement in Bihar why did scholars miss out the subject of cultural change that was brought out by the identity politics, while studying/analyzing the different models of Dalit identity

politics in India. Some of the scholars do give the importance to the cultural changes brought out in the direction of the larger emancipatory project of Dalit community. At the same time they think that Ambedkar's cultural politics such as conversion is only social phenomenon rather than political. My study of existing literatures and the ethnographic study on the politics of Bihar indicate the presence of independent Dalit agencies in the state but not within the framework of an autonomous Dalit movement (ADM). It has limited appeal for mobilization mainly in terms of putting the demand on the state for social justice. These Dalit agencies ignored the importance of cultural changes or cultural politics, which Ambedkar considers more emancipatory. For Ambedkar,

the politics of identity may be generally part of the electoral strategy and it is only a temporary period aiming at mobilizing the marginalized community in the democratic political process of the country. For him it was only a means to ensure participation in the public institutions and pressurize the state to meet the demands and not the ultimate singular goal or a master key to emancipation... Therefore, Ambedkar tried to shift his followers towards cultural politics in everyday life through conversion to neo-Buddhism... The Dalit movement in UP has missed Ambedkar's point and instead of using identity politics as temporary means to engage with electoral politics, it made it the end in itself by ignoring the cultural politics (Das, Shiv Shankar 2014: 05)⁵⁹.

It means two things. The identity politics without socio-cultural politics is not complete and sustaining and the social and political changes are not substantive. It is the preliminary stage to construct broader base of the emancipation of the depressed classes of India.

In Bihar there is no history of renouncing Gandhian ideals under the framework of true Ambedkarite politics. As Sudha Pai describes that in colonial period Jatav of Agra, Aligarh, Meerut and some other districts of UP renounced the Gandhian ideals and politics in the influence of Ambedkar. Dalits of these districts rejected the demeaning identity of Harijan (Children of God) given by Gandhi and stood with the idea of Ambedkar to Annihilate Caste as they saw it more emancipatory than Gandhian idea. Gandhi was talking about the abolition of untouchability without abolishing the Verna System and Caste structure, while rejecting the Verna system and its offshoot castes along with Hinduism and to establish socio-economic equality was the part of the broader emancipatory project of Ambedkar.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Das, Shiv Shankar (2014). Cultural Politics of Neo-Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh: A case Study of Lukhnow. (Unpublished) Doctoral Thesis submitted to JNU, New Delhi. P. 05.

⁶⁰ For detail, see SudhaPai (2001) From Harijans to Dalit. In Ghanshyam Shah (ed.) *Dalit and Identity Politics*. New Delhi: SAGE Publication.

This was the period of the Sanskritization movement in India when people from backward castes inherited the Brahminical ritual and so-called upper castes life style such as food habit, dresses, customs etc. to imitate higher castes' way of life for their upward mobility. Dalits in cities rather began negating the very idea of Brahminical Hinduism and the notion of purity and pollution under the influence of Ambedkar. They were feeling the emancipatory effect of Ambedkarite politics.⁶¹ In the contemporary period the Dalits of Agra, Meerut, Saharanpur, Aligarh etc. have more faith in the Constitution of India than any Hindu scripture. They are now rejecting the Hindu God & Goddesses and other social, religious and cultural practices of mainstream society. They are taking Ambedkarite idea in mission mode and transmitting to the villages. In contrast to Dalits of Bihar, Dalits of UP believe that political unity will improve the conditions of Dalit community.⁶²

The core idea of Ambedkarite Dalit politics was to bring social reform at grass-roots level because the villages are the den of irrational Brahminical ideas. Therefore the need was the democratization of institutions to create spaces for Dalits through the political as well as cultural revolutions. Bihar has witnessed even not a single strong Dalit revolution yet. What OBCs dominated identity politics in Bihar have done is the widening of the social, economic and even cultural gap between backward castes and Dalits. Evidences are also found in many cases of Untouchability, caste atrocities and exploitation inflicted on Dalits by backwards castes. However, political assertion of educated Dalits are found but due to lack of literary supports the Ambedkarite idea is not transmitted to the grass-roots levels and this has caused Dalits of slipping of cultural reformative agenda of Ambedkarite politics which is very essential to organize the marginalized community under a broader agenda.

Dalit leaders of Bihar are opportunistic, power monger, self-centered and even they always entered into alliance with groups and parties which were/are ideologically antagonistic. They never made any efforts to construct Dalit as a category to bring a level of confidence to assert their independent identity. Moreover, Dalit academia neither provides an alternative ideology to counter mainstream Hindutva ideology,

⁶¹ See Owen M. Lynch (1969). *The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India*. New York: Columbia University Press.

The word here taken as the same concept as what M.N. Srinivas describes. For detail about Sanskritization see M. N. Srinivas (1952). *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. London: OUP. P. 85

⁶² Rawat, Ramayan S. (2011). *Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in North India*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

nor they uphold Ambedkarite ideology at the grass-roots level. There are various opportunistic political alliances made between Dalits and non-Dalit political parties but they fail to make a single alliance with Dalit civil society so that they can develop a public forum to organize Dalits of state under a single umbrella. They were never interested in Dalit mass mobilization for social change. They completely ignored the cultural part of identity movement. This is what is the real character of post-Ambedkar Dalit identity movement in India. Sudha Pai is also having the same arguments to describe the character of BSP in UP. She explains that ‘although it has emerged out of a social group, it is not a religious or reform movement; it is definitely a political organization whose aim is to capture power and use it to improve the conditions of the SC community’ (Pai, 2001, p. 270).⁶³

In the contemporary period after 1990s identity politics of North India have seen great transformation particularly in respect of cultural mobilization. In the same period Bihar witnessed completely different form of Dalit assertion.

It is different because their assertion came under the trap of non-Dalit parties, either under communist framework or OBCs dominated identity politics and this has happened due to changes met with the traditional agrarian relations. The traditional agrarian relationships that was closely associated with the land and social status, witnessed change. The old feudal class came into the conflict with the dominant OBCs castes which has opened the space for Dalit to assert themselves but that assertion of Dalit are not in the line of Ambedkarite (cultural) politics. They are asserting themselves for upward mobility in the line of Sanskritization. Dalit at the grass-roots levels found asserting themselves mostly through communist movements. The genuine assertion of Dalit, which should have based on social-cultural and political assertion once again, came under twin threats because neither OBCs dominant identity politics wants to loose their electoral base, nor communist movement allows Dalit assertion based on caste, religion or cultural politics. The only scope left is the assertion through upward mobility to only a fraction of Dalits who are economically well-off. This is the fraction of Dalit who can lead socio-cultural and political assertion of Dalit community to broaden the base of independent Dalit movement in the state through transmitting the Ambedkarite idea and universal principles. They are now completely out of the Ambedkarite framework and they are

⁶³Pai, Sudha (2001) From Harijans to Dalit. In Ghanshyam Shah (ed.) *Dalit and Identity Politics*. New Delhi: SAGE Publication. P. 270

trapped in to the non-Dalit/Brahminical propaganda to become Dalit agents in the mainstream political parties.

The real strength of identity politics is when both socio-cultural and political movement are going together but the problem of Dalits of Bihar is that they neither see socio-cultural nor any independent Dalit movement which can lead the social, cultural and political aspiration of Dalits. The issue of leadership of Dalit movement in Bihar indicates one very interesting fact, which was well articulated by the then chairman of SC commission, Bihar Vidyanand Bikkal. He explains that;

“Bihar has got a Dalit leader every time in each election and everyone does claim to be a Dalit leader but we still wonder that why has an independent autonomous vibrant Dalit movement not emerged yet in Bihar? See, there are several reasons for the absence of Dalit movement in Bihar. The first reason is the population composition of Dalit castes. It is a strong factor. Dalit population in Bihar is not fair enough to construct a Dalit movement in the state. It is little more than 16% of the total population of the state. For me this is not 16%, but only 6%. This may sound you problematic, but the first thing is that there are 23 castes in Dalit Community of Bihar. Why am I saying the population of Dalit is only 6% is that only 6% Dalits are politically conscious and the rest are Dalit for nothing, like you must have heard a proverb that ‘good for nothing’. This 6% politically conscious Dalits mostly belong to Chamar and Dushad castes. Each constitutes 6% population and collectively they make 12% out of 16% Dalit population of Bihar. I take them only 6% because today the only Dalit caste working under his single caste leader is Paswan rest of Dalits are divided under seven parts, RJD, JD(U), BJP, BSP, Congress, Left parties and Manjhi’s HAM(S). They are highly fragmented. Only Ramvilas Paswan has command over a chunk of Dalit population of Paswan community, but not 100% and one cannot. In the current situation of Bihar if only these two politically conscious and active castes (Chamar and Paswan) will unite then they can construct a strong Dalit movement in state because together they have the potential to unite all 23 castes of Dalit communities. However, together Paswan and Chamar castes have the potential to unite all Dalit Community in Bihar to launch a vibrant Dalit movement in the state, but the real question is that who will lead this initiative. Both castes cannot accept the leadership of another. If they take leadership together the crisis of Dalit leadership will be solved easily and the movement they unite in the very next election they can put a significant impact in Bihar politics, if situation arise they can even capture the political power of the state.

If you compare to UP then the first thing UP have is a good percentage of Dalit population. In UP, Dalit population is about 23% and out of that Jatav (Chamar) is single largest caste who constitutes around 60% of that SC population. It solves the problem of leadership in Dalit Community naturally. This makes almost total Dalit Community to unite with a single party BSP. In UP Dalit communities, because of their unity, they follow a single Dalit and Ambedkrite ideology and whatever they need to do in respect of strengthening Dalit movement they do it quite easily.”⁶⁴ (Vidyanand Bikkal, SC Chairman, Bihar)

The identity politics do have some limitations but in respect of Bihar, its complex population composition of Dalit community is itself the hurdle in the way of leadership and socio-cultural politics. Another fact is that neither Ambedkar nor his idea of conversion is acceptable to the Paswan caste that is most politically conscious caste of SC community. Dr. Amit kumar, who belongs to Paswan caste and work as assistant professor in Magadh University Bihar is of the opinion that ‘why did

⁶⁴ Interview with Vidyan and Bikkal, on May 20 2015. He was the then chairman of SC Commission Bihar.

Ambedkar compromised with Gandhi on the issue of Poona-pact? He did let him die. The reserved constituencies for SC are performing very badly just because of that compromise.’⁶⁵ Santosh Kumar, an IRS GOI, the grand-children of Mungeri Lal does not agree with the idea of conversion to other religion to follow the socio-cultural politics of Ambedkar. He is of the opinion that ‘Ambedkar endorsed the idea of conversion to emancipate Dalit community from social marginalization but the conversion will lead Dalit community to political marginalization.’⁶⁶ I found almost same opinion among the Paswan caste of Bihar regarding the issue of Ambedkar’s idea of conversion to other religion. Even Chamar caste, the second most politically conscious caste of Dalit community of Bihar, is also not very enthusiastic with the idea of conversion.

Ashok Chaudhary, the only Dalit MLA who manages to win from an unreserved constituency, Kanti⁶⁷ as an independent candidate is of the opinion that, look; now the conversion issue become the issue of gone days. What people really want today are honesty, dedication and commitment to the local issues. Even Dalit community of Bihar does not look interested to come out from the Hindu social structure. They don’t have that kind of consciousness that the identity based socio-cultural politics will lead them to emancipation.’⁶⁸ So, there are different understandings among Dalit Community regarding the idea of conversion and the socio-cultural identity politics as envisaged by Ambedkar. There understandings also differ according to the caste and social and economic conditions. This makes very difficult to mobilize Dalit community together for an independent Dalit movement in Bihar. This also indicates the complete absence of earlier Dalit socio-cultural movement in Bihar. When Dalits of other state such as UP, Maharashtra etc were engaging with RPI and other Ambedkarite social and political organizations, Dalits of Bihar were upholding Gandhian and Jagjivan Ram’s model of assimilative and reformative politics under

⁶⁵ Interview with Dr. Amit kumar on May 15 2015.

⁶⁶ Interview with Santosh Kumar during the 4th phase state assembly election Bihar in Bochahan constituency where his wife Sunita Kumar was one of the independent candidates. Oct. 2015. Bochahan constituency was my one field of study. Santosh Kumar is an IRS officer GOI and the grand-children of MungeriLal, a popular Congress Dalit leader of Bihar.

⁶⁷ Kanti Vidhan Sabha Constituency no. 95 is part of Muzaffarpur Lok Sabha constituency and it is adjoining Vidhan Sabha SC reserved constituency Bochahan, 91.

⁶⁸ Interview with Ashok Kumar Chaudhary. He is only Dalit MLA of Bihar who managed to win from an Unreserved State assembly constituency Kanti in Muzaffarpur district. (There are four independent candidates won in last Bihar assembly election 2015 out of 243 seats. Dharendra Pratap Singh from Valmiki Nagar, 1 Paschmi Champaran. Ashok Kumar Chaudhary from Kanti 95. Bebi Kumari from Bochahan 91, both from Muzaffarpur district. Anant Kumar Singh from Mokama 178, Patna District.) I had telephonic interview with him on April 05 2017.

the banner of mainstream political party Indian National Congress. Despite that even the most successful Dalit political party based on identity politics BSP is also very reluctant on the socio-cultural politics of Ambedkar and particularly on the issue of conversion.

For Ambedkar 'the change must be meaningful' in direction of establishing socio-economic justice in society rather than replacing one dominant structure by another. He knew that despite the rights of Dalit community are formally written in the constitution of India its implementation is going to be very difficult because the prevailing dominance of Savarna castes Hindus in all departments of lives is completely against the ethics of constitution. So he warned the nation that;

We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy... Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many... We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian Society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others... On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality... In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up (Moon, 2014, p. 1216).⁶⁹

And what exactly happened in Bihar even after the emergence of identity politics is completely opposite to the essence of identity politics. It is not the Dalit identity politics to bring radical social, cultural and political transformation to end the structures deprivation of Dalit community. It is OBCs dominated identity politics and the replacement of one dominated group of upper castes by newly conscious backward castes which is neither working for establishing socio-economic justice nor they try to reduce contradictions between social and political democracy. They claim to be socialist but divide the society on social and political lines. The propagators of social justice became the main hurdles in the way of social emancipation of Dalit community of the state. Definitely they don't follow the ideals of Ambedkarite idea of socio-cultural revolutions and this is the reason why Bihar is completely out of the wave of socio-cultural revolution. The politics of Bihar be it mainstream, (OBCs)

⁶⁹Moon, Vasant (ed.) (2014). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. Vol. 13. Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India: New Delhi. P. 1216. Retrieved from: http://www.mea.gov.in/Images/attach/amb/Volume_13.pdf

identity politics or Dalit politics all are limited to gaining electoral success and Dalit leaders who claims to be 'leader of Dalits' are opportunistic, power monger and anti-Ambedkarite. This is why Dalits of the state are neither in position to 'blow up the structure' in the communist leadership(which is not desirable in Ambedkarite understanding of politics) nor they can bargain the interests of their community.

So, the above discussed contribution made by the Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite Dalit identity politics to infuse a sense of power among Dalit community, breaking the existing culture of dominance, hegemony in all the cultural and political institutions and penetration of threat among the ruling class that if they are not provided their due share in power and various institutions they might revolt against the ruling class hegemony are not seen in the ruling class of Bihar.

Conclusion

Understanding the broader socio-cultural and political impacts and invention of new power relationship in the context of the changing dynamics and emerging paradigm of Dalit identity politics, I understand that Ambedkarite politics is not just an identity politics rather it is based on total transformation of society. It has twin approaches. On the one hand it want to inflict the guilt in the mainstream society for the discriminatory attitudes towards Dalit community, on the other hand it try to empower the Dalit community through the empowerment of cultural and material conditions of Dalit community. The Maharashtra model of Ambedkarite politics however subordinating the political mobilization of Dalit community is successful in term of socio-cultural assertion of Dalit community. On the other hand Ambedkarite politics of UP, which can be taken as post-Ambedkarite model of Dalit identity politics however subordinating the socio-cultural mobilization of Dalit community is also successful in terms of political assertion of Dalit community. Both can be considered as the part of whole Ambedkarite movement, which has goal of total transformation of society in terms of broader mission of establishing socio-economic justice. Whether these Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite movements of Dalit community are more democratic and based on establishing socio-economic justice or not can be the subject of further research but understanding its psychological and political impacts on Dalit community, I found it more assertive, more liberating and emancipatory to Dalit community than assimilative and reformative model of the

mainstream politics. But the irony is that Dalit community of Bihar is still not responding positively to Ambedkarite politics. Barring some exceptions even Dalit leaders of Bihar do not endorse Ambedkarite politics in the state and so does the Dalit community.

It is true that there is some limitation of identity politics while participating and practicing electoral democracy. It is all about number game and one cannot capture the power of state without broadening the base to other communities also. This is why Kanshi Ram, the constructor, nurturer and rearer of BSP, the most successful political party of Dalit identity politics in India, was much calculative in terms of socio-cultural politics and electoral political gains. No doubt socio-cultural politics including conversion gives an independent identity to Dalit community but the empowerment infused in Dalit community in terms of self-respect and dignity through the political power cannot be undermined to the socio-cultural politics of Ambedkar. It also opens the door for economic independence, which is one of the most important elements to challenge the hegemony of upper caste and emancipation of Dalit community. One can also easily understand the same Kanshi Ram, who started Dalit movement following Phule, Periyar, Ambedkar etc., differs while entering into electoral politics.⁷⁰ The difference between approaches of these two icons suggests some other limitations of post Ambedkar identity politics.

Ambedkar made a call for conversion while he was already established himself in the politics of India, at the same time he was also part of government and state. He tried to legitimize his move through his politics and position. Kanshi Ram however subordinated the conversion part of identity politics to start with the independent social movement of Dalits but followed the Ambedkarite philosophy to justify his political move. Thus followed the principle of 'social movement precedes political movement. It was certainly the same 'silent revolution' however the socio-cultural mobilization with the same spirit was absent. On contrary to both models, as discussed in first chapter, Ambedkar contemporary Jagjivan Ram in Bihar, using his political position along with Gandhi, notwithstanding the importance of an autonomous Dalit movement tried to develop a completely different model of Dalit politics in Bihar based on assimilative and reformative approaches which was not

⁷⁰for detail see The Renewal of Dalit Politics. In Jaffrelot, Christophe (2003). *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics*. Delhi: Permanent Black. Pp. 387-425.

based on an independent Dalit politics in nature blunted the scope of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state. These three different models followed by three Dalit icons in different states in India itself explain the complexity and limitations of Dalit identity politics that whether socio-cultural movement is the part of an autonomous Dalit movement? However, Kanshi Ram proved his point with the success story of BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

The contemporary Dalit leaders of Bihar reject all three models of Dalit politics available in India. They neither follow Ambedkar, nor they try to construct a broader independent Dalit social movement like Kanshi Ram. They also reject Jagjivan Ram model with their opportunistic move to one party to other. They are not serious about social reform and cultural change. They are just confined to the political calculation to remain an insignificant part of power politics. They don't only question their legitimacy rather they have made the mass Dalit population of state an insignificant part of the politics of state.

Social Construction of an Alternative Dalit Identity: Study of Bochahan

In the previous three chapters I have discussed three models of politics, which Dalits have engaging in the state. First; the Gandhian and Jgjivan Ram's model based on assimilation of Dalit into the mainstream Hindu society and reformation of Savarna upper castes attitude towards Dalit community, which I named it 'the Bihar model of Dalit politics'. Second chapter deals with the Dalit engagement with the communist movements with basic arguments that Dalits have been so intimately engaged with communist movements that Dalit movements and Communist movements (particularly Naxalite and Maoist movements) became synonyms in Bihar. Communist-Dalit bonds are still so strong in the state that Dalit parties itself find tough to connect with their own constituents. The last (previous) chapter deals different models of Dalit politics under the Ambedkarite movement in India, what are their impacts on Dalit community and Despite the success story of Dalit identity politics (Ambedkarite politics) in UP, the adjoining state, it has been not getting the expected response of its own community in Bihar.

This chapter is based on the case study of the Bochahan Vidhan Sabha constituency (state assembly Constituency) in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar, which will explore which model of Dalit politics is working there. Whether the processes of 'symbolic interactionism' to construct an alternative identity of Dalit Community of Bihar, which is considered the base of socio-cultural politics of Dalit community, is in the process or not? Whether Dalit Community understands the importance of the construction of an independent separate identity to them in the formation of constructing a broader social and political base? Do they understand the role of 'practical efficacy'¹ of their cultural and social autonomy in the liberation of Dalit Community from the scourge of Hindu religion? The process of 'symbolic interactionism' to construct a parallel or an alternative identity of a community starts when the level of the consciousness of that particular community reaches up to a certain height of consciousness to claim the 'parity of participation'. What

¹For detail about Dalit theology and its practical efficacy see Rajkumar, Peniel (2010). Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation: Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities. Routledge: England. P-08

have Dalit and Ambekarite movement in Bihar done on the ontological surface that allows it to be used as an interconnecting thread among individuals of Dalit Community to connect with psychological framework? What have Dalit intellectuals and elites, through their literary and non-literary works, done to construct an epistemological domain for Dalit Community of Bihar, and to look into the importance of the process of 'symbolic interactionism' in the construction of alternative Dalit identity based on the protest ideology and liberation theology? This is why Precisely, this chapter is like the 'measuring rod' to scale the level of consciousness as well as commitment of Dalit community regarding the construction of an autonomous Dalit politics as a part of their broader project of Dalit emancipation from exploitation, discrimination and segregation.

1. Introducing the Constituency

I will begin by saying that a well constructed history, myths, memories and stories on the ontological plane gets the status of an identity of self, a culture or a religion of society, when it captures the epistemological domain of society after passing through the intermediary phase of psychological domain of individuals and society. After a certain period it starts getting reflected in the pattern of interactions in day to day lives of individuals of that particular society or communities well associated with newly discovered rituals and practices under the reflection of psychological domain and finally it becomes the part of the pattern of socialization. Once it becomes part of the process of socialization, it starts entering into the epistemological domain of the society to challenge the apparatuses, which decide the hegemonic social, religious and cultural identity of the mainstream society. Thus, these ontological, psychological and epistemological domains of society act as three levels of the process of the construction of an alternative or a separate identity to begin the process of the 'symbolic interactionism' and to achieve the independent status of social, cultural and religious identity. It can be compared with what Eric Hobsbawm call an *invented tradition*. For him, 'an *invented tradition* is a set of

rituals or symbolic practices that inculcate certain values and norms by establishing continuity with a suitable historic past.²

The state assembly constituency Bochahan is the part of Muzaffarpur district, which is a place having continuity with past, a politically vibrant place in Bihar right from the period of freedom movement of India. It is not only the place from where JP launched his 'Total Revolution' against the democratic crisis during emergency, it is also the place where Naxalite (Communist) movement regained their momentum after the brutal crackdown during emergency under the leadership of a popular communist Dalit leader Ram Naresh Ram. So, the constituency has invented its unique tradition in two senses. First; it has never been won by the mainstream political party of India. Either socialist or Janata Dal and its constituent parties have managed to win. Second; it is one of the longest ruled (40 years) state assembly reserve constituency by a single Dalit candidate in India.

On the ontological domain, the construction of an alternative identity under the process of the 'symbolic interactionism', which includes de-construction, evaluation and interpretation of old and mainstream hegemonic histories, stories, myths, symbols, rituals and practices are undertaken by the marginalized and depressed communities. They construct an alternative histories, myths, stories, symbols, rituals etc. after re-interpreting and re-evaluating them. It does not only challenge the hegemonic and dominant traditions and culture of mainstream society but also enable marginalized and depressed communities 'to enter the meaningful domain of knowing, inventing, creating the telling of past as a constant dialogue with the present'³ dominant social, cultural and religious discourses of the mainstream society. It establishes an alternative pattern of social engagements for marginalized and depressed Dalit Community under the 'existential narrative reflecting living cultural contexts'.⁴ This chapter with the help of the ethnographic field work as a participant observer will examine how far this process of

² Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, T (1985). *The Invention of Tradition*. (ed.). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Pp.- 1-2.

³ Narayan, Badri (2001). *Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse*. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. Page- 16.

⁴ Ibid.

constructing alternatives has reached in Bihar. Let me begin with political profiling of this constituency.

Bochahan (Vidhan Sabha constituency) is part of No. 15 Muzaffarpur (Lok Sabha Constituency).As per Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies Order, 2008, No. 91 Bochahan (Vidhan Sabha constituency) (SC) is composed of the following: Adi Gopalpur, Balthi Rasulpur, Bhootane, Deogan, Karanpur North, Karanpur South, Lohsari, Maidapur, Majhauri, Sahila Rampur, Sarfuddinpur, Unsar and Vishunpur Jagdish gram panchayats of Bochahan community development block; Abdul Nagar Urf Madhopur, Baikatpur, Barajagannath, Bhikhanpur, Chhapra Megh, Dumri, Jamalabad, Jhapahan, Kanauli Vishundutta, Khabra, Manika Harikesh, Manika Vishunpur Chand, Mushahri Alias Radha Nagar, Narauli, Prahladpur, Rajwara Bhagwan, Rohua, Sahbazpur, Shekhpur, Sherpur, Susta and Taraura Gopalpur gram panchayats of Mushahri CD Block.⁵

**List of winning candidates from Bochahan (SC) Reserve State Assembly
Constituency (Bihar) Till Date**

Year	Constituency Name	Winner	Gender	Party	Votes	Runner Up	Party	Votes
2015	Bochaha	Beby Kumari	F	IND	67720	Ramai Ram	JD(U)	43590
2010	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	JD(U)	61885	Musafir Paswan	RJD	37758
2009	Bochaha	Musafir Paswan	M	RJD	39968	Ramal Ram	JD(U)	35942

⁵ "Schedule – XIII of Constituencies Order, 2008 of Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies Order, 2008 of the Election Commission of India"(PDF). *Schedule VI Bihar, Part A – Assembly constituencies, Part B – Parliamentary constituencies*. Retrieved 2011-01-10.Retrieved from: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/CurrentElections/CONSOLIDATED_ORDER%20_ECI%20.pdf

OCT 2005	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	RJD	46861	Shiv Nath Chaudhary	JD(U)	41081
FEB 2005	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	RJD	50956	Shiv Nath Choudhary	JD(U)	33432
2000	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	RJD	77031	Musafir Paswan	JD(U)	22863
1995	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	JD	74273	Mushafir Paswan	SAP	28147
1990	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	JD	66280	Ram Pratap Niraj	INC	27854
1985	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	LKD	20303	Hari Lal Ram	INC	17996
1980	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	JNP(JP)	17663	Righan Ram	CPI	13752
1977	Bochaha	Kamal Paswan	M	JNP	32030	Hari Lal Ram	INC	10810
1972	Bochaha	Ramai Ram	M	HSD	13531	Hari Lal Ram	IND	12798
1969	Bochaha	Sitaram Rajak	M	SSP	19042	Chandramani Lal Chowdhary	INC	11374
1967	Bochaha	S.R. Razak	M	SSP	18049	C.L. Chaudhary	INC	11927

Source: <http://www.elections.in/bihar/assembly-constituencies/bochaha.html> retrieved on 05 June 2017

SAP -Samajwadi Party, JNP- Janata Party, JNP (JP) – Janata Party (JP), SSP- Samyukta Socialist Party, LKD – Bhartiya Lok Dal, HSD – Hindustani Seva Dal, RJD – Rastriya Janata Dal, JD (U) – Janata Dal (United), IND - Independent

The above table itself shows the very unique characters of this constituency. It has completely different history regarding the general political mobilization in the state. Right from the creation of this assembly constituency in 1967 none of the mainstream

party like Congress and BJP could manage to win here. This place has remained the place of the dominance of other than mainstream political party. In 1967 when the Indian National Congress (INC) was dominating the all regions of the state, Samyukta Socialist Party⁶ (United Socialist party) dominated this constituency. Sitaram Razak of SSP won the election twice (1967 and 1969) and Congress remained the runner up before Ramai Ram captured this seat in 1972 but again with the banner of non-congress and non-BJP parties and the Congress even lost her runner up status to an independent Candidate Hari Lal Ram. Even in 1977 during emergency and that was the period when Congress popularity was on the top and when Jagjivan Ram's had strong hold on Dalit Communities, this constituency gave verdict to Janata Party and its constituent parties. However, Congress managed to remain the second major political force till 1990 except twice (1972 and 1980). The year 1980 was the year of strong upsurge of Communist (Naxalite) Movement in Muzzafarpur district and surrounding areas under the leadership of Ram Naresh Ram, a popular communist Dalit leader.

This is the reason why Congress lost its runner up position to CPI (Communist Party of India) in 1980. Another Dalit leader

Hari Lal Ram was the mass Dalit leader of this region. He started his political career at the grass-roots level under the communist organization but he joined Congress party under the influence of Jagjivan Ram. Congress could have lost her ground in seventies only but it was only Hari Lal Ram who made the Congress regain her strong ground again in 1977. Despite his all effort and the strong influence of Jagjivan Ram on Dalits Congress only manage to stand second again in 1985.⁷

Ramai Ram, who always remained with either Jnata Party or with its constituent's parties such as RJD and JD (U), has remained undefeated since 1972 except once in 1977 by a Janta Party Candidate Kamal Paswan. Finally he was defeated in the last assembly election in 2015 by an Independent candidate. So, the constituency has its unique character in two senses. First; It has never been won by the mainstream political party of

⁶Samyukta Socialist Party (United Socialist Party) (SSP) was formed in 1964 after a split in the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). The popular Trade Union leader George Fernandes and MP from Muzaffarpur was the General Secretary of this party from 1969 to 1972. In 1972, SSP was reunited with PSP, forming the Socialist Party. For detail see Verinder Grover (1997) (ed.) *Political Parties and Party System*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications. pp. 228–231.

⁷ Interview with Mahesh Paswan in Mushahari, Bochahan on 26 Oct. 2015. He was the ex-jila parishad also but his image is so distorted as a leader of Paswan only that he could not win the second time.

India such as Congress and BJP. Either socialist or Janata Dal and its constituent parties have managed to win. Second; it is one of the longest ruled (40 years) state assembly reserve constituency by a single Dalit candidate in India. Despite that the condition of Dalits of this constituency is no better than any other state assembly reserve constituency.

The population composition of Dalit Community in Bochahan is following. Dushad constitutes 18,501, Mallah (Sahni)- 25,777, Chamar- 15,491, Mushar- 3544, Dhobi- 1913, Dhanuk- 1770 are the major Dalit castes amongst others. They constitute around more than 70,000 out of 206898 voters i.e. around 34 percent. Muslims constitute good number, 27,787. Hence, both Dalits and Muslims hold almost half of total number of votes in this Vidhan Sabha constituency.⁸

2. Introducing Dalits in the constituency

For getting clearer picture, I divided Dalits of this constituency into four categories, the educated middle class Dalit, literate lower class Dalits, illiterate poor class and Dalit women. The educated middle class Dalits who can play important role for the construction of an autonomous Dalit politics have strong caste consciousness rather than Dalit consciousness. They have some idea and understanding of an independent Dalit politics but seeing the nature of Dalit leaders of Bihar they are more opportunistic than poor Dalits.

2.1 Strong Caste Consciousness among Dalits

Mahesh Paswan, a former Zila Parishad, is of the opinion that Dalit can surely take initiative of an independent Dalit politics here but due to strong caste consciousness among Dalit themselves and lack of vision and understanding of Ambedkrite movement, this has not been possible. He says ‘Dushads apne chaurai me rahte hai, aur Mallah bhi apne aapko kam nahi samajhte, Chamaron ka kuchh pata nahi chalta’ (Dushads boast themselves, Mallah also do not consider themselves inferior to anyone and none can guess about Chamars). The reality is that Dalit Community of this Vidhan Sabha are highly fragmented. Dushads who are politically conscious and under the patronage of

⁸Retrieved from: http://ceobihar.nic.in/AE_2015_Report.html

Ram Vilas Paswan boast themselves and consider superior than other Dalit castes. Mallah (Sahni) who is very good in number here are now taking pride with Mukesh Sahni, a film producer –turned politician and BJP star campaigner in last election, who is given a punch words ‘Sahni- the son of Mallah’. Further, Vinod Sahni, from Shmanichak Dhab village, confirms that ‘mere gaon me bhi Mallah aur Dushadon ka do khema hai, wo ek dushre ke khilaf hi lage rahte hai’ (in my village also there are two groups Dushads and Mallah, they are busy in conspiring each other). Even these leading castes do not appropriate Dr. Ambedkar as their icon and they are against the religious conversion of Dalit communities, however, they are not against the Dalit and Ambedkarite movement. They consider themselves part of the Brahminical Hindu social structure. For them, an autonomous Dalit movement is good but construction of a separate religious identity of Dalit Community is not the viable option. This is what their understanding about an autonomous Dalit movement of Dalit Community of Bihar.

Just literate (not educated) lower class Dalits have completely different understanding of Dalit politics. They are orthodox, rigid and misguided but honest and committed. They want to come out of this exploitative system of Brahminical social structure, so that they can save the future generation of Dalit Community but they have neither proper guidance, nor have their faith in Dalit leaders. Some people, sitting at Budhnagra Radha Chauk of Dumari Panchayat, have shared their views like ‘sab jati ka khela hai bhaiya. Dalit bhi jativad karte hai. Paswan sirf paswan ko dekhta hai. Mallah sirf Mallah ko, yadav sirf yadav ko. Yaha koi aisa nahi hai jo sabka leader ban sake.’ (It is nothing but all about caste. Dalits are also casteist. Paswan looks over paswan only, Mallah to only Mallah, yadav to only yadav. None of the single leader here who can be leader of all or who can represent all castes equally.) Further, they are of the opinion that ‘for the independent Dalit movement all Dalit castes will have to join hands together. It is not possible in Bochahan. All are self-acclaimed leader. Pointing to me one among them, while offering seat and tea, further spoke that ‘aap bahut badi baat kah rahe hai sir. Hamlog padhe-likhe nahi hai lekin aapki bbat puri tarah samajhte hai. Yaha sab neta banta hai lekin koi aisi baat hi nahi karta. Inke neta bhi aise hi hai, wo kab, kyon kis party me rahte hai pata hi nahi chalta.’ (you are saying a matter of great concern of Dalit communities. We are not educated but we understand the bigger perspective of what you are saying. Here, all are

claiming a leader themselves but none of them talk about bigger perspectives and plans. Their leaders are also like them; it is beyond understanding that when they join which party and why?). This class of Dalit Community is less politicized and they are ready to support the movement that can pursue the interest of Dalit communities.

The poor illiterate Dalits have nothing to do with politics, movement and any other social, cultural and religious philosophies. Both in Bochahan in Muzaffarpur and Chakai in Jamui Districts these poor, landless, unemployed and helpless Dalit Community have some common properties. They are hopeless, stressed and accept their penury as destiny. I found them drunk even early in the morning. When I tried to find the reasons, all I can explain is that they are killing themselves so that they can liberate themselves from hopeless, stressed and humiliating life. This is the reason why money plays such an important role during the election. Except money, liquor and 'Bhoj' the liberating philosophy, movement, identity etc. mean nothing to them.

Dalit women are another highly exploited, hopeless and humiliating category in the Indian society. During my fieldwork, in last assembly election of Bihar 2015, I asked more than 500 of these illiterate poor Dalit women, who are forced to live in slum like areas, that whom were they going to vote or elect? Except 12 women none of other knew whom they were going to vote for. Either Mukhiya, M.L.A. or M.P.? Most of them replied that they are going to vote for Mukhiya. Those 12 women who knew that whom they are going to vote were either ward member or public representatives. These 12 women were also seemingly committed for public causes but rest had nothing to do with politics and vote. Generally they do what those women representatives and their husbands direct to do. None of those women were aware about Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit movement. When I asked another question that why do they vote? Most of them came up with very common reply that 'sab vote dete hai isliye mai bhi chali jati hoon' (I vote because others vote).

Seeing this situation of Dalit Community one can easily imagine the level of consciousness of Dalit Community and the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar. This also clearly reflects their psychological and moral understanding of Dalits about the vote and electoral democracy and other theoretical and philosophical concepts.

Under this low level or complete absence of social political and cultural consciousness, construction of an alternative ‘social imaginary’⁹ myths, story, narratives, rituals and practices based on an alternative theory and to popularize it against the mainstream social, cultural and religious myths, stories, narratives, rituals and practices is almost impossible.

This constituency, however, represents a fertile place that offer the hope for the alternative politics in the state but as far as the alternative Dalit politics is concerned the ground situation tells a completely different picture.

2.2 Dalits are Mentally Enslaved and Ignorant

No idea can be produced alone, it needs to be propagated, preached and promoted by various modes. It also needs appropriation to consolidate. Like ‘Brahminism consolidated itself by opposing Buddhism and by appropriating some of its principles and practices as its own.’¹⁰ Propagation, dissemination and appropriation of independent identity, protest ideology based on liberation theology need free minds, rational analytical thinking and a strong zeal to live a better life with full of dignity, equality and self-respect. In Bihar, particularly in Bochahan, the poor level of literacy, strong hopelessness, poverty, economic interdependence on upper castes, the kind of consciousness needed to activate Dalit minds free is absent, which seems clearly that the physical slavery of Dalits and untouchables have ended, the name of former Untouchables has changed to Dalits but the mental slavery still persists strongly. They are still governed by traditional Hindutva horizon to interpret their condition as a sin by virtue of being Dalit.

2.3 Dalits are Intimidated Voters

Before the emergence of OBCs dominated identity politics in Bihar, Dalit voters were marginalized, segregated and under high sway of the Brahminical patron-client system.

⁹ The word ‘Social Imaginary’ is taken from Charles Taylor to co-relate the Dalit political and cultural imagination with their socio-economic conditions. Using this word Taylor tries to explain ‘the ways in which people imagine their social existence- how they fit together with other and how things go on between them and their fellows’ (Taylor 2007: 119). For detail see Charles Taylor (2007). Culture of Democracy and Citizen Efficacy, *Public Culture* Winter 19 (1): 117-50.

¹⁰ Rodrigous, Valerian (2008). Dalit Bahujan Discourse. Critical Quest, New Delhi. Page.- 10.

They were intimidated to think that defying the order of Brahmins and landlords will bring curse upon them. They were so illiterate and dependent that Brahmins and landlords used religious dogmas and irrational myths to capture the votes of these intimidated Dalit communities. The Brahmins were religious and political master and landlords always haunted Dalit Community by virtue of being their economic master. The role of religion and the Brahminical tyranny to intimidate Dalit voters was replaced by criminals, landlords and neo-feudal class after the 'criminalization of politics' and the 'politicization of criminals'. On one hand criminals turned politicians started using the money and muscle power for capturing votes, on the other they started intimidating Dalit and depressed communities directly putting the threat of bad consequences if they don't cast vote in their support and this still continue with Dalit Community of Bihar. I found this complaint in number of villages.

2.4 Holding Voter Identity Cards

The value of a priceless vote of Dalit for upper caste is nothing but one time dinner with local made liquor. The upper caste acts as an agent as well as 'thikedar' of votes for a Dalit village. I found organizing 'bhoj' in a number of villages of Dalit castes. The organizers were upper caste dominant people and they take lakhs of money for what they call 'setting and managing' of their votes. Act of 'intimidation' is very general phenomenon in this area. One very interesting thing I found is that those villages of Dalit castes not in favour of upper caste propped and supported candidates; they capture the voter identity cards of Dalits of those villages, paying some money forcibly to ensure that they cannot vote against their candidates. The next day after voting is over they return it to them, and Dalits accept it happily.

2.5 Dalit's Perception about Vote

To think why people vote in election we need to be more analytical, more creative and more practical. Generally, people think that electoral politics or election is only political and statistical event but reality is that it has also social, psychological, religious, cultural and moral implications. Had it been only a teleological phenomenon then candidates would have no hesitation to declare the result after statistical calculation of counting

crowds in rallies and other participations of people before voting. It is general thinking that 'every voter participates with conviction that his or her vote matters. Without that conviction, there would really be no point at all'.¹¹ Further it is also a general understanding that 'India is not only the largest, but also one of the most enthusiastic and engaged of democracies'.¹²

Despite it, this scale of enthusiasm and vibrant engagement cannot be generalized for all castes and communities of India. Before my fieldwork, on the basis of literature and books I might have agreed on both scales of judging voting behavior of Dalit Community in India but after my fieldwork, I started doubting about the enthusiasm about electoral participation of Dalit Community of Bihar. This statement cannot be generalized but it may hold true also for upper castes and other communities of Bihar. They are certainly very enthusiastic in election days but not about votes and engagement with democracy rather they are enthusiastic about money and liquor with 'bhoj' i.e. one time dinner or lunch provided by various candidates to manage their votes with the help of 'thikkedars' i.e. local criminals and dominant persons who take responsibility of their votes. Dalits of Bochahan found engaged more than any other communities but not for vote rather they were more enthusiastic for local made liquor, money and 'bhoj' only. However, the concept of this bhoj was taken from the BJP politics of Uttar Pradesh when Dalit assertion started putting potential challenge to mainstream politics. Getting aware of this potential challenge BJP started 'samoohik bhoj' in Dalit bastis (villages) to woo Dalits of the state. 'It was not as if the other political parties were not aware of the Dalit challenge. The BJP from the very beginning was trying to woo the dalit. It made much of Ambedkar, organized 'samoohik bhoj' in dalit bastis and brought a dalit forward to lay the foundation stone of Ram mandir in Ayodhya.'¹³Hence, to analyze, understand and write anything conclusively about the voting behavior of Dalit Community of Bihar one needs to engage with them as a participant observer only. The fieldwork experiences of

¹¹Spencer, Jonathan (2014) Foreword, in Mukulika Banerjee, *Why India Votes?* Routledge, New Delhi. P. - xviii.

¹² Ibid.

¹³Misra, Amaresh(Dec. 11, 1993). Dalit Assertion: Possibilities and Limits. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 (50), p. 2701.

Bochahan and Chakai tell a different story about what we understand about the voting behavior and their democratic participation through general theoretical literary works. Let me put some examples to clarify the phenomenal enthusiasm of Dalit Community of Bihar towards electoral democratic participation.

2.6 Public Perception of Dalit Voting Behaviour

‘Jo na Kare Kali Durga, wo Kare Daru Murga’ (what cannot be done by Goddesses Kali and Durga would be done by liquor and Chicken) is the famous formula/slogan of upper caste dominants and criminals who work as ‘thikkedar’ to manage votes of Dalit Community in elections. Under this belief, a number of ‘Bhoj’ were arranged at different places at ‘thikkedars’ houses or the place suitable to arrange this ‘Bhoj’. For example, in Bochahan Vidhan Sabha constituency, in the village Binda (Akhar Binda), (Panchayat-Narauli, Block- Mushahri) there was pre-election Bhoj of 90 kg Chicken, Daru (local made liquor), arranged by a Chaudhary just before the day of election to manage the votes. After the Bhoj money was also distributed to confirm the votes of Dalits who participated in ‘Bhoj’. To put the extra pressure on them their name was also mentioned in the register of Chaudhury. In Devagan, Bhutane, Adi-Gopalpur, Baikatpur etc. I observed same phenomena. Money was distributed openly till late night just before the day of election while article 144 was in operation. Certainly, there was a different level of happiness; satisfaction and enthusiasm was writ large on the faces of Dalits on that day but it was not for democracy and the electoral democratic participation. It was enthusiasm neither about Dalit and Ambedkrite politics nor about construction of alternative social, religious and cultural identity for them. But it was just one aspect of Dalits of that area. It is not the holistic picture of all Dalit Community of Bihar because to project a holistic picture of Bihar it will need a coherent set of ethnographic studies, however, the socio-economic development and cultural understanding of Dalit Community at the village level are almost same.

3. Socio-Cultural and Political Conditions

The ethnographic exploration of Bochahan indicates how Dalit Community of local/village area is completely disconnected from the Dalit and Ambedkrite movement

in Bihar. Followings are the findings, which explain the socio-cultural and political situation of Dalit Community who are too poor to understand the meaning of alternative politics.

3.1 Mismatched Grassroots Dalit Aspirations and Dalit Political Elites

One of the main reasons of it is the absence of continuous dialogue between Dalit elites including Dalit politicians and social and political activists and illiterate, misinformed and poor masses of Dalit Community to develop a distinctive consciousness about subjectivity and to clarify objective of ‘subaltern movement and inter-faith dialogue’¹⁴ among them. The dialogue is the only key through which these marginalized communities can understand the basic reasons of construction of superior-inferior, pure-impure and touchable-untouchable identities. It will make them understand the hidden Brahminical politics of socially, religiously and culturally embedded discriminatory world in them. Only the dialogue could have helped them to understand the importance of construction of an independent or separate social, religious and cultural identity of Dalit Community and to develop a protest ideology what is called ‘subaltern ideology’, a distinct Dalit or subaltern religion, which is different from that of mainstream Brahminical discriminatory and oppressive religion based on pure-impure caste identity. It is alternative to Dalit Community to fulfill their religious and cultural aspirations and simultaneously, in other state, it has proved as a strong interconnecting thread to mobilize Dalit Community to develop a strong protest movement against oppressive, discriminatory Brahminical social structure.¹⁵

Observing the very low level of socio-economic, religio-cultural and political consciousness among Dalit Community of Bochahan constituency one can easily explain that neither poor Dalit masses nor Dalit political and social activists are able to understand the essentiality of developing inter community inter-faith relation. Even intellectuals and other elites have completely failed in articulating grassroot’s Dalit interests and generating a sense of carving an equal Dalit space by establishing a more

¹⁴ Raju, Dr. T. Swami (nd). Subaltern Movement: Insight for Inter-Faith Dialogue. Retrieved from www.google.com

¹⁵Prakash, Gyan (1994).Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,*The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No.5, December, 1994, pp. 1475-1490.

democratic and egalitarian society among Dalits through capturing the political power of the state. In the absence of completing these preliminary tasks related to Dalit movement, Unlike other states, there remain a big mismatch between the political aspirations of grass-roots Dalit Community and the Dalit politics, politicians and intellectuals. It has failed to popularize Dalit politics in the context of an independent or separate Dalit identity and culture to counter mainstream model of Hindutva and so called socialist inclusive politics of Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar.

3.2 Absence of Construction of Alternative ‘Social Imaginary’

There are differences between socio-political theory and Social Imaginary. Taylor (2007, p. 119)¹⁶ explains three differences.

- a) Social Imaginary is about the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings, which is often not expressed in theoretical terms but is, instead, carried in images, stories, legends and so on.
- b) social imaginary is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society, while theory is often the possession of a small minority; and
- c) social imaginary is the common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy, while theory can circulate only among elites

For the construction of any independent alternative movement based on different philosophy and theoretical ground it need to popularize, disseminate among the society to challenge the mainstream social imagination and to construct a new social and political understanding. With the great level of consciousness, commitment and continuous support of people who believe in that philosophy and theory to work in missionary mode help create a new meaning and understanding of society. They set an alternative future goal in public imagination with the continuous process of ‘symbolic interactionism’. When it starts percolating as common understanding of masses, it also succeeds to capture the public imagination which eventually takes the shape of movement. It gets legitimized when masses start following new alternative rituals, practices, symbols etc. based on alternative philosophy and theoretical base. While interviewing individuals and observing their behaviors in Bochahan I found complete absence of the required level of consciousness, understanding and independence among Dalit community. They cannot

¹⁶Charles Taylor (2007). Culture of Democracy and Citizen Efficacy, *Public Culture* Winter 19 (1): 117-50. P. 119 Retrieved from: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?>

even imagine to challenge the mainstream hegemonic philosophy, theory and other social, religious and cultural practices.

3.3 Occupational Boundaries and the Cultural Stigma

It is said that modernity, urbanization, modernization and industrialization have almost broken the occupational boundary but the cultural stigma related to a caste or communities by virtue of being Dalit, Untouchable, impure, inferior etc. are still unchanged. Bochahan assembly constituency is the part of Muzaffarpur district, one of the important commercial and educational hubs of Bihar like Bhagalpur, Darbhanga, Gaya and Patna but it covers local village area, except some small village town. It has neither seen modernity and modernization, nor has it seen urbanization and industrialization. So, Dalit Community of Bochahan has neither broken the occupational boundary, nor have they eradicated the humiliating and stigmatised identity associated with them in the Brahminical social structure. They are completely in clutch of upper caste Savarna Hindus; however, this district is highly politically vibrant right from the Indian freedom movement. Gandhi visited this district on both the phenomenal occasions of 1920 and 1927, which had strong impact to make Muzaffarpur more vibrant and politically conscious place during the freedom movement. It was one of the major centres of anti-emergency and 'total revolution' movement led by Jai Prakash Narayan during late 1970s. It was represented by political leaders of great stature like Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Kriplani, George Fernandes etc. Despite it, the district has also figured in one of the most backward districts listed in 2006 by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. Dalit Community of Bochahan constituency has neither seen modernity and modernization nor do they have test of urbanization and industrialization. It is yet one of the most backward areas and this is the reason why they have neither broken the occupational boundaries nor they are in a position to challenge the cultural stigma associated with their Dalit identity based on caste under the Brahminical hierarchical social structure.

The occupational mechanisms of a community are the distributional operation and religious and social identities are their philosophical operation of life. Further, the cultural values (associated with a caste and community) are the part and parcel of both

the occupational mechanism and philosophical operation of life. In all engagements of life, political engagements is a strongest mechanism which promises all these operational efficiencies on a single stage¹⁷ and when this political engagement combines with religious engagements then it becomes very dominant force to construct wide scope for both, the liberation of a particular oppressed, subordinated and marginalized community/civilization and the dominance of a particular privileged section/community/civilization, what Dr. B. R. Ambedkar refers these two societies as 'Bahiskrit Bharat'¹⁸ and 'Puraskrit Bharat'¹⁹ in respect of highly oppressive and discriminatory Indian Brahminical society. So, Dalit Community of Bochahan still represents the part of most 'Bahiskrit Bharat' who is economically dependent on upper castes landlords and other dominant society. They are neither able to break the occupational boundaries, nor they are in position to challenge their humiliating and stigmatic identity to come out of the Brahminical discriminating and oppressive social structure.

3.4 An Absence of the Dalit Dissenting Culture

Generally, Dalit assertion is understood merely as a political rise and Dalit empowerment and their struggle against the mainstream Brahminical oppressive hierarchical caste system, but it is very much related to development of the socio-economic, religio-cultural understanding and political behaviour of Dalit Community based on Dalit dissenting culture and protest ideology. It also includes the development of their distinct socio-religious and cultural engagements in everyday life well associated with different rituals and practices. This is guided by the various processes of social, religious and cultural production, re-production, construction, re-construction of a Dalit counter-space that aim to develop a counter political language in support of struggle against their social, political and cultural exclusion to establish a democratic and egalitarian society. It is completely a democratic consciousness that forms the basis of political mobilization of Dalit Community and it opens the door for them to enter in the independent democratic discourse of electoral politics. In the contemporary politics of India, the newly developed

¹⁷Sen, Amartya (2010). *The Idea of Justice*. Penguin

¹⁸this word is taken from the book Gopal Guru & Surinder Sarukkai (2004). *The Cracked Mirror: The India Debate on Experience and Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Where he use the word Bahiskrit Bharat which constitutes all 'Depressed Classes', marginalized and oppressed communities of India.

¹⁹ibid. Puraskrit Bharat constitutes all upper caste privileged savarna Hindus of India.

independent pattern of social, cultural and political interactions of Dalit Community in some states led to the formation of strong liberation movement including the notion of justice and equality within the marginalized sections of society. Simultaneously, it has led to the formation of an autonomous political front with the aim of bringing broader structural change in Indian society.

3.5 Lack of Understanding of Alternative Dalit Identity

Dalit politics of Bochahan is facing twin problems. It has neither developed 'Dalit' as a political category, nor they have constructed a separate broader alternative Dalit social, political or religious identity so that they can construct a separate identity to challenge the hegemony of caste based Hindu religious identity. However, the process of 'documenting dissent'²⁰ and protest was started much earlier with the narration of various forms of memories centered on Dalit heroes like Raja Chuharmal, a Dushad chivalrous, popular as a man of high character, his courteous behaviour especially towards women. Dina-Bhadri, Raja Sahlesh, Rahsu Bhagat and so on are some other Dalit heroes which are being glorified and celebrated by Dalit Community in other part of Bihar. These narratives and stories produce contestation; confrontations, protest and sometimes violence between the mainstream Hindu communities and Dalit Community who are trying to challenge the hegemony of mainstream cultural resources and identities. Neither the ideological conflicts are quite visible nor the structural conflicts to challenge the mainstream hegemonic culture through the process of glorification of Dalit icons narration of local stories, local songs such as 'Pachara' are found there.

3.6 Construction of 'Dalit Counter Space'

The construction of Dalit counter space depends on the development of counter dialogic space and alternative pattern of interactions with the help of exploring experiences of exploitation and social and cultural marginalization in the daily life of Dalit communities. This needs de-construction and demolition of dominant symbols and identities embodied in the mainstream society and their day-to-day social and political discourse of life. It

²⁰ Narayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institute of Advance Study Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla.

also includes the process of creating awareness about the false myths created in reference of Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads etc., the fictional narratives of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Geeta etc. as well as intentionally created oppressive ideas of Manusmriti, the constitution of Brahminical forces. The attack on these texts and traditions are considered very important because the demeaned, stigmatised and humiliating identity of Dalit Community are constructed, appropriated, disseminated and legitimized by these Hindu texts.

In Bochahan, I found such consciousness very little or completely absent. The main reasons are very poor literacy rate among Dalit communities, high level of unemployment and a few number of literate, and those not properly educated are busy in their personal socio-economic needs and cultivating seasonal political aspirations. Some Dalits are just informed, not well informed like a Dalit missionary or Ambedkrite movement about this alternative social, cultural and political construction of Dalit communities. They themselves neither understand the importance of this for Dalit communities, nor are they interested to join, propagate and disseminate it by any mode. Suresh Paswan, Sarpanch (member of panchayat samiti), Susta Panchayat and former District incharge of Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), is of the opinion that 'Daliton ka kuchh nahi ho sakta, inhe koi bhi paisa dekar ya dra dhamka kar vote le sakta hai.'(nothing will happen to Dalits, anyone can influence them either by money or force to take their vote). When, I asked the reason he asked me to visit a locality called Nursury of more than 200 families consisting of Dalit residents living in cluster of huts. There, I found not even a single concrete 'Pakka' house of a Dalit family in this village or locality. They (both female and male) used to go on railway line for toilet. A local person says a number of government hand pumps and toilets are passed in their name but funds are siphoned out by local representatives and local administration-in-charge. They don't even know why do they vote. Whom are they voting? Whom are they going to elect, M.P., M.L.A. or Mukhiya? None of these representatives have visited there even once after the election. People's anger was on top but they can do nothing.

They don't even know what does Dalit means. What is Hindutva and what is an independent identity construction of Dalit community. They are not even aware that

where to file complaint in case of any mis-happens to them. Anyhow if they go to lodge complaint against any upper caste, even in case of rape of women, complaints are not registered. In this situation of pennilessness, illiteracy and under influence of upper castes they don't have any space to think about construction of their independent identity. During my field study, I also tried to explore what are their perception towards upper castes and vice-versa.

4. Perspectival Study

To get clearer picture about the Dalit Selfhood and the material conditions of Dalit Community of Bochahan, I went to explore the modes/patterns of engagements of Dalits with the dominant upper castes Savarna Hindus. What are their perceptions towards upper castes and vice-versa?

4.1 Upper Caste Perception towards Dalits

Still after 68 years of independence when lots of (pseudo) intellectuals claim that 'something called caste does not exists in India' but the story of Bochahan in Muzaffarpur district proves them wrong. Upper castes continue to treat Dalit as untouchable. This is a reserve constituency for SC and even a seven times winning Dalit M.L.A. from this constituency used to sit on floor whenever he visits the houses of Bhumihaar caste. Neither these public representatives nor any other Dalit social and cultural organizations including NGOs have done anything to change this situation. The very reason of this is that like any other reserve constituencies for SC/ST the upper castes plays important role in election. Dalit votes are divided in different SC candidates and upper castes supports a dummy candidate who is ready to remain under their clutch. So, the position of Dalits of general constituencies is far better than reserve constituencies. The very essence of constructing reserve constituencies dies because of failure of 'Poona pact' due to intentional intervention and blackmailing of Gandhi by organizing 'Fast onto death in 1932. Rama Devi, a ward member of Bhikhanpura village in Susta Panchayat revealed the fact that 'neither Mukhiya nor any other upper caste public representative

drink water in this village because this village is Dalit village'²¹These upper caste people visit at the time of election for vote only. The Bhumihar village hardly separated by a road from this Dalit hamlet enjoys every facility. Some of Dalit women work as midwife in that Bhumihar houses but they don't allow them to seat on chair or have a place beside them. They never engage them in a formal or informal chatting.

4.2 Dalits Perceptions towards Upper Castes

Dalit community of this constituency are found socially, culturally and religiously marginalised, subjugated and highly discriminated in daily life; despite this 100 percent Dalits believe in Hindu rituals and practices. They consider themselves part of Hindu social structure and they don't have any alternative understanding to end their inferior status. Brahmins come to perform religious rituals and whatever they get in kind sell on local soap counter because the payment in cash is touchable but payment in kind is untouchable. Dalits of these areas don't have even sense of judging its value with the modern philosophy of democracy, modernity and social justice. Neither they have sense of participation nor representation, nor they revolt against the highly exploitative Brahminical social structure. They take all this discrimination and humiliation as a part of their life awarded as the virtue of being Dalit and lower caste identity except, however, paswan caste of this area are assertive and comparatively very good in status and understanding. They are assertive but not for an alternative Ambedkarite Dalit politics. They do paly dominant role in the local politics but with the mainstream political line. I found primarily a measure of assertion among Paswan caste but still it has not reached the level to construct an independent identity of Dalit communities. The 'patron-client' and 'mai-baap' culture still exists there.

²¹ This Dalit basti/village is famous as Nursury of more than 200 families consisting of Dalit residents living in cluster of huts. There, I found not even a single concrete 'Pakka' house of a Dalit family in this village or locality. They (both female and male) used to go on railway line for toilet. A local person says a number of government hand pumps and toilets are passed in their name but funds are siphoned out by local representatives and local administration-in-charge.

5. Dalit Sena

In nineties, with the emergence of backward castes dominated identity politics in Bihar Ram Vilas Paswan was one of the main leaders who happened to be one of the profounder of the agenda of social justice for Dalits and backward sections in Bihar. He was also the product of J. P. Movement and he was hard-core socialist in his early days. He established himself as a strong Dalit leader and to mobilize Dalit Community he established Dalit Sena in 1983. Its headquarter is in Delhi. The president of Dalit Sena, Bihar Anil Kumar 'Sadhu' who is also son-in-law of Ram Vilas Paswan is of the opinion that Dalit Sena is social and cultural organization. It seeks to establish a democratic and more egalitarian society free from exploitation and discrimination of Dalit communities, through social Revolution²². However not comfortable with the Cultural Revolution he further added that 'this organization works to safeguard the rights of Dalit and backward communities. It works for raising awareness among Dalits about their rights and to mobilize them against injustices against Dalit and Backwards communities.²³ Its role clearly reflected in the pamphlet published by Dalit Sena on the occasion of Virat Dalit Rally, 21st November 1996. It follows:

Dalit Sena shall work for social, cultural and economic revolution amongst ignored, suppressed and exploited section of the society by creating spirit of self-respect in them. The word Dalit shall include SCs, STs, backwards classes, minorities and all those who believe in social justice. The main aims and objectives of the Dalit Sena are: (i) to liberate Dalits from all kinds of exploitation, (ii) to establish casteless and classless society, and (iii) to create spirit of self-respect through social awakening.²⁴

However, according to Amaresh Misra this Dalit sena was advanced by V. P. Singh under Ram Vilas Paswan as a Dalit Shiksha Andolan to counter the BJP strategy of 'Samoochik bhoj' organized in Dalit bastis, in Uttar Pradesh to attract Dalits. Observing the strong Dalit assertion in Uttar Pradesh.

BJP from the very beginning was trying to attract the Dalit community. It made much of Ambedkar, organized 'samoohik bhoj' in dalit bastis and brought a dalit forward to lay the foundation of Ram

²² This information revealed in the conversation with Anil Kumar 'Sadhu' the president of Dalit Sena, Bihar on 22nd October who met me in a Gayatri Hotel, Muzaffarpur where he was also a Bochahan Vidhan Sabha candidate of Lok Janshakti Party.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Virat Dalit Rally (21st November, 1996). Pamphlet cited in Narayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. Page-82.

mandir in Ayodhya. On a different plane, V P Singh also advanced a Dalit Sena under Ram Vilas Paswan's leadership, supported the Dalit Shiksha Andolan and associated himself with the activities of the Ambedkar Mahasabha.²⁵

Dr. Kishori Prasad is of the opinion that,

With the time Dalit Sena adopted a blue colour flag and started believing in raising slogan 'Jai Bhim Jai Bharat' like Ambedkrite movement and BSP. It also raised membership to more than one crore (10 millions). We also observed huge gathering and mass participation of Dalits. It had also created a strong base at local level, particularly in northern Bihar. Dalit Community understood that it is going to join the hands with the Ambedkrite movement but slowly it became Dushad caste organization only, and later it got reduced to the pocket organization of Ram Vilas Paswan.²⁶

He was very true because in the last state assembly election 2015, even his own caste Paswan rejected to accept him their leader. In Bochahan where there was lots of protest against him and this protest was led by Paswan against the candidature of his son-in law. Further Kishori Prasad is of the opinion that 'nowadays he has become a Brahmin among Dalits. Throughout his political career he has misguided Dalit Community to fulfill his personal political aspiration. Dalit leader like him weaken the Dalit and Ambedkrite movement in Bihar'.²⁷

This clearly reflected during my field work in the last Bihar Vidhan Sabha election 2015 in the paswan dominated Bochahan constituency where people of Paswan caste did not only burn effigy of Ram Vilas Paswan but also extended their support to Sunita Kumar Paswan in the meeting of Bochahan constituency Paswan Mahasabha held on 27 September 2015 in Muzaffarpur. However, she did manage to secure only 4637 votes because of internal caste politics and other four Paswan candidates like Anil Kumar 'Sadhu' the son-in-law of Ram Vilas Paswan and Musafir Paswan, a former MLA from this constituency. Bochahan is the reserve constituency for SC, there are more than 30 thousands Paswan voters in this (Bochahan Vidhan Sabha) constituency, Dalit Sena is also very active there but the image of Ram Vilas Paswan is now so distorted even in his caste that it is an independent candidate, Baby Kumari, who emerged as winner securing

²⁵ Misra, Amaresh (Dec. 11, 1993). Dalit Assertion: Possibilities and Limits. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 28, No. 50, pp. 2701.

²⁶ This fact was revealed in the interview with Dr. Kishori Prasad at his home, East Lohanipur, Patna on 12 Feb. 2015.

²⁷ Ibid.

more than 67 thousands votes to defeat eight times winner MLA Ramai Ram. She is only fourth independent candidate who managed to win assembly election of Bihar 2015.

6. Fictions, Myth and Contesting Multiplicity

Various stories of different castes in India revolve around certain myths. It not only helps to understand structure and character of that society which is related but it also acts as a vehicle of carrying collective identities and memories of community or society generation after generations. Sometimes it goes beyond the limits of historiography to get modified itself into a broader social and cultural resource for that community because 'myth originates from shared language culture and environment and it has a psychological truth within the culture where it originates'. Fiction is initial process of construction of a myth. It is like storytelling. It may be created purposefully. After long period when it gets associated with the rituals and religious practices it enters into the psychological domain of individuals of society or community to get converted into a metaphysical reality. When it gets attached with the metaphysical reality it becomes the part of collective social and cultural identity to reflect the worldview and inner reality of that particular society. It becomes the mode of communication among the individuals with the newly established pattern of social engagements. This pattern of social engagement acts as an interconnecting thread to develop solidarity, brotherhood and 'we feeling' among peoples of a community having share a common myth, rituals and other social, cultural and religious practices. So the journey of all the established world hegemonic culture in every historical civilizations started with the construction of fictions only to get converted into the myth and after entering to the psychological domain of individuals of society, it captured the epistemological discourse of society, be it Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity.

History is full of 'contesting multiplicity'. It had never been a homogeneous category. Every dominant civilization, culture and society has been challenged by subordinated communities, cultures and societies. They have been creating a counter culture after deconstruction, construction, interpretations, re-interpretation, evaluation and re-evaluation of history, myths, stories, symbols, rituals etc. of each other. Each civilization constructs its unique claim over narrative of history and culture. They always attempt to create a

corpus of historical knowledge to justify their claim and continuity into the present. There is no better example of contesting multiplicity than between Hinduism and Islam in India. It is also a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-identity, and multi-religious country and one can easily observe various other examples of ‘contesting multiplicity’ between the different communities and castes within the discriminatory and exploitative Brahminical social structure in India. The culture of India is also not a homogeneous category. It is full of ‘contesting multiplicity’ predominantly based on castes and other cultural and religious identities. It is highly discriminatory and exploitative society and Dalit Community are most discriminated, marginalized, exploited and humiliated under the mainstream Brahminical social structure at almost every social, religious and cultural domain of lives. The construction of an alternative social, religious and cultural identity is the part and parcel of this ‘contesting multiplicity’ in India. It is an attempt to construct a separate category of ‘depressed classes’ to liberate them from the scourge of the discriminatory Hindu religion and the exploitative Brahminical social order based on castes and other identities. So, justifying the claim of construction of an alternative identity of Dalit communities, Badri Narayan is of the opinion that:

The sudden rise of Dalit politics in north India and its exponential growth among the rank and file of Dalit caste, its influence on the electoral politics in India, its attempt to create a counter-culture against what they call Brahminical culture, their distrust of history written by anyone other than Dalit, their desire to create their own corpus of historical knowledge, and their efforts to explore their identity in the past and claim continuity into the present, are some of the events which at a theoretical level one can contemplate and analyze.²⁸

Further he says, it is not a spontaneous response of Dalit Community to create what Eva Maria Hartmann call it a ‘counter Dalit space’. It is a long due process that has to happen much earlier in India. This ‘continuous contestation between various voices i.e. dominant as well as oppressed’²⁹ has to reach to the grassroots level. It has become now a field of continuous contestation between privileged, dominant and oppressed to achieve the ‘parity of participation’ which is now finally reflecting at almost every levels of social, cultural and most strongly in the continuous political contestation among them.

Theoretically, every intellectual stream like Liberals, Marxists, Neo-liberals, Modernist, Post-modernist, Subaltern, post-post-modernist, and many other modern civilizational

²⁸ Ibid. page- 19.

²⁹ Ibid.

discourses do provide an epistemological ground having the quality and character and atmosphere of a pure democratic and more egalitarian society to achieve ‘parity of participation’ but in the society like India and particularly the social structure of Bihar, that is so undemocratic, rigid, orthodox and feudal in character that none of the intellectual stream including subalterns provide either an ontological or epistemological ground to support the multiplicity of contestation under the process of ‘symbolic interactionism’ to construct an independent identity of Dalit communities. Even Dalits of subaltern intellectuals’ stream are working towards ‘fascinating Hindutva’³⁰ and saffron politics i.e. there rightward shift and this is one reason for the absence of a vibrant Dalit and Ambedkarite politics vis-à-vis an autonomous Dalit movement/politics in Bihar. However, they need nothing to understand the importance of the construction of Dalit as a ‘separate category’ like OBCs, except to understand character of humiliation of their own lived experiences under the inherent contradiction of the exploitative Brahminical social structure. Neither the ‘individual psyche’ nor the ‘social psyche’ has reached to a level of ‘collective consciousness’ that allow them to fight for the socio-economic as well as religio-cultural justice for their communities. Neither they have craving to achieve ‘parity of participation’ for their communities nor they much worry for the equal social, religious, political and cultural recognition of their separate identity. However, various contested memories, stories, myths and narrations are present there to challenge the dominant Brahminical cultural symbols and histories. Let me present some examples of some contested multiplicity. Badri Narayan is of the opinion that:

In a survey of the identified areas of Bihar it was found that voices of people, which were hardly recorded in popular historiography, were playing an instrumental role in popularizing the message of dissent and vigorously contesting the story of the same event as articulated by the dominant groups. Many forms of dissent have emerged in these areas. Dramas, folk songs, rituals, mystical narrative and literary productions- were targeting dominance. Conflict was visible not only between stories but also between remembrances. Struggles against forgetting have almost become a common feature of society in Bihar.³¹

This ‘contesting multiplicities’ got engaged with the Brahminical politics of giving saffron colour to these Dalit identities with the construction of an alternative Brahminical

³⁰ Narayan, Badri (2009). *Fascinating Hindutva: Saffron Politics and Dalit Mobilisation*. Sage Publication. New Delhi.

³¹ Narayan, Badri (2001). *Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse*. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. Page- 20.

identities or a different explanation. The Brahminical forces construct multiple explanations, narratives and stories of same Dalit hero, icon or identity and people get confused. For example,

There are seven versions of the story of Reshma and Chuharmal in popular literature produced between 1992-97. The same Chuharmal is a thief for the British administrator, a hero of love and moral rectitude for the community to which he is said to have belonged, and an anti-hero for the same community, which has adopted another hero for its identity. Personalities dubbed as evil by the dominant sections are heroes among the subaltern communities.³²

The story of Chuharmal is very popular in Dalit Community of Bihar, particularly in Dushad caste of Mokama and Magahi and Bhojpuri speaking regions. Every year in the month of March-April (Chaitya month, according to local Hindu calendar) a fair (mela) is held at Charadih near Mokama in the remembrance of a Dushad hero. According to Dr. Amit Kumar who belongs to Dushad caste, this story has many versions and each of them contesting the other. For Dushad, this fair is held to celebrate the bravery and rich moral rectitude of Raja Chuharmal. Dalit Community and particularly Dushad caste consciously take pride to glorify their glorious past. Dushad tradition is very rich and raja Chuharmal is one example among various others. This story is also performed by various local 'Nautanki' teams as 'Rani Reshma aur Chuharmal ka Khela' (the story of queen Reshma and Chuharmal). Since queen Reshma, in this story, belongs to Bhumihar family/caste, the Bhumihar communities take it as a conscious attempt on part of dalits to insult them.

However, this story is being glorified by Dushad caste of Dalit Community only, but the way they celebrate, glorify, and take pride with it shows nothing but the construction of a respectful Dushad identity. When I interacted with some local people of this area and some intellectuals of Dushad community to know whether this process of construction of Dushad identity has any relation with the construction of an independent movement of Dalit communities? Whether it is the part of Dalit and Ambedkarite movement or it is just an act of constructing Dushad caste identity separately? There are different versions of responses one can find according to the understanding of people about Dalit movement. Some are of the response that it is just a Dushad caste identity formation movement. It has nothing to do with the Dalit movement. Some others claim that Chuharmal is a hero of all lower castes of this region. He represents the symbol of

³²Ibid.

bravery and rich moral standard of lower castes. It symbolizes Dushad as a fighting warrior and victory of Dushad caste over the upper caste Bhumihars. This is the reason why this story remained the bone of contention for long time between Dalit communities, particularly Dushads and Bhumihars in these regions. Bhumihars of Bihar are most feudal and digesting this story is not easy for them. They have been trying to erase this story by the barrel of gun while Dalit Community have been struggling to save and preserve it to take some pride with glorifying Dalit past. Several times Bhumihars stop local Nautanki to play this story and in resistance there have occurred firing and killing of actors of that Nautanki. There are also examples of various caste riots in central Bihar centered on this story.³³

This story is also sung as 'Pachara'³⁴ by the local singers. They are known as 'Bhagat'. It is also played in the form of Drama by the actors of local 'Nach party' (theatre group) on the occasion of the marriage party to entertain the people. However, several attempts were made to stop this story to grow but this story has been growing more and more widely. "The north-eastern part of Bihar particularly is influenced by this story, although this is narrated by different classes in different ways. Lower castes glorify the legend of Chuharmal and perceive it as a part of their tradition."³⁵ The lower castes have also invented some alternative and different rituals and practices to worship and glorify Chuharmal. It can be compared with what Eric Hobsbawm calls it an 'invented tradition'. For him, 'an invented tradition is a set of rituals or symbolic practices that inculcate certain values and norms by establishing continuity with a suitable historic past.'³⁶ This story is so popular among Dalit Community of this region that they consider it as real story like Ramayana and Mahabharat of the mainstream upper castes Savarna Hindus. That means, this story has now got transformed into history among common masses of Dalit Community of Bihar but still contested among upper castes and lower castes.

³³in the conversation with local people during field work.

³⁴Local name of singing or narrating a story in the form of singing. In this style of narrating a story, the local singer narrate the story part by part and also he sings in the form of song to make it more meaningful, attractive and enjoyable to the people.

³⁵ Narayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. Page-26.

³⁶ Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, T (1985). The Invention of Tradition.(ed.). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Pp.- 1-2.

The acts of glorification and eulogy also run parallel to goddess Kali and God Ganesha of the mainstream society. In the Mokama region whenever a 'Kirtan'³⁷ is sung, at first people start with song to praise lord Ganesha and after that they sing songs to praise Chuharmal to glorify the divine power of Chuharmal but this act I didn't find in this constituency.

For local people of Dushad castes, Chuharmal possesses a symbolic power like what Hanuman for Hindu society. In this region, the name Chuharmal has the same popularity as Hanuman in the mainstream society. For People, Chuharmal is symbol of strength. He acquired the strength to fight even a mighty enemy. Whenever people go to the field and load is heavy, they hail baba Chuharmal like mainstream hindu society hail jai Bajrang Bali or jai Hanuman. Baba chuharmal has also an identity same as Hanuman to protect people from unholy spirits. They are of the opinion that 'even in the night we have to work in the field in Tal area but we are not afraid because of the presence of Baba Chuharmal. Whenever we feel afraid we start hailing Baba Chuharmal and our fear disappears suddenly. We don't feel afraid because Baba Chuharmal is always there to protect us.'³⁸ It is the same alternative construction of Dalit Communitylike what Hanuman or Bajrang bali acquired the identity for Savarna Hindu society.

The 'Mokama Tal'³⁹ where a fair is held every year is the sacred place for Dalit Community of this region. There is also a large statue that has been installed at the

³⁷ Kirtan is a collective act of worshipping Gods and Goddesses by singing traditional rhythmic songs with musical instruments. It is sung without any discontinuity (continuously) for 24 hours. Singers take references of Ramayana, Mahabharata (specially from Krishna lila), and other local popular myths. They sing in chorus to praise various Gods and Goddesses.

³⁸ This information I got from the conversation with Dr. Amit Kumar a research scholar in Patna University.

³⁹ Mokama Taal wetlands cover more than 1,000 ha of shallow waterbodies, situated in Patna, Samastipur and Begusarai districts of Bihar. They lie about 75 km of Patna city towards the southern bank of the River Ganga, which drains the wetland. The topography of the area is generally flat land, like most of the Gangetic plains. It is a fairly compact tract of alluvial plain, sloping gently from south to north. Mokama Taal is a perennial water system and exhibits enormous biodiversity. Kawar (Kabar) Lake, an IBA site is close to Mokama, and when the birds get disturbed at Kawar they fly to Mokama.

Mokama Mor/cross. Dalits and particularly Dushads of this region believe that the wishes expressed during Baba Chuharmal worship are fulfilled. This reflects the same or equal standard of devotion with alternative rituals and festive spirits among Dalits of this region toward their religious alternative, constructed in this region. Whenever a couple get married or a married couple have a child they don't go to seek blessing of mainstream God and Goddess rather they prefer going to Charadih, the place of Baba Chuharmal in Mokama, to seek his blessing. Local people say that Baba Chuharmal is our god only, he saves us in the bad time. His blessing is the reason for our prosperity, growth and happiness in our life. The paswan of other area and some paswan of Bochahan are aware of this story as Dr. Amit Kumar accepts that 'Dushads and other lower caste people consider Baba Chuharmal not inferior but superior to mainstream Hindu Gods and Goddesses. He belong to our clan and we follow the religious path shown by him.'⁴⁰ During the harvesting time, the first crop is offered to Baba Chuharmal like the Baishakhi in Punjab and the ritual of first crop offered on 'Ramnavami' or Chaityanavami in the month of Chaitya in the mainstream Hindu society.

While visiting some houses in Bochahan constituency, I found Tulsi tree planted in a small courtyard in houses of Dalit Community but this small courtyard represent worshipping place of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. So, their festivity and rituals of Dalits in Bochahan do not provide the continuity to revive the memory inherent in the stories,

Key biodiversity

AVIFAUNA: About 149 species of birds have been estimated to occur in the area. Further surveys will most certainly add to the number of species. The site also holds, on a regular basis, over 20,000 breeding and migratory waterbirds. The Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser* and Barheaded Goose *A. indicus* are some of the species reported from the area. Ten globally threatened and Near Threatened species are found here. Flocks of 200 Eurasian Spoonbill are not uncommon. Similarly, Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* is found in thousands, along with a few hundred Large Whistling Duck *D. bicolor* (Mehboob Alam pers. comm. 2002).

For detail see BirdLife International (2017) Important Bird Areas factsheet: Mokama Taal (Barah) Wetlands. Retrieved from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 25/06/2017.

⁴⁰Interview with Dr. Amit Kumar who is assistant professor in Patna university on May 6 2015, however, he is not from Bochahan, he is from Mokama.

myths and history of Dalit icons or alternative construction like the oral tradition, memory and narrations inherent in the part of everyday life of Dalit community who are trying to construct an alternative imagination of Dalit community to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream cultural tradition. The absence of these practices reveal a clear picture that how alternative and separate imagination are not become the part of Dalit lives in Bochahan.

7. The Politics of Multiple Identities

The continuous contestation of construction of alternative identities between Dalits and upper castes against the construction of a 'Dalit counter space' constructs many versions of a story and all these versions reflect changes in the different time frames. One can find different versions of the same story and popular narrative depends on the caste identity of writers. According to George A. Grierson, Chuharmal was first thief. He was killed by a Dushad king Sahles. 'He was a great hero and first watchman'.⁴¹ Local people of Bochahan say that it is wrong version of story. Chuharmal and Sahles were friends and both belonged to Dushad caste. In another narrative Chuharmal is explained as powerful and courageous person, a hero of Dushads who married a Brahmin girl Reshma.⁴² In another narrative of the same story, Chuharmal was explained as a son of a Bandi Ram. Ram belongs to Chamar caste of Dalit community. In this narrative he explained that Chuharmal was a man of strong character but he had assassinated the character of Rani Reshma. She was the sister of a Bhumihar landlord Ajabi Singh. Falling in the charms of Chuharmal she followed him to express her desire for him when he went to have bath in the river Ganga but he refused her because she belonged to the royal family. Disappointed Reshama made an allegation of rape and cruelty to her by Chuharmal. On hearing this complaint the landlord ordered his soldiers to arrest him. The terrible battle took place between Chuharmal and soldiers of the landlord. Since, Chuharmal was the great devotee of the Goddess Durga, before battle he prayed goddess Durga and received her blessing. By the grace of Goddess Durga he emerged victorious. Here, it reflects

⁴¹ Grierson, George A. (1885). Bihar Peasant Life: Being a Discursive Catalogue of Surrounding of the People of that Province, with Many Illustrations from Photographs Taken by the Author. Bengal secretariat Press. Page- 407.

⁴² Interview with Dr. Akal Ram, Patna University May 6, 2015 at 5:30 pm.

clearly that the upper caste people have tried to give it saffron colour to bring this identity under the mainstream religion.⁴³

There is also some addition in this story that Chuharmal was a great devotee of Durga. On praying goddess Durga, before the battle was to take place, she gave him a sword and Chuharmal emerged victorious in that battle because of using that sword only. The mainstream society also tried to link the Chuharmal identity with the Rigveda so that his identity get subsumed into the mainstream religious identity. They also tried to link Chuharmal identity with the Brahminical religious worldview of rebirth, like he was Brahmin in his previous birth and projecting him as a great devotee of goddess Durga was nothing but to bring Chuharmal's religiosity and his devotion to the Brahminical religiosity. To confuse people the mainstream society also projected his identity as a cowherd. There is also an act of de-constructing of Chuharmal identity by projecting him as an evil force/spirit. Upper caste narrated the same story in different versions. According to Badri Narayan, 'the main content of the story of Reshma and Chuharmal, namely their marital relationship, is eliminated and some other content is added to it... As per this interpretation, the name Chuharmal has originated from two words, i.e., Chor and Chuhar. Chor means a thief and Chuhar a robber in the folk dialect. Chor-Chuhar (thief-robber) is a compound word popular in local dialect. Thus the people of the forward castes depict Chuharmal as a dacoit.'⁴⁴ It is nothing but a sheer attempt to de-construct Dalit identity.

There is also an attempt to co-opt Dalit legends into the mainstream Savarna Hindu identity. When all attempts of Savarna Hindu castes failed to erase the Dalit identity of Chuharmal, upper caste intellectuals particularly Bhumihar intellectuals of Bihar projected Chuharmal as a Bhumihar. Since, Rani Reshma belonged to Bhumihar caste and the story is an insult to Bhumihar caste.

In one article 'Lok Geeton Mein Baba Chuharmal' published in the Aryavart (7 December, 1980), Dr. Baidyanath Sharma had claimed that Baba Chuharmal was born in the Bhumihar caste. However, Shri Vilat Paswan vihangam, Chairman of the Bihar Public Service Commission, Shrimati Yosoda Devi, President of Akhil Bhartiya Dushad Seva Sangh, Shri, B. P. Shastri, General

⁴³In a long conversation with Dr. Amit Kumar May 6 2015 6:00 pm onwards.

⁴⁴Narayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. Page- 43.

Secretary of Sahles-Chuharmal Chetna Samiti, Sri Brahma Dev Paswan, President Baba Chuharmal Smarak Samiti, have all come up with many folkloristic proofs in favour of the fact that Baba Chuharmal was born in the Dushadh caste, not in the Bhumihar caste.⁴⁵

So, projecting him as a Bhumihar would reduce the insulting effect of Bhumihars of Bihar.

There are also examples of Dalit legends' identity being contested among Dalit castes themselves. In the conversation with Dr. Amit Kumar, a research scholar of Patna University, it is revealed that Dushads of Mithila region don't regard Chuharmal as their hero rather they regard Sahles as their hero. They consider Sahles and Chuharmal as enemies to each other and Chuharmal is villain for them. Chuharmal was nephew of Sahles. However, the entire story narrated by him revealed Sahles as a traitor and when Chuharmal went to take revenge from Sahles, he was killed by Sahles. This narrative made Chuharmal hero for the Dushadhs of Magahi area but villain for the Dushadhs of Mithila region. He opines further that since Mithila region is dominated by upper caste Savarna Hindu, particularly by Brahmins, growing popularity of Chuharmal as a Dalit hero and Rani Reshma who belonged to upper caste in love with him was insulting narrative to them. This is why they first tried to appropriate Chuharmal by constructing a Brahminical identity of Chuharmal but in the absence of proof they failed. On failing, they de-constructed his identity to make Chuharmal and Sahles as enemies. This is an act of Brahminical conspiracy to confuse people so that they can stop the growing popularity of this particular Dalit legend. For some time they succeeded to create conflict between both identity and contesting to each other.⁴⁶ On the other hand, Rekha Das has different story about this, popular in the Madhubani region. In her opinion the conflict between Sahles and Chuharmal was resolved and Sahles did not kill Chuharmal. Both served the king of Morang bravely entire life. Both commanded prestigious position under that kingdom and they also command equal respect of the people of this area.⁴⁷ The upper caste intellectuals do not only make Dalit identity contested to each other but they also give it a communal angle to stop their growing popularity. Badri Narayan, giving the

⁴⁵ Ibid. page- 46.

⁴⁶In the conversation with Dr. Amit Kumar Paswan, a research scholar, Patna University, Patna.

⁴⁷ Das, Rekha (1994). Bihar Ke Lok Natkon Ki Pramukhya Sahityon Ki Vivechana. Sanmarg Prakashan, Delhi. Page-108-110.

reference of Baidya Nath Sharma, a Bhumihar intellectual, who was also associated with the movement of the Bhumihar Samajexplains that;

Bhumihars regard Chuharmal as a Bhumihar hero who was in love with the daughter of a Muslim, a Pathan. By appropriating the story of Chuharmal in this particular way they might be attempting to escape from the possible social insult in that version of story in which Reshma is presented as a Bhumihar girl. At the same time, the depiction of the father of Reshma as a Muslim might be the functional reflection of a mentality that targets Muslims at the opportunity.”

The sole purpose of the construction of multiple identity and giving it different angles of the same Dalit hero, legend, myths, narrative, story etc. is to weaken the emerging popularity of Dalit legends and stop spreading it among Dalit communities. The multiple identities of same icon not only confuse the people but also divide them into fraction and so does the movement. This is true that creation of alternative symbols, memories, stories, narratives etc. belonging to Dalit Community are playing a crucial role in challenging the ‘ideological contours of dominance and subordination’ constructed by the Brahminical ideological school but at the same time the Brahminical counter narratives constructed by the co-opted Dalit intellectuals minimize the impact of an alternative Dalit movement. In most of the cases the Brahminical counter narratives are created by another Dalit or backwards of the same caste so that people of that community can’t raise question regarding their authenticity.⁴⁸ Justifying it, Badri Narayan is also of the opinion that to provide resistance in multiple forms the various interpretations of

the story of Chuharmal and Sahles further reveals how this has been systematically interpreted in accordance with the interest of the privileged right from colonial times to contemporary period... What was formerly an innocuous protest has now become contention. Competition and denial have emerged in varying forms. State intervention and the shifting of the locus of power has added new ramification to it.⁴⁹

With the emergence of ‘neo-feudal class’⁵⁰ (upper caste OBCs) in the state and the divisive and sectarian politics, continuous betrayal of Dalit leaders and failure of BAMCEF, absence of Ambedkarite politics are some of the reasons proving obstacle in constructing a countervailing force against the hegemonic Brahminical social, cultural and religious narratives. The mutually contested versions of Chuharmal story appear

⁴⁸In the conversation with Dr. Kishori Prasad and Dr. Amit Kumar.

⁴⁹Narayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. Page- 20.

⁵⁰ This word is used by Dr. Kishori Prasad to describe the dominated OBCs attitude towards Dalit community of the state.

highly politicized because its different versions depend on who is narrating to whom. The difference between the narrations of upper caste intellectuals and Dalit intellectuals is clearly observed. Some intellectuals tried to appropriate it under mainstream Hindu identity by giving it saffron colour. Some gave it communal angle. Some constructed different versions so that a unified and universal form of it can be disturbed. The bigger politics behind not allowing its growth to a universal character is the fear of immense popularity among Dalit Community that would challenge the mainstream Hindu identity. Inconsistency of myths hindered the proper communication and dissemination of Dalit legends among Dalit communities. The inconsistency of the narration of Chuharmal is also a reason to not capturing the imagination of construction of an independent Dalit identity as well as an autonomous Dalit movement in the state. This has not happened with the Chuharmal story only, but the same happened with the other stories in the process of the construction of independent Dalit identity like Dina-Bhadri, Murkatwa, Natua Dayal, Basawan, Raghuni, Bhumiya, Rahsu Bhagat, Goraiya Bandi etc. some of the name of villages falls on the name of local mythical hero. For example; Goraiya Baba is worshiped in GopalGanj, Siwan, Chhapra and Vaisali to Muzaffarpur, the name of Goriyakothi block in Siwan is believed to be fall on his name. Rahsu bhagat a Dalit from mocha caste happened to be a great devote of kali and Dalit community of Thawe Block and surrounding area worships him parallel to Durga but not as alternative to Durga. The Kul Devta⁵¹ of family differs village after village and community after community.

The myth of Dina-Bhadri⁵² is very much popular among the Musahars caste in the north Bihar but in Boochahan, Musahar caste also worshiped this character but not as alternative to the mainstream culture they feel Dina Bhadri as the incarnation of Rama and Laxman of Ramayana. In Bochahan, culture has not developed as a source of alternative identity of Dalit community as a process of symbolic interactionism of

⁵¹ Kul Devta is the family God of and it differs region by region and community after community.

⁵² The myth of Dina-Bhadri is very popular character of Musahar caste in the Northern Bihar. This character is believed to be hero of Musahar caste who struggled for the emancipation of his community from the bonded labour and the other right to empower them. These characters are compared with Rama and Laxman of Ramayana. They are believed to be born in the Jogiya Nagar of Kosi region. He took the challenge of Feudal lords and their Goddess who was supporting them. According to some villagers that characters were so powerful that they challenged God Indra to save his community from rain. Since, this myth is full of the struggle against feudalism, landlords, exploitation and pro-peasant rights, it help in the mobilization of Musahar community in Bihar.

developing a counter culture. However, some educated Dalits of Musahar caste are aware of this myth and contend that this character fought for the liberation of Dalit community. In other part of Northern Bihar this character is very much popular. While visiting to the Manik Vishunpur village of Mushahari Block, the largest Musahar hamlet in the constituency, I found that some people are aware of the Dina- Bhadri myth. There are also acts of glorifying in the local song called jhoomar at the time of paddy showing. Every year in the month of end of Ashadh and beginning of Sawan⁵³ (August-September) they organize function in which only Dalit community participates. It is believed that Dina-Bhadri are the savior of Cattle also, so worshipping them would prevent the spread of any epidemic in the region. But the very low level of consciousness, illiteracy and absence of the process of constructing alternative culture, the alternative practices like this are reduced to nothing more than a disparagement as it is celebrated by Dalits only. It is nothing like taking a sense of pride as reflected in the life culture of Dalit community in the other parts of Bihar.

8. Mela and Dalit Consciousness

There are various examples of local Mela or Lok Utsav in Bihar. Some represents the mainstream Brahminical social and cultural expression and some other represents the non-Brahminical and Dalit social and cultural expression. Both hold in the memories of their legends, but Dalit legends are still marginalized and not so popular except a few like Chuharmal, Sahles, Dina-Bhadri etc.

The Chuharmal Mela (fair) every year is held as Chuharmal Mahotsava in Godsari Block, Charadih of Mokama region. Around 1998-2000 acquired great political importance in view of Dalit and backward politics due to mass participation of backward society. It attracted wide media coverage and the status of Baba Chuharmal Mahotsava due to successful management of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) M.P. Brahmdeo Anand Paswan. With the great participation and mass support of Dalit Community it was seen as an example of assertion of Dalit communities, particularly of Dushad/Paswan caste. Seeing its popularity and huge congregation, political leaders started visiting to capture this

⁵³ Ashadh and Sawan are the fourth and fifth month according to Hindu calendar. It is considered as starting of Mansoon/ rain.

space and the symbolic power, which acts as the interconnecting thread to consolidate and unite Dalit communities. Very soon it became the matter of political contestation between Lalu Prasad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan. In 1995 Lalu Prasad Yadav visited this place first time before any other leader. This mela also helped him to emerge as undisputed leader to capture Dalit imagination and transform it into a political tool to capture power in the state. In one of the speeches delivered by Lalu Prasad Yadav on the inauguration ceremony of this fair when he appealed Dalit Community that 'Dalit apne adhikar ke liye ek joot ho jayen'⁵⁴ (Dalits must unite for their rights) clearly reflects his vision and intention to open the opportunity for the assertion of Dalit Community but Ram Vilas Paswan who belongs to this caste and community, soon started hard to capture this space and finally he succeeded. Slowly, with the help of paswan (Dushad community) he became dominant in this political battle but government of Bihar was led by Ravri Devi, so government stopped giving political patronage, police protection and other facilities for Chuharmal Mahotsava (festival). Later Ram Vilas Paswan offered five 'bighas'⁵⁵ land for Chuharmal fair and two lakhs money for constructing temple of Baba Chuharmal. This fair is still popular and it is held every year. In 2009 this Mela/fair was also inaugurated by Ramvilas Paswan. Offering 20 lakhs money for the development of the place he advocated Chuharmal as the masiha/savior of poor, Dalits, backwards and marginalized.⁵⁶ He also compared the struggle of Chuharmal with the struggle for social justice of Raja Shailesh/Sahlesh, Dr. Ambedkar etc. The last function started on April 10 2017⁵⁷ and it was also celebrated in other part of Bihar like Begusarai district from April 14 to 19 and the Paswan community mostly led the function.⁵⁸

Some melas are based on highly contested narratives between Aryan and Non-Aryan cultures. For example, however, Ravana was Brahmin according to Hindu mythology but in some region of Bihar the mythical identity of Ravana is highly contested. It is believed that Ravana was a great devotee of lord Shiva and he established a 'Shivlinga' at Sasaram in Rohtas District. In the contested mythical identity of Ravana, Dalit

⁵⁴ Dalit Apne Adhikar Ke Liye Ek Joot Ho Jayen: Lalu (1998, 12 April). Aaj, (Newspaper), Patna.

⁵⁵ In Bihar bigha is used to scale land. 20 kattha makes one bigha and one kattha includes 20 dismals land.

⁵⁶ Daliton ke Masiha the Baba Chuharmal: Ramvilas. Live Hindustan.com March 15 2009. Retrieved from: <http://www.livehindustan.com/news/article/article147304.html>

⁵⁷ <http://www.prabhatkhabar.com/news/patna/story/967875.html>

⁵⁸ <http://news.raftaar.in/jagran-news-> April 14 2017.

Community interpret him as an ideal ruler and leader of Non-Aryan i.e. Moolnivasi (indigenous community of India). Since Dalits and Backwards are indigenous communities i.e. 'Moolnivasi' of India, Ravana represents the tradition of Moolnivasis. So in the remembrance of Ravana, a Dusheesh Mela is held every year on the occasion of 'Mahashivratri' in the month of February-March.⁵⁹ Ravana who is villain for the mainstream brahminical narrative is so respectful personality that Dalit Community of that area recognize him as Maharaj. They do not follow 'Ramcharitmanas' for the references of Ramayana rather they follow 'Valmiki Ramayana' written by Valmiki because it is said that Valmiki was Dalit and Valmiki Ramayana is the original version of Ramayana. This description, I also found in the book 'Buddh ke Bad'⁶⁰ written by Gajadhar Prasad.

Taking the reference of Dr. G. P. Prashant and his book 'Mool Vansh Katha', he is further of the opinion that the king Ravana who is projected a villain for the mainstream Brahminical Hindu society, is a very humble and justice loving ruler. According to Dalit Community of that area he represented the Buddhist tradition. Since, he was Buddhist and believed in glorifying the Buddhist tradition created a threat for exploitative Brahminical tradition. This is why Brahminical forces plotted to ruin his dynasty. In the entire version of 'Ramcharitmanas', one can easily find that those who were not the devotee of Rama were dethroned by Brahminical forces and made successor who were devotee of Rama and the Brahminical tradition. The great king Bali was cheated to be killed by Ram and Sugreev was made successor to him as same Ravana was killed in very planned way and a devotee of Rama and the Brahminical tradition was enthroned after Ravana.⁶¹ This is one example of highly contested narrative between the intellectuals of the mainstream Brahminical Hindu society and Dalit intellectuals.

After interaction with some BSP leaders, Ambedkarite and BAMCEF activists, including a Dalit BJP M.P. of Gopalganj district, a co-opted old BSP leader, I came to understand that the BSP intellectuals and their protest ideology assume that the ancient history of

⁵⁹ This fact revealed in the conversation with Subedar Anand, a hard-core Ambedkarite and Buddhist, at his residence, Patna on May 18 2015 at 11 am onwards.

⁶⁰ Prasad, Gajadhar (1990). *Buddh Ke Bad*. Bharti Prakashan, Mathura.

⁶¹ Prashant, Dr. G. P. (1994). *Mool Vansh Katha*. Cultural Publication, Lucknow. Pp.-24-25.

India is all about struggle between Aryan and Non-Aryan i.e. struggle between 'Moolnivasi' (indigenous people) and outsiders. The Bahujans (Dalits and Backwards) are 'Moolnivasi' who believed in non-violent Buddhist tradition and were against the Aryan culture of violence. Before Aryan society there were no castes, they believed in equality, justice and what we now call a more egalitarian and democratic society. History is biased to the Aryan and misinterpreted. Non-Aryan cultures are full of glory and their legends need to be glorified through de-construction, re-interpretation, invention and re-invention history, myths and memories. The 'Mela' is one occasion to remember, glorify and establish Dalit legends to challenge the mainstream biased history and the Brahminical (Aryan) dominant culture.

Confirming the importance of these Melas in Dalit politics for Bahujan society, which stands for 'a journey of hope against oppression', Kanshi Ram explains its various roles:

(i) Mela is organized in remembrance of great personalities who have done exemplary service to society. It keeps the memories of those persons alive and memories get more sharpened with its continuity (ii) It has great communicative and mass disseminating power which raise awareness, awakening and strong consciousness for social transformation. (iii) It symbolizes successful struggles of Dalit heroes in the liberation project of the marginalized, exploited and downtrodden communities. (iv) It inspires Bahujans and gives solidarity to fight against injustice. (v) It plays great role in mobilization of masses to achieve their political ends. (vi) It intensifies the wave of social transformation.⁶²

So, it is obvious that Mela has played great role in raising Dalit consciousness to mobilize them for a successful Dalit movement or politics. Badri Narayan is also of the opinion that,

While trying to understand the relation between melas and Dalit consciousness, two things become clear. First, the claim for political use of melas being held from earlier times for commemorating folk heroes of different Dalit castes, and second, starting to organize new melas in memory of new

⁶² Maurya, C.L. (1996). Kanshi Ram: Press Ke Samne. Kushwaha Prakashan, Allahabad.

Dalit political and cultural personalities, e.g. Ambedkar, Shahuji Maharaj who are regarded as 'great heroes of Dalit'.⁶³

Realizing the importance of keeping Dalit memories, myths, history, story and struggle alive, such 'melas' are held regularly in the states where vibrant autonomous Dalit movements are observed. It has not only helped to construct an independent social and cultural identity of Dalit Community but has also helped to organize all castes of Dalit Community to develop a unified 'Dalit' as a social and political category like 'OBCs category'. However, in Bihar there are a few examples of such melas, they are 'similar in some respects in retrieving heroes from myths, symbols and folk-tales and reinforcing their remembrance existing among Dalit people and then utilizing it as a technique for mobilization',⁶⁴ but due to the political contestation between backwards and backwards (Dalits) itself, these 'melas' have been appropriated by a particular Dalit caste. It has remained the festival of glorifying Dalit legends of particular caste of Dalit Community and to fulfill personal political aspiration and a place to settle personal rivalry. So, due to personal political aspiration and rivalry of Dalit leaders, Dalit Community of Bihar have not only remained scattered and politically fragmented but also they have failed to organize into a unified 'Dalit' as a social and political category.

This is why they are fragmented into different forms of political and social mobilizational patterns under different political parties or alliances. On the one hand, Lalu Prasad Yadav still has a strong hold on some Dalit castes. Ram Vilas Paswan claims strong hold on Dushad caste, however, the last assembly election proved otherwise because he is part of NDA, an anti-Dalit alliance. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has some hold on Chamars, Ambedkrites and Buddhists and 'particularly in Bhojpur region BSP has good support of Dalit community'⁶⁵. Newly formed Hindustani Avam Morcha (Secular) by Jitan Ram Manjhi also claims strong hold on Musahars and other Dalit castes of Bihar. On the other hand left parties like, Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist) (CPIML), it is also known as (MALE), Naxalite Organisations, Marxist Co-ordination Committee (MCC),

⁶³ Narayan, Badri (2001). Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse. Indian Institute of Advance Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. P.-90.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.-94.

⁶⁵ As revealed by Shashi Bhushan Kumar who is Dalit from Bhojpur and have done PhD from JNU, New Delhi.

Majdoor Kisan Sangram Samta (MKSS) have also strong hold on Dalits, particularly in central (South) Bihar.

Despite this, slowly and subtly the political transformation of Dalit identity, history, myths, glorification of Dalit heroes, legends etc. with the help of conscious and continuous efforts of various Dalit organisations are taking place. According to Buddha Saran Hans (Dalit babu), a retired Dalit IAS, proprietor, publisher and editor-in-chief, Ambekar Mission Publication, Patna and Subedar Anand, a hard-core Ambedkrite, the Ambedkrite movement, through its literary production and alternative cultural construction, they are trying to construct an independent communicative 'Dalit counter space' to mobilize Dalit Community of Bihar. Buddha Saran Hans is of the opinion that; 'the emergence of Baba Saheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar into a global icon and the growing importance of Dalit and Ambedkrite movement in all parts of India has raised a remarkable hope among Dalits of Bihar also'⁶⁶. In addition, Subedar Anand says that;

what is more remarkable in Bihar is that in each and every festival, fairs to glorify Dalit icons, seminars and other social and cultural functions organized on Dalit issues, Dalit participation has been raising in multiple ways. It is said that earlier Paswan (Dushads) community was not ready to accept Baba Saheb as their icon but today the reality is that Paswans have become Ambedkrite activists more than any other Dalit caste. The various literary works have entered the psychological domain of Dalit individuals and seeing the growing legitimacy of Dalit and Ambedkrite movement, at both local and regional level, it will not take much time to capture the epistemological domain and thus its political transformation as well.⁶⁷

This is the scene of well informed, educated and politically conscious Dalits of Bihar living in the capital of the state, Patna, and surroundings who constitute a few in number. This cannot be generalized to explain the socio-cultural and political situation of Dalit Community of Bihar. In the study of two Vidhan Sabha constituencies (Bochahan in Muzaffarpur District and Chkai in Jamui District) as a two fields of case study of my PhD research, I explored the socio-cultural and political situation of Dalit Community otherwise. This ethnographic exploration, which is aimed to explore the reasons for the absence of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar found Dalit community of local/village area are completely disconnected from the Dalit and Ambedkrite movement in Bihar.

⁶⁶ Interview with Buddha Saran Hans at his residence Chitkohra, Anishabad Patna on May 20 2015

⁶⁷In the conversation with Subedar Anand, a hard-core Ambedkarite and Buddhist, at his residence, Patna on May 18 2015 at 11 am onwards.

9. Symbols, Booklets and New (Dalit) Politics

Generally in Uttar Pradesh one can find Dalit specific book stall under the banner of 'Dalit Chetna Mandap' but not in Bihar. In Bochahan I attended some political rallies, visited local weekly haat (Bazar) and some other places but I didn't find this book stall of 'Bahujan Chetna Mandap'⁶⁸ or any other Dalit literary organization which has collection of books, booklets related with Dalit-Bahujan mission and Ambedkrite movement to deconstruct Brahminical myths called counter-cultural booklets. This has been playing great role in the construction of an alternative identity of Dalit communities. Particularly in Chakai it is completely absent. However, some local people have told me that this kind of books and booklets stalls were found at the place of meetings organized by Dalit Sena or Ram Vilas Paswan.

Except Ambedkrite activists, I didn't find any thirst for knowing, reading and disseminating the knowledge about Dalit and backward tradition, culture, identity and their mission for liberation even in educated Dalits. I interacted with one of the publishers of Dalit literature in Patna having strong complaint that even the popular Dalit literature are not sold much to encourage Dalit intellectuals, publishers and distributors. He was of the opinion that, in Bihar, leftist literatures have bigger market than Dalit literature.

Conclusion

After exploring the socio-economic conditions, cultural understanding and political economy of Dalit community of the Bochahan constituency through the ethnographic study as a participant observer and developing a detailed understanding through various literary sources it is explained that Dalit community of this region has not reached to the required level of political and cultural consciousness who can understand the importance

⁶⁸ The Bahujan Chetna Mandap is publisher and distributor of books and booklets related to Dalit-Bahujan and Ambedkrite mission of social justice. It is the name used by the books and booklets stall that sells Dalit literary work written by Dalits scholars and intellectuals. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (where I visit generally) there are several stalls opened in the district centre and small towns. These literary work are available at very low price so that poor Dalit and backwards can afford to purchase it. Basically these work having the explanatory, inspirational, descriptive, critical etc. It is aimed at deconstructing irrational, discriminatory, exploitative, oppressive etc. nature of Brahminical ideology, principle, philosophy, and social structure and to disseminate Dalit-Bahujan mission of social justice. It has great role in generating social and political consciousness among Dalit communities.

of construction of an alternative Dalit movement. None of the model of Dalit (identity) politics is working there independently. However, the resources are available to start the process of collective identity formation of Dalit Community in the region through construction of alternative history, myths, stories, memories etc. to mobilize and to launch social and cultural revolution but it have lost the essence under the political contestation and personal political aspirations. The dynamic of ‘symbolic interactionism’ has also been distorted under the political contestation between backwards and backwards (Dalits). It was not the contestation between the upper castes dominated mainstream politics and backwards and Dalits’ alternative political imaginations. The prevailing social and cultural differences based on caste and other identities, which are major determinants of construction of alternative identities of Dalit communities, if properly cultivated, could have helped immensely to launch an independent vibrant Dalit movement in Bihar like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and other states but the self interpretative modes governed by personal political aspiration of Dalit leaders killed the spirit of Dalit political aspirations as well as the independent Dalit movement.

Chapter- 06

Dalits in Chakai: Community without Political Consciousness

The previous chapter saw how the leading section of Dalit community in Bochahan constituency failed to generate a level of consciousness to fight for their liberation from the exploitation, segregation and multiple-discriminations. They also failed to reinforce a level of consciousness to challenge the exploitative Brahminical Hindu society and reinforcing a sense of justice, self-respect and dignity among 'Dalit-self'. Consequently, Dalit community failed to recreate a formal democratic discourse and sense of share in power to start a collective struggle through construction of an alternative institution and agency of liberation under Ambedkarite or post-Ambedkarite framework. In this absence of alternative construction or an autonomous Dalit movement Dalits of Bihar have never organized around their social marginalization and the various forms of exclusion that they face in day-to-day life. Every Dalit related social and political initiative devoted to address the problem of Dalit mobilization has reduced to a part of an organized movement and none of the existing model of Dalit politics in the state succeeded to mobilize them into their own social, cultural and political fold. In other world I can say the existing evidences in Bochahan constituency suggest that none of the model of Dalit politics is working there properly.

This chapter is also based on the ethnographic field study to explore the same possibility in one of the most backward district, which has witnessed strong Naxalite and Maoist movement. The second fieldwork is done in Chakai in Jamui district. As the previous chapter, this chapter will also explore issues related to relation between Dalit political mobilization and alternative religious imaginations. It will explore the symbolic meaning and political dynamics of the various social, cultural, economic and political engagements of Dalit community of Chakai constituency. Besides social, economic, religious and cultural factors this chapter will also take into account that what are the psychological impacts of these engagements on the Dalit self-hood to the alternative imagination and the Ambedkarite mission of liberation for Dalit community.

When the multiple (social, economic and political) contestations on each and every perspectives of life of Dalit community with the Brahminical Hindu society are

gaining ground through the construction of an alternative Dalit (social and religious) identities to challenge the mainstream religion, politics and the hierarchical social structure, the Dalits of Chakai, in some region, have not even got the consciousness to understand the meaning of democracy, social justice and the role of the independent Dalit identity in the liberation of Dalit communities. The social and political conflicts among Dalits and the Brahminical Hindu society have now become reality in India. Lots of claims are made that Dalits of different parts of India, through the help of the process of the ‘symbolic interactionism’, are coming together to develop a parallel homogeneous ‘Dalit counter space’ to fight their multiple marginalization. It has various implications including the political mobilization of Dalit communities. At the same time the picture of Dalit community of Chakai is not consistent with this claim. So this chapter will explore the question that, are Dalits of Chakai aloof from this newly emerged concept of ‘Dalit consciousness’? Do they have a level of consciousness to challenge their humiliating and stigmatic identities and understanding to challenge the hegemonic Brahminical discourse, which inflicts marginalization, subordination, exploitation etc. upon Dalit community?

Table No. 1 Percentage of SC and ST Population, 2001

Sl. No.	Block	SC%	ST%
1	Jamui	17.30	0.04
2	Khaira	17.63	2.86
3	I. Aliganj	18.46	0.34
4	Sikandra	21.41	0.58
5	Laxmipur	21.57	10.87
6	Barahat	24.37	4.99
7	Gidhaur	19.69	0.86
8	Jhajha	11.67	5.09
9	Sono	14.11	3.31
10	Chakai	17.51	17.77

Source: Primary Census Abstract 2001 (* blocks were undivided)

The socio-geographical condition of whole district tells that the population density of the Jamui district is much lower than the average population density of the state, in

comparison to state population density i.e. 880 per sq km. Only 451 persons reside in per sq km in the district. The district has 36th rank in the state. District of Jamui has a sizeable population of Schedule Tribe. However status of SC, ST population according to census 2011 is yet not published. According to 2001 census abstract 22.42% of the population of the district is SC, ST Population. Out of 22.42% of SC, ST population 17.35% population is SC population and rest 5.07% population is ST population.¹ Following table indicates the share of SC & ST among total population is according to 1991 census.

There are more than 60,000 votes constitutes by tribal communities, however, official record is less than that. Dalits are around more than 40,000 in number as the date gathered from the different activist of political parties. Together they constitutes more number than Yadava votes constitutes 65,000 but due to strong political apathy and lack of political consciousness Dalit and tribal voter did not turned enough to ensure the win of the BSP and other candidate belong to backward politics. Seeing this data one can easily make the opinion that there is good possibility of the emergence of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics in this area but the fact is that the strong presence of the Tribal politics of JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha), the Christianity and Dalit engagements with Maoist movement make it almost impossible.

As information gathered about the district it has explained that;

“The district consists mainly of alfisols and ultisols types of soils formed under different lithological and pedogenic conditions. The alfisols are developed mainly on the marginal alluvial area in the northern fringe of hard rock terrain. It occurs mainly in Jamui, Sikandra and Aliganj blocks. The soils in these blocks are called alluvial soil composed of clay, sand and gravel. The lower horizon is highly ferruginized. A variant of alfisols soil is red sandy soil occurring mainly in plateau and hilly regions. These soils have poor fertility and are suitable for high land crops. The ultisols occur mainly in Sono and Lakhimpur blocks. It contains argillic horizons and has low base status. Red and yellow soils occur in southern and eastern parts of Jamui town, while light brown to red yellow soil occur in the south of Jamui town in small patches.”²

“Jamui has a typical topography. The soil pattern of the district differs widely due to topography of the region. Important soils are sandy soils and alluvial soil of heavy texture having natural or alkaline reaction. Jhajha, Khaira, Sono, Chakai, Laxmipur block contain forest soil. A sizeable part of the plain of northern side of the district lies in the Basin of Kiul River and its tributaries.”³

As I observed most part of the Chakai constituency has hilly topography. Dalits of the villages of Chakai in Jamui district bordering area of Bihar and Jharkhand are

¹ The data retrieved from: http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_bihar.pdf

² Retrieved from: <http://dcmsme.gov.in/dips/2016-17/JAMUI.pdf>

³ the information retrieved from: http://www.cgwb.gov.in/District_Profile/Bihar/Jamui.pdf

particularly marginal farmers or living on agricultural work on the upper castes landlords field and are resorting to manual labour or migrating towards the city areas to sustain their livelihoods. Sole source of irrigation in the area is rainfall particularly for Dalits. Despite that the former M.P. of Jamui Narendra Singh was the agricultural minister of the government of Bihar most of the agricultural land are barren and there is no alternative source of irrigation. There is hardly any source of irrigation. Neither I found boring, nor tube-well as alternative source of irrigation. The only source of water for Dalit Community is well. Most of these well were constructed during the Sarvodaya Movement in this area. Since the water holding capacity of sandy soil is very less and wheat needs three or four time irrigation, so transplanting of wheat could not be possible in larger parts of these villages. Madan bhai, who is a member of Panchayat Samiti Chakai and Social activist Gram Bharti founded during the Sarvodaya Movement said that:

agriculture is primarily dependent on rainwater. Local water bodies have dried up. That wells been constructed during sarvodaya movement are by and large insufficient and ineffective to irrigate the entire land of the village. Some wells are constructed under the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.) plan but just wells are not enough for irrigation of land. It is useful for limited area only. One can easily imagine the economic condition of Dalit Community and how much they are dependent on agriculture work of this area that when these wells were being constructed by using JCB⁴, lots of resentments among them was seen because it was killing their wages. However, using JCB in the work going on under MGNREGA is the complete violation of the MGNREGA guidelines which also indicates the state negligence of the interests of poor labourer.⁵

Since, the rainfall condition decides the land cultivation condition. The area, which is rainfall deficient, has more 'fallow land'⁶. Chakai comes in area which has very less percentage (8-16%) of fallow land. It means two things. The most of the land of Chakai is cultivated and the rainfall condition is comparatively better than other regions. Despite this fact the lowest double-cropped area is found in Chakai anchal/block (.70%), however, the highest double-cropped area is found in Tarapur (75.87%). Single cropped land provides less labour opportunity to agricultural labour.

⁴The full name of JCB is Joseph Cyril Bamford. It is a worldwide known Machine or Crane which can be used for constructions, agriculture, military etc. Joseph Cyril Bamford is also the name of person who is the founder of J.C. Bamford Excavators Limited which is well known as JCB. It is a British multinational company whose head quarter placed at Rochester, Staffordshire.

⁵ Interview with Madan Bhai. He is the Sarvodaya activist. He spent most of the time with us during the election campaign of Bajrang Bihari Singh, an independent candidate of Chakai constituency 2015.

⁶ the fallow land is the land which is left uncultivated for one or two seasons or years to regain its fertility. It includes two type of land, namely old fallows and current fallows. The lands which is left for 2 to 5 years is called old fallow and those cultivated lands which is left fallow for one season in a year or other because of rain deficiency or other economic reasons is called current fallow.

The life of Dalits of Chakai is mostly depends on the agricultural labour and this is another reason for their poverty.⁷

The other livelihoods of Dalit Community of this area are making Biri/Bidi, leaf-plate, basket etc. from Tendu/Kendu leaves, bamboo, preparation of Lathi (bamboo sticks) and other product depend on forest product are the main source of their livelihood. They use Salai grass for the preparation of string/chatai. Chakai is the also an important forest export center. Mainly women are involved in making leaf-plate which they sell to the market 20 rupees per 100 plate which is very less in terms of the amount of they put in it. The same thing I observed in case of Biri/Bidi making by women in the village Charka Patthar. When I asked the women of the village who are preparing Biri for market that, don't you have an organization to bargain for better wages for you from middle men. They replied no, there is no organization and in the absence of organization when they demand for increasing wages and cost of Bidi, the middlemen stop collecting their product from them. Though those women were illiterate they want to increase the cost of Bidi according to the market rate but in the absence of any organization the middlemen gets more benefit than these the people who work hard to make the products. Further, I found that not even a single man or women possesses Kisan Credit Card. In fact they don't even know about the Kisan Credit Card. Giridhari ji, a Dalit of Bhoodan tola Chakai, whose age was 35 but looking like more than 50 years old, said that there are many incident you can find than the Indira Awas was allotted in the name of some Dalits under the government plan of Indira Awas Yojana but the money has been taken by some other upper castes dominant people or landlord with the help of corrupt officials and bank managers but Dalits can do nothing against them.

The average population density is 696 persons per square kilometer in the Munger division. The highest population density is 1230 for Munger anchal and the lowest density is 242 in Chakai anchal in south Munger.⁸ Since, population density is very low the allocation of administrative institutions, medical facilities, educational institutions etc. is comparatively lower than the regions having dense population.

⁷ For detail see, Udai Prakash Sinha (2011). Sustainable Resource Development: Policy, Problem, and Prescription. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.

⁸ Ibid. P. 145

1. Political Economy

It is matter to think that this constituency has more than 2,45,000 voters, despite that voter turnout had been generally so low, consequently the candidate secures 21,809 votes in 2010 state assembly election, could win the seat. In 2010 assembly election, the fight was between JMM and BSP candidates Polouce Hembram, the BSP candidate stood fourth with 16,427 votes. He is Christian, did good politics of BSP among Dalit and Backward communities of the constituency. So, he got their good support. Afraid from his popularity Narendra singh, ex-agricultural minister of state, taking help of state machinery charged Hembram as Maoist and put him behind the bars with charges of murder and involvement in anti-state activities. He even tried hard to kill him but anyhow he managed to survive. In the last election of 2015 also the BSP offered the party ticket to Jawana Hansda, mother of Polish Hembram, but she stood fourth position with 11, 068 votes. It shows good support among Dalits for BSP but local people say that BSP got this huge support because of Hembram and not for Dalit and Ambedkrite politics. This claim seems to be true because most of the Dalit and particularly women are not even aware of the Ambedkarite politics.

Talking to TOI at his hideout, Hembrom said;

I contested the 2010 assembly election on BSP ticket but lost by 2,200 votes to Sumit Kumar Singh of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). This year also, I was all set to contest election but three days before filing of nomination papers, police came looking for me in connection with a murder case. Finally, the party gave ticket to my mother who has a clean image.⁹

However, according to the local people he had actively contested for her mother in his own way against the sitting MLA Sumit kumar Singh who was contesting the seat as independent candidate in the last election and the other candidates of this constituency. Further, talking about the modes of campaign to convince the voters, Hembrom is of the opinion that;

I am not new to the place. I solved problems of the villagers on my own. They trust me. In 2010, I was picked up by the police on the polling day. Someone spread rumour that I was badly beaten up by the police and a chunk of voters rushed to the police station to enquire about me. They could not cast their vote leading to my defeat¹⁰ to a very little margin.

In addition, the local people say that he is the mass tribal leader but in the influence of Narendra singh who is better known as criminal than the politician in the area, the

⁹ Chaudhary, Sayantane (Oct. 4, 2015). Maoist's Mother Joins Ballot Battle. Times Of India. Retrieved from: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/Maoists-mother-joins-ballot-battle/articleshow/49219119.cms>

¹⁰ *ibid.*

police treat him as a Maoist. However, some other people say that he is the Naxalite and actively engaged with the Naxalite movement but due to his image of a mass tribal leader, he never physically present in any criminal offences and anti-state activities. A local person who didn't want to mention his name is of the opinion that;

Despite his (Hembram) claim that he is not a Maoist, he followed every decision of the Naxal organization and he will have no problem even to boycott the election if the organization decides. But it is also true that the police arrested him several times and branded as a dreaded Maoist because he is the only potential candidate after who can challenge the political legacy of Narendra Singh.

Some people say that he is educated and the strong supporter of the Ambedkarite politics of BSP and the issues like reservation, land distribution and other poor and peasant rights. As reflected in the statement made before the media he has the better understanding of the Dalit and Ambedkarite politics. One of the statements he made that;

in Chakai constituency, of the 2.45 lakh voters, around 60,000 belong to ST community, 65,000 to Yadav community and the rest are SCs, EBCs, general and Muslims. Hembram added that the state government's decision to include the Nishad community in ST category has not gone well with the tribals. The government should instead increase the percentage of reservation.¹¹

This reflects his political maturity and understanding of mainstream as well as Dalit and backward politics. He is young resident of Bhalua village under Chandramandi police station in Jamui district. Those who are in contact with him say that he believes in the democracy and electoral politics and with this inspiration he worked hard with tribal and Dalit Community to establish himself a mass Tribal leader. Also, he has good personal impact on the Dalit Community of this area, irrespective of his Naxal/Maoist organization. That is why the BSP offered party ticket in the election. The Poluce Hembram is the only hope for the beginning of UP model of Dalit identity politics in this area.

2. Strong Patron-Client System

While visiting Chakai I found big disparity in the landholding and other material resources. In the one hand, in the beginning of this chapter I mentioned the narrative of Sanju Murmu of Bhoodan Tola who narrated the story of the Landless, hopeless and helpless life Dalits in the village who are forced to share a water source with animals. On the other side, I found landlord of more than 5000 acres of land in Babudih village who was worried to lose more than 1000 acres land in a Dam planed

¹¹ *ibid.*

to construct by Jharkhand government. The two sons and a daughter live outstation in for the better higher education. Shekhar Kumar Rai the elder son said that it is obvious to think that a family howsoever big cannot cultivate the 5000 acres land by self. These lands are cultivated by two ways. Either they offer landless Dalits on ‘adhiya’¹² it is also called ‘Batai’ or it is cultivated by these poor Dalits and other people on the daily wages basis. Arvind Kumar Yadav who runs a tuition center in the same village clarified my understanding that why Dalits are better choice of landlords I the area for working on their land or for daily wages. I got to know that Dalits are the favorite choice of landlords because in the absence of other alternatives they accept all the conditions without any opposition and the landlord can decide every terms and conditions according to own convenience. Since, in this system of vast disparity of the distribution of lands and other material resources Dalit Community is depend on the mercy of upper caste landlords. So, during election they have to cast their vote in the favour of the candidate whom these landlord masters order them to support. Madan Bhai about whom I described above clarifies that “in the entire election campaign every candidate is visiting mostly to landlords or what they think the power blocs are situated. They only manage those power blocs to win the election.”¹³ I observed this tendency very clearly because the candidate with whom I was visiting the villages was contacting those landlords personally, however, in the villages of Dalits and poor Candidate contacted in group while calling them together. It is true that visiting to each and every individual on the time of election is not possible for the candidate but this difference observed in the terms of treatments tells the different story. This claims become more pronounce when these landlords were taking the responsibility of the vote of whole village particularly of Dalits and poor. While I also observed saying that they are not sure about Dalit votes because Dalits are more in influence of Maoist and they decide their support after committee meeting.

¹² Adhiya and Batai are the same term used in the area. In this system of land cultivation the landlords who are unable to cultivate the huge land give some pieces of land to landless people to cultivate with the condition that the final product will be divided into two equal parts. Half of the product will go to the landlord and other half will go to cultivator. In some area the spenditure on the showing, fertilizer and other pesticides is also share by both the parties but in some region only the products are divided into two half.

¹³ In the conversation with Madan Bhai.

3. Socio-Economic Conditions of Dalit

To explain the socio-economic conditions of Dalit in Chakai constituency let me begin with the story of a Dalit village of Chakai, called Bhoodan Tola of Lakadaha Panchayat, which comes under Sono Community Development Block.

Entering this village portrays picture like someone is becoming aware of the socio-economic lives of 18th century people. Dalits of this village forced to live in extreme poverty. They are landless; there is no employment, no education, no water sources and no power. They do not even know the meaning of the development, democracy and other democratic values. They are living on the land granted during the 'Sarvodaya and Bhoodan Andolan'¹⁴ led by Jayprakash Narayan, popularly known as J. P. of Bihar. That is why this village is known as Bhoodan Tola. In the age of digital India Dalits of this village are so illiterate that even they cannot even store the name and 10 digit mobile numbers. In the life when single person in India has multiple mobile phones, there were only two mobile phones in that whole Dalit village. In the absence of power they recharge their mobile with the help of a small solar (3/2 feet), sometime holding it on his back while grazing goats and cattle. The most heartbreaking scene one can observe there are the people of this village share water pond with animals. That is not a government constructed pond rather it was down land where water lags after rains. They store the water from this water-lagging place for drinking. Giridhari ji, a Dalit of this village along with Pappu Manjhi narrated this story that in normal season they have to fetch water from hand pump of upper castes and they face number of discrimination while fetching the water from upper caste's hand pump.

Some times Dalit women, who generally go to fetch the water, have to work for free whatever they are ordered to do by Malkin (upper caste women) and they cannot oppose it. Dalits of this village are so dependent on upper caste that even they have to take money as debt for the cremation of dead body of the member of their family. Pandits/Brahmin and other upper castes do not join the 'Bhoj' arranged on the 13th day of cremation in order to give peace of soul of dead person.

¹⁴ Sarvodaya and Bhoodan Andolan were going together.

Thus, the Dalits of this village, since birth to death of life, are completely dependent on these Babus¹⁵ and landlords of the area. Babus, and landlords of this area decide all social and political affairs of Dalits of this village. Since they are landless, they depend on the mercy of these landlords and 'Babus', they do any kind of injustices to them including striping a Dalit woman to naked and raping them, even for a minor alleged mistake. Turning emotional, one Dalit of this village, who does not want to mention his name here, narrated that just two month ago of my visit his wife was striped to naked just because she didn't go to work on the field of a landlord. That was the rice planting time and that women of this Dalit village were ordered by an upper caste landlord to plant rice plant (in the mud) but she went to do same work in field of another upper caste landlord because of the prior commitment and also she was offered comparatively more wages than later. Feeling offended the goons of that landlord beaten her brutally and striped her to naked but even they didn't courage to go to the police station to lodge an FIR against the landlord. Even the FIR is never lodged against them and police always works as their pocket army. Going to lodge an FIR against them inflict more punishment to Dalit by the goons of landlords and Babus. They don't even afford to go to the government hospital for the treatment of the injury because the hospital is more than 30 kilometer away and doctors are hardly seen in those government hospitals, they cannot afford private health care center, another person, named Paras mentioned.

Even in other the villages of Chakai wells constructed by Sarvodaya Movement are the source of drinking water for Dalit community that poses threat to health and hygiene of the people. There are very few hand-pump in the villages and people are completely dependent on the well. It is the lifeline of the Dalit Community and even other people of the villages. These are the common issues of Dalit community related to the exploitation, discrimination, intimidation, redistribution of resources and issues such as the dignity, self-respect etc. on which they can be organized but the problem is that in such a low level consciousness due to absence of any Dalit movement, reinforcing the sense of independency among them is tough task.

On the other hand Naxalite/Maoist group also punish them for not supporting their causes and the mission. Further, they revealed that just two days before my visit in

¹⁵ They call upper caste dominant person Babu. This word has multiple connotations in the area. Babus for them are the local agents of MLAs and M.P. who are also very loyal to landlords, the local officers etc.

Bhoodan tola, the goons of the sitting M.L.A. Vicky Singh (Sumit Kumar Singh), the son of Narendra Singh, former agricultural minister of the Government of Bihar, who did nothing for the Dalits of this village, threatened them to inflict a harsher punishment in case they fail to cast vote in his favour in the upcoming state assembly election 12th Oct. 2015. They can't lodge an FIR because, for them, there is no difference between police and Goons of Babus. Both act in a similar way to them. Having gun in the hand is either police Goons or a member of the Naxal group for them. They don't even sense to differentiate between police, Naxal and other Goons of local criminals. Precisely, I observed that even after the 70 years of independence of India, Dalits of this village are still enslaved under the feudal society. They are segregated, discriminated and marginalized in every aspect of lives. They are exploited, deprived and debarred from their every constitutional right that guarantee them to live their life as the free and dignified citizen of India.

Observing the socio-economic conditions of Dalit Community of this area it is easily reflected that they are not only helpless but also hopeless. They have no sense of looking an alternative for the existence of their life except the working on the fields of landlords and following their oppressive orders. Rests are done by the negligence of state and the dominant presence of Naxalite and Maoist groups. It is one of the worse Naxalite affected area and simultaneously we can say with the same conviction that it is also one of the most state neglected area. So, talking about the process of the 'Symbolic interactionism', construction of an alternative Dalit religious and social identity and construction of 'Dalit counter space' is beyond their understanding. There are almost similar stories of Dalits of other villages like Terkha Patthar, Loha, Lakadaha, Blthar, Jugdi, Churhat, Jhagrudih, Amatila and Bauna village. Political apathy is on top among Dalits of this area. This phenomenon, I have observed also in the tribal and the other poor and marginalized people belong to other caste and community. Let me mention another picture of Dalit Community of this constituency.

4. Maoist Perception of Emancipation from Hunger and Humiliation

While visiting to villages like Gaganpur, Bindali, Gadai, Manjhitand, Bagha, Baluahi, Madidih etc., one cannot find even a single element of development indicators, which are decided in Delhi while sitting in the air conditioned room such as education, communication, road, light/power, water sources (except well), health facilities and so

on. Every indicators of development are almost absent there. People call it worse Naxal affected area and none of the leader of any political party or state officials dares to visit the area or have shown their will to visit there to listen their problems. If I take a particular case then I would like to talk about Gaganpur. This village is about 60 km away from Chakai bazar, where one can find nothing but reminiscence of Sarvodaya Ashram constructed during the Sarvodaya movement led by J.P. The premises are used for cattle sheltering of local people. This area is the best example of worse neglected area of State. State just failed to engage people within the processes of development. The complete state negligence in almost every respect of lives makes task easy for Naxal groups to engage and manipulate people against the state institutions and agencies. The condition is too bad to explain that some Dalits even do not know what the election is, and they have never cast vote in their entire lives.

On the wall of Gaganpur Sarvodaya Ashram, I found one of the most touching and meaningful slogan in one's life. It was written that 'Jab tak bhukha insan rahega, dharti par toofan rahega' (until there is hunger in life, there must exist storm and thunder on earth). Mahesh Marandi, who takes care of Ashram, explains that the word 'toofan' (storm) represents revolution against hunger, exploitation, oppression and discrimination. While enquiring about this slogan I came to know that it was written by Naxal group and they use this kind of several other appealing slogans to influence Dalits and poor and marginalized of this area to mobilize them against the state or to caste the vote in the favour of the candidate whom they support or even to boycott the election. In this area I found no state administration and rule to function. Naxalite run there parallel government to deal each and every issue related to the lives of people. In committee meeting¹⁶ decisions are taken for the punishment and reward in any public or individual matters. Regarding the decision of vote, when I asked a local Harish Chand Kishku of Salaiya village, he replied they decide after committee meeting that whom they are going to vote. Some people do cast their vote for money also but once it is decided that they are going to boycott the voting none can dare to come out from their houses but in recent time the incident of boycotting voting process has reduced. However, I observed, almost every basic minimum requirement of people are available right from the territory of Bihar ends and the territory of Jharkhand state starts. I must say that it is not only the Naxalite affected area rather it

¹⁶see, second chapter communist movements and Dalit engagements where I have discussed committee meeting in detail.

is the 'state neglected area'.

While conducting my fieldwork, I sheltered myself in Ghormu Sarvodaya Ashram with Bajrang Bihari Singh, an independent candidate of Chakai constituency in the last assembly election 2015, where lots of people were visiting everyday and I used to discuss the politics of Chakai with them after coming back to the field. Vishal Raj, the ex-marine officer, GOI. He is from Jhjhha constituency, graduated from Magadh University Patna. He runs Nav Jagriti Shiksha Manch in Jhajha town and lives in Devghar. In the conversation when I asked him that despite the good population of Dalit and Backward communities why there is no socio- cultural Ambedkarite politics is found here? He replied that;

the level of consciousness and the type of the Dalit politics you are talking about is almost absent and even in the near future, at least 5-10 years from today, you will not find the emergence of this kind of consciousness for two reasons. First; they are ignorant, illiterate, they live in extreme poverty and their lives are completely dependent on the Brahminical and feudal forces. Second; there is strong Naxalite and Maoist presence in this area and in the area the Naxalite movement is neither based on castes nor it endorses the construction alternative identity based on caste and religion.¹⁷

It reveals the absence of a level of consciousness among Dalits due to their ignorance, poor material condition and dependency over Brahminical forces who are completely against to the Ambedkarite socio-cultural politics which endorse construction of alternative social, cultural, religious and political institutions to challenge the hegemony of these feudal forces. On the other hand the dominance of Naxalite/ Maoist organizations does the rest because they are also against the mobilization of people based on caste and religion.

I often used to go the field with Madan bhai, who is the member of one of the panchayat samiti of Chakai Vidhan Sabha constituency. His long political experience helped me a lot to understand the local politics of Chakai. He spent long time with the 'Sarvodaya movement' led by Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan. He is of the opinion that

in Chakai, Some Dalits who became conscious while working with Sarvodaya Movement of J.P. came forward against the Brahminical forces to fight for the injustices and oppression being done to Dalit Community but due to the lack of support and security either they were killed by criminals of upper caste politicians or suppressed by police guided with the upper caste politicians alleging them Naxalite or Maoist. In true sense, in the time of J.P. itself, Brahminical forces grabbed the struggle for social justice of this area. These forces turned the fight for social justice in the way that it got associated with the landlords to become the straight fight between Brahminical forces and landlords on the one side and Dalits, oppressed, landless and poor on the other side.

¹⁷ In the conversation with Vishal Raj.

So, the spirit of social justice emerged among Sarvodaya activist was also killed by the Brahminical forces in the region. In the support of any organized movement of Dalit and backward section and consequent threat either they became the party with the Brahminical forces or they were killed by these forces. This tendency could have been observed very clearly in the period of the emergence of OBCs identity politics under the chief-minister-ship of Lalu Prasad Yadav. This unwanted situation created the twin danger for the activists of the social justice of the area.

Further, what I observed while talking to many people that, even today, coming out of the Brahminical social order and the Brahminical Hindu religious fold neither construction of alternative religious practices of Dalit community, nor organizing against their multiple-marginalities, exploitation and discrimination to challenge the Brahminical forces are acceptable to even some of the social justice activists who are/were working together at the time of Sarvodaya Movement. What is more surprising that even educated Dalits showed hesitation while talking about the construction of alternative religious practices as a instrument to organise Dalit community together having similar feelings of pain and suffering. They are not ready to come out from the Hindu social order because neither they know the importance of alternative socio-religious culture of Dalit community, nor the socio-cultural movements are launched in this area in the same respect.

Madan Ji from Bhikhda village, who introduced me as the Sangathan Mantri of Badmar Dam projected in Batiya. This region falls between Chakai and Sono Community Development Block, explained that

going against these Brahminical forces by organizing Dalits along with caste identity and oppression and other common issues of their suffering inflict anger not only to the Brahminical society, rather to the Naxalites group also. Even most of the other activists of social justice will not agree with this idea because either they belong to the upper caste or they are still in clutch of strong Brahminical forces. Considering the circumstances some social justice activists of Sarvodaya movement, who really believe in the philosophy of social justice chose to remain silent.¹⁸

¹⁸ In the interview with Madan Ji, who introduced me as the Sangathan Mantri of Badmar Dam. He is working for organizing a strong movement in support of the construction of Badmar Dam, which is planned to be constructed in Batiya region. The Batiya region falls between the Chakai and Sono Community Development block near the Jhumraj Sthan. The Bedmar Dam Sangathan demands the construction of the Dam as soon as possible. The Sangathan/ Organization thinks that the construction of the Dam is will be milestone for the agriculture of this area. It will be beneficial for the crops as well as land fertility. The region, which is grain deficient, will turn into at least grain sufficient to the people. This project was going good but after some time it got politicized and now the project is stop. So the Sangathan is trying to launch a massive movement in support of the construction of this Dam.

Considering this statement I may guess that it might be a strong reason for dying the spirit of social justice and gradually ceasing Sarvodaya Movement to function as well as the consciousness against the caste atrocities in the area.

After entering BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) in the area a few activists started taking about Ambedkarite movement because they thought that it is the only movement that transcends the idea of emancipation of Dalit, poor and oppressed classes. Mayavati also made a good decision to give ticket to Polouce Hembram (Prithviraj), a Naxalite supported leader in 2010 state assembly election so that he would get full support of good number of Dalit and oppressed masses. Smelling this masterstroke of BSP all Brahminical forces joined hands to suppress him. They made all efforts to defeat in the election. There was straight fight between BSP candidate Polouce Hembram and the JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) candidate Sumit Kumar Sigh, the son of Narendra Singh, the then agricultural minister in the Nitish Government of Bihar. He also better known as criminal than a politician. Police under the guidance of Narendra Singh started suppressing Hembram and lodged many FIRs against him alleging the involvement in various Naxalite attacks.

Phoolchand ji, from Sukhasan village, Loha Panchayat Chakai is of the opinion that

“had BSP won the election in 2010 then one could have thought talking about Dalit and Ambedkarite politics to spread in this area. Even in that case it would not be the construction of an alternative independent social and religious identity of Dalits because it needs good education to develop an understanding about the construction of a separate religious Dalit identity and its importance and implications to the liberation of the whole communities. Dalits of this area are still completely dependent on the upper castes and the Brahminical forces for the existence of their lives and livelihood.”¹⁹

Precisely, the basic reasons for the absence of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics as well as developing an understanding about the separate socio-religious and political identity of Dalit Community are the extreme poverty of Dalits, illiteracy, the strong engagement of Dalit Community with the extremists i.e. Naxal or Maoist movement, the dominant backward politics and the strong presence of tribal politics of JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) in the area. Dalits of this region are socially discriminated and culturally segregated and economically so deprived that they are struggling for survival and livelihood in everyday life. Without organizing Dalit against their multiple issues and suffering how can hunger belly dances on the tune of

¹⁹ Interview with Phoolchand Ji, from Sukhasan village, Loha Panchayat, Chakai. He also teaches in college.

Ambedkarite movement, which is completely against the forces on which Dalits livelihood is dependent.

The next section provides more evidences regarding the understanding of Dalit community about the backward politics in general and the Dalit identity politics in particular. It will explain that, does Dalit community of Chakai understand the differences between backward politics and Ambedkarite politics?

5. Dalits' Understanding of the Backward Politics

People also specified the reason for mentioning backward class and castes politics as one of the reason for the absence of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics in that area. Madan Bhai mentioned that after the emergence of the backward castes identity politics in Bihar the illiterate Dalits of this area are not able to differentiate between Dalit and Backwards politics. It is the minor difference that can only understand by people who have some level of education and political consciousness. They thought that their rights and fights against the Brahminical forces would be supported and ensured by this Backward politics but the irony is that the backward castes politics of state is also the strong supporter of the Brahminical forces in the area. Even the backward castes politics of the state has never tried to dissociate itself from Brahminical forces. It always works for preserving, promoting and propagating the Brahminical ideas. In the lack of understanding and other alternatives like Dalit and Ambedkarite politics, Dalits have supported the backward castes politics but it has neither shown any concerns of their rights, nor it supported their fights for at least ensuring a basic minimum livelihood condition, what to talk about social justice. Even Dalit and backward leaders whom Dalit supported unconditionally because of their backward and Dalit caste identity in the hope that at least they would understand the pain of Dalit Community of the area. After election they started speaking the language of Brahmin and landlords only. Even the leaders belong to the backward caste worked for upper castes only and acted as the agent of the Brahminical forces. Thus, the backward castes politics of the state has created the major loss to Dalit politics in this area. It has captured the space, which should have been captured by Ambedkarite politics and rest are lost under the local political contestation.

5.1 Local-Political Contestations

The ideological and political contestations are very important part of politics. Interpretation and re-interpretations are also the part of construction and reconstruction of new ideas and other political symbolism. In the local politics it also works to negate the mainstream interpretation and construct an alternative interpretation to counter the ideas and political understanding. I found some interpretations of mainstream politics and counter-interpretations of BSP and Naxalite and Maoist politics in Chakai. One of the very interesting Brahminical social narrative narrated by Phoolchand ji of Sukhasan village of Loha Panchayat who runs a coaching institution and also teaches in a college. This narrative is related to the Brahminical construction of the Hindi word 'Matdan' i.e. vote. He narrated me three different versions of interpretation and counter-interpretation of the notion of Matdan (vote) narrated by the agents of different parties having different ideological understandings. The narrative goes in the following way. Let me start with the Brahminical interpretation.

The concept of 'Matdan' (vote) is originated from the Hindu notion of Dan. It means giving/donating or offering something to someone without having any expectation to get anything in return. This meaning is popular in local area to ponder over that why voting is called 'Matdan' in Hindi. Further he says that it is the Brahminical construct and there are various other examples like this Brahminical constructed narrative. However, the reality behind this construction is the subject of research but one popular perception behind it is that Brahminical forces constructed this myth because Dalit-Bahujan are in majority, and due to the discriminatory hierarchical brahminical social order Brahmins and other upper castes Savarna Hindus would always remain in power, so if voting would be made the subject of judging the contribution of the Brahmin and upper caste candidates in the terms of development in the various fields and putting other democratic criteria to evaluate and decide before casting the vote then it would become problematic to these Brahmins and upper castes. So, this notion of 'Matdan' is the Brahminical construct to perpetuate their dominancy in the name of democracy and electoral politics. This popular idea related to Hindu myth is created and propagated to perpetuate the Brahminical hegemony in the electoral politics. It has deconstructed the democratic essence of responsibility and accountability of elected representative towards the people.

There are some other metaphors created to stimulate people of Dalit and marginalized sections to cast vote again and again in the favour of Brahmin and Brahmin supported upper caste candidate because casting vote/Matdan is just a donation like someone donating something to a Brahmin saint. So casting vote is the completely religious responsibility of lower caste people. Brahmins are the living incarnation of God and next to Brahmin come landlords i.e. 'anndata' (one who provide food). Following their orders is the religious duty of Dalit and backward communities. 'Dan' (Matdan) is the voluntary action and it must be done without having any external influence, if someone is trying to influence against the Brahmins, it means he/she is creating an obstacle in the godly performance of an individuals. This is the reason why during election people are called 'Janata Janardan' (people/masses are God). The decisions made by them are supreme and it is beyond the objection and criticism. So, it is duty of Dalits and backwards to cast their vote as directed by a Barahmin or a Brahmin and landlord 'anndata' (the sources of grain and food) supported candidate.

The deconstructed counter versions of BSP and Naxalite politics are that this is the completely illogical Brahminical construct like other myths and popular perception created by Brahmins to maintain and perpetuate their hegemony. Casting vote is not the Brahminical notion and their religious conception that makes people supreme rather it is really a voluntary action depend on a complete 'rational choice' of an individual without any external influence. It has the democratic values and constitutional provisions of democracy and electoral process that makes people supreme in the democratic system of state. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar wrote constitution and he gave the strongest weapon to Dalits and depressed classes to liberate themselves from the scourge of Brahminism.

The Naxal version is that the elections held to elect not the representative of people but to elect the agents of state. State is the agents of these Brahmins, Landlords and propertied class. State is as much repressive as the Brahminical society, so oppressed, exploited, poor labour class (which constitutes Dalit and all backwards classes who are marginalized, oppressed and exploited by state and bourgeois class) must violate/reject the electoral process of state till the equal distribution of resources would not be completed. After the equal distribution of resources the newly elected representative would be the true representative of the people. They would not be the representative of oppressive and exploited bourgeois class constituted by Brahmins, landlords and dominant upper castes, rather they would be the representative of the people having

true democratic spirit to serve the people and not to rule the people. Until the concept of ruling class does not end we will keep fighting for the establishment of true democracy in India.

One can easily imagine the level of Dalit social and political consciousness where these kind of irrational Brahminical myths are still work to make them fool and these are the reasons for the existence of strong patron client system in this area of Bihar. However, the presence of strong Naxalite and Maoist movement in the area itself explains that it is now not the ‘hegemony by consent’. It is the hegemony of privileged over under-privileged. Until this hegemony is not broken through the grass-roots political, social and cultural mobilizations, the possibility of autonomous Dalit politics or Ambedkarite movement looks impossible.

5.2 Liquor-Chicken Politics

‘Jo na kare Kali- Durga, wo kare Daru –Murga’ (what cannot be done by Goddesses Kali and Durga are done by liquor and chicken). It is the popular proverb in the politics of Chakai and the surrounding areas. It was well explained by Suresh Ram, the Jila Parishad, Chakai Block. While explaining the reason that why this state assembly constituency became the hot seat and the matter of political contestation between the political parties of the same alliance (NDA), he explained that this constituency has always remained the field of political contestation between backwards and backwards due to its unique population composition. According to him;

the total voter of the constituency is 2.45 lakhs. Yadav constitutes the one single major chunk of population. They are 80,000, however, official data shows 65,000. The ST constitutes 55-60,000, the second major community. SC also constitutes a sizable number in the constituency. So, the upper castes are directly in no scene in the politics of Chakai constituency, however, indirectly due to strong patron-client system they hold good influence on the Dalits and backwards votes. Narendra Singh was the mind behind the Jitan Ram Manjhi’s Hindustani Avam Party (Secular) and he is the only strong political rival of LJP (Lok Janshakti Party) of Ramvilas Paswan.²⁰

Narendra Singh has worked long time in Jamui as well as Chakai and he lost this seat by little margin to Chirag Paswan, the son of Ramvilas Paswan. This assembly constituency has good population of SC/ST. Together they constitute more than 34% votes. So, nobody wants to leave this seat and that is why this constituency became

²⁰ In the interview with Suresh Ram, who belongs to Dalit community. He is the present Jila Parishad of Chakai Block at his residence on 8 Oct. 2015.

the one of the hot seat for the constituent parties of NDA (National Democratic Alliance) led by BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party).

Coming to the point of deep relation between liquor and politics of the area he is of the opinion that;

since most of the Dalits and the Tribals are illiterate, living in the extreme poverty, hopeless, helpless and completely dependent on the upper castes landlords masters. The liquor plays very important role in the election of these areas. Both, the local/country made liquors (desi daru) and the videshi/English daru/liquor are distributed to both supporters and non-supporters, according to their social and political holds on voters. Supporters get limited amount and mainly after casting the vote and non-supporters get unlimited amount of liquors just in the morning before the polling held, so that they keep sleeping whole day and do not go to polling booths to cast their vote.²¹

The Bauna village that constitute seven 'tola'²² story says who have the good hold in the upper caste and businessmen has greater possibility to win the election because upper caste landlords through their local goons intimidate Dalit and other poor voters and the businessmen arrange the 'Bhoj' with liquor and money to distribute among the Dalits and other backwards caste voters.

For example, Sunil Sultaniya, a Marvadi businessman arranged the 'Chunavi Bhoj'²³ (the election dinner party) just before the day of the vote was to be cast. Even they can hold their voter identity card so that non-supporters do not cast their votes in the favour of the other candidate. However, some voter tried to be enough smart to cast their vote by using alternative identity proof but after getting caught by those political thikkedars/contractor, they are forced to return the money including the cost of liquor. In addition, they were brutally beaten to teach them lesson and to not committing the same again. Further, some villages of Dalits are threatened to not go and cast their vote. The routes of village are blocked by their goondas in that village to watch their movements.

One can easily observe that there was a different level of happiness; satisfaction and enthusiasm was writ large on the faces of Dalits on the 'Bhoj' day but it was not for democracy and the electoral democratic participation. It was enthusiasm neither about Dalit and Ambedkrite politics nor about construction of alternative social, religious and cultural identity for them. It was the happiness and satisfaction of having good dinner or lunch with drink/liquor.

²¹ Ibid

²² Tola is the part of village. In some cases it is based on the hamlets of particular caste such as Dalit tola, yadav tola etc.

²³ It is the arrangement of collective dinner or lunch for Dalits and poor in return of vote.

6. Socio-religious engagements

Turning to the religious practices of the Dalit communities, Suresh Ram revealed that there is the strong discriminations are being practices by upper caste to the Dalit Community in this area. Giving the example of his neighboring village he is of the opinion that;

there are 2500 votes of Ravani caste, also known as 'Chandravansi' caste belong to the SC community. They are very much religious. They worship the Hindu God and Goddesses. Despite it, because of their Dalit identity before his win of election of Jila Parishad they were not allowed to perform 'Yajna' with the Hindu rituals. No Brahmin ready to perform the 'Yajna' arranged by Dalits of this village. He, for the first time after winning the election managed to perform 'Yajna' in this village.²⁴

After this act the Dalits of that village started offering him much respect and they promise to caste vote in his favour in the next election without judging his performance in terms of development and other issues related to the education, health etc. to elect him their local political representative. Further, he himself made the statement that Dalit Community of this area are still in clutch of the Brahminical forces and the Hinduism. They still touch the feet of Brahmins and their marriages cannot be completed without the rituals performed by the Brahmin. They are so ignorant about the Dalit liberation movement that they don't have even conscious to think that they can end their discrimination, humiliation and exploitation from the Bramminical Hindu social order. Construction of an independent Dalit identity free from mainstream Hindu religion with the help of alternative rituals and practices are beyond their understanding.

However, the Tribal communities of this area are also forced live in almost the same socio-economic conditions but the proper engagements of Christianity with them they are developing the better understanding to live their life with dignity and full of self-respect. I found Dalits of this area are also engaged with Christianity.

6.1 Dalits and the Christian Engagement

The literature and religion play great role in the emergence, preservation and propagation of any culture so as the literature of the Dalit liberation movement and

²⁴In the interview with Suresh Ram, who belongs to Dalit community. He is the present Jila Parishad of Chakai Block at his residence on 8 Oct. 2015.

ideology. It has helped in construction of the protest ideology and the liberation theology of Dalit movement. The literature of the Dalit movement while explaining the ideas promotes the level of understanding and consciousness in Dalit and marginalized communities to declare war against oppressive social system. It also explains the importance of independent social and religious Dalit identity in the liberation of Dalit Community of India from the oppression and exploitation of Hinduism and discriminatory hierarchical social order. It is the literature only, which has generated the level of consciousness among Dalit Community of India that they will not going to compromise with their dignity, self-respect and constitutional rights to remain within the Hindu social order and Hinduism. Some of them advocate conversion to Buddhism and made strong appeal to stop worshiping Hindu Gods and Goddesses including observing Hindu rituals and practices. Others appeal to develop an inclusive, accommodative and rational independent alternative Dalit religion based on secular and democratic ethos of society. For this purpose, it need a level of literacy among Dalit Community to read and understand the ideas of Dalit liberation movement but Dalit Community of Chakai are illiterate and are completely unable to understand the mission of Dalit liberation. So as to understand the importance of independent religious and cultural rituals and practices of Dalit communities, as the interconnecting thread to bring the solidarity within the people having common patterns of engagements in everyday lives.

On the other hand, following the same, Christianity has made the good presence in the area to engage Tribals, Dalits and other marginalized communities. Sheetal Das, a teacher in the Charka Utkramit Madhya Vidyalaya (Upgraded Middle School). She is Dalit and converted to Christianity. She is of the opinion that;

Christianity in this area has made good presence among the socially and educationally backward communities because of two reasons. First; it enters in their mind through promoting education and to make them able to read, write and understand and to decide the future course of action. Secondly; it has shown high level of acceptability to all section of society irrespective of their social, religious and cultural identity.²⁵

Since, Christianity focuses on educating the people and promoting education in the Dalits and marginalized communities, it provides a secular space with the wide level of acceptability in respect of inter-dining; marriages and other rituals and practices of

²⁵ Interview with Sheetal Das, a teacher in the Charka Utkramit Madhya Vidyalaya (Upgraded Middle School). She has also converted to Christianity.

life. People of these marginalized sections prefer it to other religions. Neither Hinduism promotes modern education and livelihood in highly non-political way, nor any other religious and cultural organizations provide such a wide/high level of acceptability irrespective of the identity based on caste, community, religion, race, birth colour and so on. Dalit religion also still does not emerged as a well organized in the sense of promoting education and other secular and inclusive ideas through the various institutions including educational institution. One more interesting thing she revealed as per her observation that Christian missionaries in this area are non-political. It never plays any active role in the political mobilization of people.

Although She lives in the most backward region of Bihar but revealed very important observation about the successful Dalit movement in other state like Uttar Pradesh and other states in India. According to her observation these states have seen a strong Dalit movement and mass grass-roots Dalit social and political mobilization because of hard working of Dalit organizations. Particularly about the Dalit identity politics of UP she described that what have BSP achieved in UP is just because of BAMCEF (All India Backwards and Minorities Communities Employee Federation) and other local Dalit social activist but in Bihar and particularly in this area BAMCEF has made no influence. It is almost ceased to function in the state and Dalit social activists either joined Naxal movement or other political formation for gaining the personal interest and that interest is nothing bigger than the issues of livelihood. The BAMCEF has played the very important role to educate and unite the marginalized communities of UP and this is why UP observed the strong Dalit movement. It has generated the sense of solidarity and courage within the people having the common grievances to fight against the discrimination and exploitation of Brahminical Hindu religion. The members of BAMCEF created the literature and distributed among the Dalit masses with the help of Dalit social activists. They trained that social activist how to make Dalit understand about the idea and mission of the liberation of Dalit communities.

Further she explained about Chakai that;

in the earlier generation the Sarvodaya movement has shown interests towards the social justice. The movement was also concentrated on generating self-employment and other alternative local employment based on local products but they failed to generate enough resources to make substantive approaches except convincing some landlords to donate land. Those lands they distributed among Dalits and landless castes. Despite the all efforts of Sarvodaya Movement there were no effort was made to organize Dalits and Backwards against the Brahminical Hindu society. She revealed a very interesting fact is that her father used to say that Sarvodaya

Movement is not the anti Brahminical movement, rather it was an appeal to change the heart of Savarna castes regarding the attitude towards Dalits. it was not the movement which had any intention to develop a movement against Brahminical forces as well as the social structure.²⁶

The Sarvodaya movement failed to generate enough consciousness among Dalit to organise against their multiple-marginalities and exploitation. It has also remained the tool in the hands of upper caste and the Brahminical forces which had nothing to do with the education and other development of the Dalit and marginalized communities of this area. So, the level of consciousness, understanding and courage to challenge the discriminatory Hindu religion and to fight against the oppressive and exploitative social order could not emerged in this area. In the absence of institution like BAMCEF, except few, Dalits are so illiterate that they don't even know who the Ambedkar was, what to talk about alternative Dalit movement and the construction of an alternative Dalit social and cultural identity. This was clearly visible in the non-assertive tendency of Dalit community of Chakai. They lack social autonomy.

7. Economic Dependence and Social Autonomy

The social autonomy and economic dependence of human being has reciprocal relationship. The social autonomy of a class, caste or community depends of the amount of economic dependence over other class, caste or community. Greater the amount of economic dependence on others lesser the social autonomy of later. Since, Dalit Community of Chakai are economically dependent on the upper castes Savarna Hindus and they don't have any independent existence in this area so they don't only lost their social autonomy but also their 'religio-cultural self-identity as a separate group'. Due to their economic dependence on upper castes Savarna Hindus, landlords and other dominant Babus, the extreme illiteracy and absence of alternative employment are the reasons that close every door to construct an alternative 'Dalit counter space'. In this situation and condition they can neither construct alternative place of worship nor can they enjoy the right to administer their religious aspiration.

While visiting to the various villages such as Gurmoo, Bhoodan Tola, Bauna, Dalludih, Babudih, Amatila, Jhagrudih, Charka Patthar, Mahesha Patthar, Pesra Tand, Bichkodwa, Maldadih, Jugadi, Terkha, Loha, Lakadaha, Balthar, Churhit, Sukhasan, Salaiya Charaiya, Jakatiya, Navadih, Petar Pahadi, Bagha, Chhotki Tand, Balagobhi, Liludih, Badatand, Batpar, Nawada, Berwadi, Paranchi etc. to take name of some

²⁶ Ibid.

villages. I didn't find any alternative practices with the intention to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream religious culture. There are some places of mounted soil that Dalit are used to worship as local deities, I asked them the reason for the construction but their replies reflected nothing but just their poor economic condition. I found not even a single larger construction like Ravidasia, Neo-Buddhist, Kabirpanthis etc. which poses alternative discourses to challenge the Brahminical religious discourse of broader framework for the liberation of Dalit community.

Due to their dependence on upper castes they are forced to 'internalized Brahminical versions of myths relating to this historical process and voluntarily accepted demeaning ritual roles in village festivals, temple rituals and domestic rites corresponding to a servile class in a semi-feudal economy'²⁷ in India. This equally applies also to the Dalit Community of Chakai. However, Naxal movement has strong engagement with the Dalits, Tribals and other backward communities but this extreme left movement has never engaged with the religious and the caste oppression.

So, despite that the Dalit community of this area live in extreme poverty and oppression and they are humiliated and exploited by upper castes Savarna Hindus in their everyday life engagement they have deep psychological attachment with Hindu gods and goddesses.

The Maoist and Naxalite movement has nothing to do with the religion and religious discrimination and caste based oppression. Dalit community is not aware about the oppressive and discriminatory philosophy of Brahminical Hindu society. They don't even aware that how Brahminical Hindu religion is the base of construction, perpetuation and preservation of their stigmatic and humiliating caste identity. In fact Dalit community of this area believes that they are part of Hindu society and some of their customs and rituals are very similar to Hindus. For example; as I observe in Mahesha Patthar, they also perform 'ashtajam' and 'Satyanarayan Bhagwan pooja' before the marriage and any other ceremonies. They also participate in the mainstream Hindu festivals and rituals to beat the drum. The drum beating performance is still done by Dalit in the mainstream Brahminical Hindu festivals. However, the Tribals of the area worship their own deities before the marriages and

²⁷Ayrookuzhiel, A.M. Abraham (1994) "The Dalits, Religions and Interfaith Dialogue," Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies: Vol. 7, Article 6.

other ceremonies but there is similarity between the structure and the way they perform this function. The 'Ashtajam' they perform before the marriage ends just the day on the marriage like mainstream Hindus do.

In one hand, I found the absence of any Dalit specific cultural, social and political organization working there. Neither Ambedkarite movement nor the satnami, kabirpanthi, Ravidasia etc. are working to create awareness within Dalit communities. On the other hand Hindu political and cultural organizations like the Bharatiya Janata Party, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh etc. are in very planned way keen to keep the Dalit population within the Hindu fold because of the Dalit Community in good number (more than 17%) to add huge political weight to the Hindu community and their Hindutva politics. So, they try to keep Dalit community engaging with all Hindu religious festivals.

8. Socio-Religious and Political Patronage

Given the poor socio-economic conditions of Dalit Community and the absence of functioning any Dalit religio-cultural organization to raise the low level of Dalit awareness, it is very difficult for them to understand the liberation theology and protest ideology of Dalit and Ambedkarite movement. Unless the substantial changes within Dalit Community do not take place to make them able to understand the meaning of dignity and self-respect they won't be going to challenge the ill practice of the Brahminical Hindu society. Until they are completely dependent on the Savarna upper castes Hindus, the emergence of other socio-religious and political organizations like Buddhism in Maharashtra, neo-Buddhism and BSP in Uttar Pradesh, Ravidasia in Punjab, Satnami in Chattishgarh etc. are impossible. They need to provide social, political and economic patronage to encourage and organize against the highly oppressive and discriminatory practices of Brahminical hierarchical social order. In Maharashtra, the case of Dalit conversion to Buddhism was the part of political mobilization of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. In Uttar Pradesh, it was the part of the political and social mobilization of Dalit leader Kanshi Ram, the political party BSP and the much efforts put in by the BAMCEF. In Punjab it is Ravidasia that provides socio-religious patronage to Dalit to fight against the injustices to them and to construct Dalit counter spaces. In Chakai, I found none of the Dalit socio-religious and cultural organization like Buddhism, Neo-Buddhism, Ravidasia, Kabirpanthis,

Satnamis, Dadupanthis, Shivnarayan panthis, etc. and political parties like BSP is functioning to provide social, cultural, economic and political patronage to Dalit Community to bring the social, cultural and political autonomy to the Dalit community.

Dalit liberation movement itself recognizes that Dalit Community cannot be made independent without providing the economic, cultural and political patronage but none of the Dalit social, political and cultural organization of Biharis working in this direction. On the contrary, Dalit political parties and leaders are joining the hands with Brahminical social, cultural and political organizations. In Bihar both the political and religious leadership of even Dalit community are still in the hegemony of non-Dalit section. According to Kishori Das, an office bearer of PUCL and Dalit social activist and Suresh Paswan, a Dalit converted to Buddhist, even the top teaching and non-teaching positions in the Buddhist Schools and other institutions, which run under economic patronage provided by Buddhism in Bihar, has been captures by the Kurmi and other non-Dalit castes. So, they do not provide necessary criticism of existing oppressive Brahminical hierarchical social order and other evil practices. No doubt the poverty, ignorance and the lack of education made Dalit Community as superstitious as ever and even in these Buddhist school because of these Kurmis and other non-Dalits who have capture the entire space do not criticize the irrational Hindu myths and stories and other irrational ritual and practices centered around the Brahminical ideology. In fact, they do not want Dalits to internalize an alternative religious and social philosophy, which promote the scientific outlook and rationality among masses, so that they can challenge the irrational myths, unscientific rituals and discriminatory practices of the Brahminical Hindu society.

In Chakai, due to their ignorance, poverty, lack of education and economic dependence over feudal forces the confidence of Dalits are so low that they themselves internalize and legitimize the Hindu concept of purity and pollution. They themselves consider themselves untouchables. They don't even the sense that what is the anti-Brahminical stance of the Dalit and Ambedkarite liberation movement and what do its literatures talk about the importance of an independent Dalit religious-cultural philosophy. What are their social and wider political implications in the liberation for Dalit Community from the scourge of the exploitative Brahminical

Hindu society?

In the entire area it is very tough to explain and speculate what democratic values, principles, ethics and technique, particularly within Dalit communities, work there to understand that who voted whom and why? I doubt the general perception made by media and intellectual society that poor and illiterate (Dalit and Adivasi) has a higher turnout than educated so-called upper castes including metropolitans educated class because I found some evidences which suggest that in the villages like Gaganpur, Bindali, Gadai, Manjhitand, Bagha, Baluahi, Madidih etc., Maoist group does not believe in the electoral politics of the state. The fact is that this is not the sufficient condition for doubting because the political apathy, state negligence, absence of political consciousness etc. are several other reasons for their low turnout for voting. Observing, the socio-economic condition and religio-cultural understanding of Dalit Community of this area I also doubt whether they have any particular independent 'social imaginary' regarding the political mobilization? One of the obvious reasons I understand important to mention is that the habit of drinking. Even the early in the morning I found them drunk and this is the common habit of Dalit men of both Chakai and Bochahan state assembly constituencies. They are so drunk that they try hard to say 'Johar'²⁸ the salutary word used by them similar to 'pranam' and hello in the mainstream society. I also reject the concept of base vote in respect of the Dalit community of Chakai.

Further, the close observation of their everyday life engagements helped me to capture the better understanding about their habit of drinking. It is nothing but they are killing themselves day-by-day by drinking country made liquor in hopelessness, helplessness, poverty and loss of dignity and self-respect in everyday lives. In this situation, I must say that it is foolish to think that they have any understanding, imagination or idea of getting out of scourge of the oppressive Brahminical social order. It reflects no particular Dalit political mobilization trends and model of Dalit identity politics in this area that can be generalized. This is why there is the big gap between the viewpoint of an ordinary voter and the reports portrayed in the media. Voters hold multiple motivations and beliefs and the Dalit voters in Chakai hold none.

²⁸ Johar and Hul-Johar are the words Dalits and tribals use to greet each other when they meet.

Conclusion

The autonomous Dalit movement based Ambedkarite politics is the part of cultural production or the production of an independent social, cultural and political identity. It is well associated with the general everyday life activities and various engagements of Dalit community. It subtly inculcates the social and cultural autonomy among Dalit community for the construction of alternative cultural and political identity. Inherently it designs the selfhood and self-dignity within the culturally segregated, socially discriminated, economically exploited and politically marginalized Dalit community who are forced to live in crisis. Further, it is not possible without developing an alternative selfhood and restoring the self-respect of the Dalit community. It also requires cultivation of alternative pattern of engagements to counter the hegemonic discourse of the mainstream society. Its very existence is not possible without attaining some level of independent material condition and life practices but the material condition and life practices of Dalit community in Chakai are completely dependent on Brahminical society. They are scattered, unorganized and struggling with livelihood. They are neither independent of this Brahminical hegemonic discourse, nor are they in position to challenge it. Even their everyday life engagements do not impart the otherwise meaning to stop the continuous assault of dignity, self-respect and demeaned identity of Dalit-self. The Dalit agencies in Chakai do radicalize but not in the sense of constructing alternative, and to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream society, rather along the direction of the political apathy, against state negligence and state repression. So, I found among Dalit community of Chakai, there is the political absence under the individual struggle for survival against their hopelessness and helplessness, rather than struggling against the Brahminical forces which bring them destitute, ignorance, suffering and humiliation in everyday Dalits' lives. They are not aware about their identity so one cannot imagine the possibility of Dalit identity politics without infusing a level of consciousness to understand the reasons of their social discrimination, political marginalization, cultural segregation and economic exploitation.

Autonomous Dalit Politics in Bihar: A difficult Possibility

The previous two chapters of this thesis are based on the ethnographic field study of two state assembly constituencies Bochahan and Chakai in Muzaffarpur and Jamui districts respectively. I have tried to explain the social, economic, cultural and political conditions of Dalit community in these two constituencies. I have argued that they are politically active in the mainstream politics. However, the study shows that still subjected to social segregation and economic exploitation. I have further demonstrated that despite their pathetic condition they do not have transformative political consciousness. There no signs of autonomous Dalit politics in terms of internal social transformation or external political struggle. In fact, I did not find them sympathetic to even the Ambedkarite socio-cultural politics. They lack the alternative socio-cultural and political imagery and religious imaginary. They are not fully aware of the struggle, philosophy and mission of Ambedkar. What surprised me was absence of even BSP or Amberkarite kind of politics in these constituencies.

This chapter is based on my fieldwork and over all engagement with the Dalit activists and scholars in the state I would like to address the question if there is a possibility of autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar. To recall the idea of Autonomous Dalit Politics, it not exactly like the BSP politics of Uttar Pradesh or like the Dalit cultural Politics Maharashtra, but, something closer to the imagination of Ambedkar himself. As mentioned earlier it is a form of liberation politics aiming at creating a non-exploitative society. Of course, the cultural politics and identity politics are necessary component of such an imagination but only as tools of the larger aim of the politics of liberation.

Having concluded that the Dalit politics in Bihar has witnessed neither the identity politics of UP not the cultural politics of Maharashtra. Now I would like to move one to examine if such there is any possibility of Dalit politics beyond the Gandhi-Jagjivan model or left model in the state. I have argued in this chapter that it would be possible only if the Dalit movement fist raises an alternative religious imagination. However, to my surprise, at the moment there does not seem to be any possibility of such alternative

religious imagination in the state. In this chapter, I would like to analyze the factors one may consider as hindrance in the path of the alternative religious imagination and hence, obstacles for autonomous Dalit movement.

1. The Contemporary Politics of Bihar

If the modern politics of Bihar seduces us into judging all political values (democratic values) and principles by a single standard, it will certainly be nothing but caste and the caste politics. All other Democratic values come later to analyze and understand the electoral politics of Bihar. Having said that a true Democracy must consider our diversity and differences. It must be recognized under the democratic values of our governance and it should be reflected in our voting behavior and political practices. In Indian politics, it is nothing but castes and religions that structure the politics, the pattern of politicization and the political mobilization, Bihar being no exception. Both (Caste and Religion) are most durable elements of the politics in India and so do in Bihar. They do operate as a powerful basis for construction of a particular social and cultural identity (based on caste and religion) but also consolidate, unite and polarize people under a particular ideology against another category, ideology and party. Further, the essentialist experience witnesses that with its durable, rigid and stable characters and the continuous strong 'politicization of caste' for the long period it has become the essential element of the Indian politics. It is also true that caste is deeply embedded at all levels (local, regional and national) of politics in India. Its association with religion and their common but different rituals and practices, acts as an interconnecting thread among the people of different castes. It blends people under common religious and cultural identity to develop a unified category broader than caste and community.

In India identity has different categories. It is social, political and religious and so on. Castes are the social categories. The communities like OBCs, Dalits (SC), ST and Minorities are the political categories and Hinduism is the religious category broader than any other social political and religious categories in India. Nationalism is another different universal category of a state. Caste is highly fragmented and very small unit of Indian society. Without association with religion construction of a broader identity and a broader social and political category is almost impossible. For instance, in the absence of

an independent socio-cultural or religious interconnecting thread Dalit community of Bihar that commands such a significant part (more than 16.5 percent) population of state is still divided in 23 castes. So far, they are fragmented into different political alliances led by Congress, RJD, JD (U), Communists and BSP. Even the support of some Dalits to NDA alliance in the last assembly election cannot be rejected completely. In the absence of Ambedkarite movement and Dalit consciousness to assert their independent Dalit identity the mission for integrating them together as a strong political force like BSP in Uttar Pradesh, remain a remote possibility.

Another way of looking the politics of Bihar in respect of Dalit Community is that People of India (irrespective of all castes, classes, regions, religions, birth, colour and races) fought national movement together. They gave up lives to liberate India from the exploitative colonial regime and to establish a just, democratic and more egalitarian society. What wonders us is that, after 70 years of independence even our national politics has not morphed to an issue-based politics. It is always blamed for the politics of appeasement, politics of communal polarization and so on. Thus, opened the space for the emergence of identity based regional politics. Regional politics are also seemingly not approaching in this direction. It is nothing but a bandwagon of caste and communal politics. Observing the deep social and economic contradiction in Indian society, Dr. Ambedkar, during the constituent assembly speech, had indicated that after independence the mainstream politics which is highly dominated by Brahminical forces and ideology, would be fragmented into different streams if the due shares of different sections of society would not be taken care off. His forecast became true when it was seen that the dominantly two parallel movements based on the principle of subaltern politics created space to grow. One is led by dominant backward castes (OBCs) and other is led by Dalits. Both were having the anti-Brahminical character. They aimed to unite all depressed classes to counter the hegemony of Brahmin and upper castes dominated politics based on Hindutva ideology.

This phenomenon is called the emergence of identity politics in India. It is seen in Bihar after 1990, when a OBCs dominated identity politics captured the power of state. It was understood as the part of the process of 'second democratic upsurge' in India such as

Dalit politics succeeded to capture the power in Uttar Pradesh. But there is basic difference between the politics of these two states. In Uttar Pradesh, the mainstream politics is divided exactly on the same two lines what was forecasted by political intellectuals during constituent assembly debates. One stream is now dominated by OBCs of the state and Dalit community dominates the other stream. On the other hand in Bihar, no doubt, politics of state got divided into two streams but both are dominated by OBCs. Dalit politics of the state subsumed under these OBCs dominated identity politics. In the absence of an independent Dalit and Ambedkarite politics, Dalit Community of Bihar still searching their political ground to challenge the newly establish hegemony of OBCs politics and the mission for challenging the mainstream Brahminical politics is left behind. This section explains the nature of caste based contemporary identity politics of Bihar. Who should be blamed to essentialise caste as one of the dominant factors of the politics of Bihar?

As I said that Caste in India is strong phenomenon of Indian politics and it is a strong reason for the emergence of identity politics. Particularly, in Bihar, where I spent almost two months to cover all five phases of last Vidhan Sabha election 2015, observed an unprecedented caste polarization. More than 90 percent upper castes casted their votes in favor of NDA, on the other side OBCs did the same and polarized in the favor of 'Mahagathbandhan'. Again, the two most important communities i.e. Dalits and Muslims left with no choice except tilting towards Mahagathbandhan. More than 90 percent Muslims casted their votes in the favor of Mahagathbandhan and also Dalits had no choice except to support Mahagathbandhan. The huge victory of 'Mahagathbandhan' and the humiliating defeat of NDA have another dimension to analyze it, and it is nothing but a complete failure of autonomous Dalit and Muslim politics in the state. Both the 'Manhagathbandhan' and the NDA put their all efforts to attract Dalit Community in their coalition and it is 'Mahagathbandhan' whom Dalits choose to believe once again rather than showing their believes in Dalit leaders such as JitanRam Manjhi and Ramvilas Paswan. No doubt, Manjhi emerged as a new hope for Dalits of Bihar, but his decision to join NDA destroyed their hope once again. Feeling cheated, Dalits decided to strengthen the hand of 'Mahagathbandhan'. They showed their believe in Nitish kumar but not even

in Ramvilas Paswan. This was the clear indication of an anti-Brahminical sentiment among Dalits of Bihar.

Here, the point to ponder is that if the sole motives of our freedom fighters were to establish a just, democratic and more egalitarian society where caste, communalism, region and religion have no role to play in the politics of India. The issues like individual freedoms, rights, education, inclusive development and minimizing corruption would have role to play. Then the question remain to think is that who is responsible to maintain the same exploitative and discriminatory structure where caste is still remained a strong feature of the politics of Bihar? Who gave the birth of caste politics in Bihar? Who made this worst way of politics to follow on? Why this caste factor is still so relevant in the politics of Bihar? Do Lalu Prasad Yadav, Kapoori Thakur and Jitan Ram Manjhi responsible for doing and maintaining caste politics in Bihar? Certainly, they are not. Do the raising voices against inhuman treatments of upper castes toward Dalit Community and struggle for their constitutional rights even after the 70 years of independence are the casteist politics? Or, history indicates something else? Even today these questions are very relevant in the present era of the concentration of all rights and opportunities in the hands of few people, who belong to certain privilege castes. Let me explore it a little deeper.

In the politics of Bihar however freedom movement was fought by all castes but just after a few years of independence the Bihar politics was captured by a certain caste called 'Bhumihar'. Even Rajpoots, Brahmins and Kayasth were also thrown out to show their way. The first Chief Minister of Bihar started his politics as a man of above caste, community and religion but died with the identity of a casteist 'Bhumihar'.¹ But, the interesting fact is that Dalits and Backwards are always blamed for starting caste politics in Bihar. Even Jayprakash Narayan, one of the great crusaders of socialism, also blamed Shri krishn Singh a casteist leader, for giving all key positions to the leaders belonged to his (Bhumihar) caste only. Thus, prepared the stage to capture all political space by single caste leaders only.² The truth of Bihar politics is that, till date, none of the leader of Bihar

¹ Jha Hetuka (1959) Dr. Shrikrishn Singh ke Samay ke Ubhare Prashn: Ek Samajshastriya Avalokan in 'Shri Krishn Singh Smriti Granth (Vichar aur Darshan), Rajya Abhilekhagar, Patna. Pp- 99-105.

² Newspaper (6.8.1959), The Searchlight, Patna.

has tried to end the caste politics because the Brahminical caste tendency is deeply entrenched in the society of Bihar. Neither a collective movement was drawn nor was a political and social forum established to think and debate how to bring caste (as a sole criterion) out of politics of the state.

Another important fact is that, till date, none of Dalit leader holds key position of the state politics of Bihar, then what forces and who are the persons responsible to promote the caste politics in Bihar. Seeing the trajectory of the politics of Bihar, certainly the upper caste leaders are responsible to promote the caste politics, caste coalitions and caste polarization. These upper caste leaders are responsible to make caste, the only feature of Bihar politics. If upper castes leaders have ruled the state governments barring some exceptions then they must have taken care of equal participation and representation of different sections of society. Certainly, they are responsible to not constructing a model to establish a true democratic society where everyone has their share in power and freedom to enjoy their individual democratic rights, and to live with dignity irrespective of their caste and communal identity. Till nineties, backwards are marginalized from all the power game of the state and Dalits are still completely marginalized from all social, cultural, political and economic rights. Now, when these marginalize sections have started asserting themselves to fight for equal share of all constitutional rights then they are blamed for promoting casteism and communalism in the state politics of Bihar.

In the present situation the society of Bihar has been polarized in two broad categories. One is commanded by so-called socialist OBCs and Backwards politic where Dalit and Ambedkarite politics has been subsumed under it. Another is commanded by (elite) upper caste dominated politics. They are trying to capture the power of state by playing religious, communal and caste card, and drawing a broader category of 'Hindutva' than OBCs category. What is different in the politics of Bihar today, after the convincing victory of 'Mahagathbandhan', (the so called socialist coalition) in 2015 is that now Bihar has emerged as the open ground for three broad/main political formations i.e. right wing politics, so called socialist and OBCs politics and Dalit and Ambedkarite politics? Congress has still not bounced back in the scene, however, left has tried hard to recover their political ground but they failed to make good impact in the last election. Dalits

Muslims and EBCs remain the base votes for both the Congress and Left for the long period of time in Bihar but now Dalits of Bihar has also started asserting themselves to constitute Dalit as a category like OBCs and to play their independent politics. Thus, opens the possibilities of an autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar, but before this, Dalits have to understand the broader hypocrisy of right wing 'Hindutva politics'.

2. The Alternative Religious Orientation of Dalit community

If we talk about any effort of construction of an alternative religion for Dalit Community in Bihar then it is none other than Buddhism. It is known as 'neo-Buddhism'. But let me explore some reality of the 'neo-Buddhism'. It was started as a part of Ambedkarite movement to challenge the Hindu religion and to construct an alternative for Dalit Community to come out of the discriminatory Hindu social order. According to Kishori Das, in Patna and surrounding Dalit participation was good in number but it caught the eyes of Brahminical forces very soon. These Brahminical forces started sabotaging it in many ways. First of all they dissociated it from Buddhism by naming it neo-Buddhism. These Dalits are now called neo-Buddhist and after capturing the leadership they started discriminating Dalits. Now a day, most of the 'bhante' (Buddhist saint) that are on the top positions belong to OBCs and upper caste. They are in the controlling position and lots of discrimination one can observe easily. Dalits remained out of the governing council of neo-Buddhism. Most of the foreign donations, which come for the development of Buddhism and for the investment for Dalit welfare like education of children, go in the hands of these OBCs turned Buddhist. Mostly they belong to Koiri caste of Bihar. Since, they are the part of the Brahminical forces; they use that money for their own benefits. That money are being not used to the welfare of Dalit, oppressed and weaker section of society who converted to Buddhism to liberate themselves from discriminatory and exploitative Hindu life. These upper castes 'Bhante' (Buddhist saints) have their political inclination towards kushwaha (OBCs) politics and this is the reason why they are not interested in promoting the ideals and spirits of Buddhism in true sense. In this era of OBCs dominated politics of Bihar, they represent the ruling class, which have completely contradictory vision to the Buddhist ideology. The aim of this movement was to open an organized struggle against the Brahminical forces by providing the religious alternative to

the oppressed castes. But the entire Buddhist movement of Bihar, which is called 'neo-Buddhism', was shattered by these 'neo-feudal class'³.

Another movement against the Brahminical forces was started by Triveni sangh under the leadership of koiri, kurmi and yadav. It was seen as an anti-ruling class backward caste movement. Dalits also contributed much in this movement. Some people are of the opinion that it was the movement that brought OBCs in driver seat in the politics of Bihar during nineties. This movement was started with the ideology and the principle to fight for exploited and oppressed castes together. In a meeting organized in Patna under the chairmanship of Jagdev Babu it was decided that all oppressed castes (Dalit, OBCs, and EBCs) would cooperate in the struggle against ruling class to establish socio-economic justice in the state. But again, Dalits were cheated by these OBCs primarily Yadav, Koiri and Kurmi. Dalit Community was not given a fair participation as decided in the various meetings of Triveni Sangh. After capturing the power of state the new ruling class dissociated themselves from Dalits and their leaders. Today these three castes (Yadav, Koiri and Kurmi) have emerged as 'neo-feudalist' class. Today Dalits feel more threaten by these OBCs than old feudal belong to upper castes, however, they still exist with the same spirit and intent. In the newly developed scenario upper caste do not put potential threat to harm Dalit interests but these 'neo-feudalists' (yadav, koiri and kurmi) are very shrewd and they are behaving like new exploiter. These are the product of 'triveni sangh' which had very goal to fight for injustices been done to depressed classes by upper caste/ruling class. They have now emerged as new exploiter class. Earlier, the 'Baniya' caste was the part of the Brahminical ruling but now this caste has joined the hand with these neo-feudalist classes. They have now started checking every move of Dalits in the state.

Particularly, Baniya caste (vaishya) practices harsher untouchability and other evil practices to Dalits than any other castes. Now these four castes (yadav, koiri, kurmi and baniya) practice harsher discrimination to Dalits than upper castes. It does not mean that upper castes do not discriminate Dalits, rather their form of discrimination has changed.

³ Kishori Das use this word for newly emerged dominant OBCs who behave as traditional feudal class Rajputs, Bhumihars, Brahmins etc.

They now discriminate Dalits indirectly at the administrative and bureaucratic level. They don't assault them physically but they discriminate Dalits in the various institutions such as judiciary, police, higher education and other departments. Dalit Community now also face physical assault by these newly emerged neo-feudalists class of yadav, koiri, kurmi and baniya.

The basic reason for this is that these four castes have been leading the struggle of social justice in Bihar for more than last 25 years. Indian National Congress who has little faith in social justice has lost her ground in Bihar. All new parties like RJD, JD(U), and other are basically caste based party and people of that particular caste support them blindly without checking the qualification of the candidates. Party became the qualification and caste has the matter of trust and believes for casting vote in assembly elections. Dalits are completely outnumbered by these four castes in all the newly developed political spaces. Feeling cheated, once again by these neo-feudalists, Dalits have started searching their space out of backward community but not independent and they preferred to join hands with the different coalitions. In this situation they changed their coalition time and again. Thus, they lost their trust and ground both. Had these Dalit leaders tried hard to construct an independent political space through the grassroots mobilization of people and leaving their personal political interests aside in the interest of Dalits and minority communities, the scene would have been different. The present situation is that Dalit Community of Bihar is leaderless, bifurcated and fragmented into different parties. They are divided into sub-categories (such as Dalits and Mahadalits). Dalit leaders of the state take it unconstitutional. It was just a political game. Whatever the explanation, the then CM of the state, Nitish kumar gave in the favour of this move was not appealing. The real intention behind it was to stop consolidation of Dalits into a single category such as OBCs, so that, they cannot emerge into a political category like Uttar Pradesh.

Right from the beginning Dalits of Bihar have extended their support to Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar and their so-called struggle of social justice. Even the more than 25 years of their long struggle for socio-economic justice have not opened the space for Dalits and minority to cultivate equal share in respect of rights and opportunities. Dalits of the state feel cheated by these so-called 'mashiha' of social justice and vikashpurush.

They left no stone unturned to stop every movement of Dalits started against the atrocities and exploitation, which might have turned into Dalit movement in the state. Most of the time they were found brutally suppressing their struggle. Their social justice drama got the same character of the (old) ruling class and the neo-feudalist character of OBCs can be observed everywhere at the grassroots level.

The impacts of dividing Dalits can be observed in the day-to-day life of Dalit community. Even at the village level, they are so fragmented. The kind of social solidarity and brotherhood I observed, at the local level, in the villages of Uttar Pradesh are absent in the villages of Bihar. However, the scene of the naxalite areas and the villages of the left dominated constituencies are completely different. I found them united with the spirit of fighting against every injustices being done to poor and Dalits even after the every attempts of OBCs dominated governments to block the emergence of this phenomenon among Dalits of the state.

Followings are some features of Dalit Community at the local level. Dalits even do not show their solidarity on the matter of small conflicts like UP. Yet, there are no mutual beliefs, trust and the sense of solidarity despite the common grievances of Dalit community. During my fieldwork, the worse thing I observed in Bihar is the practice of casteism among different (sub) castes of Dalit community. There are also the sense of superiority and inferiority among these Dalit sub-castes. One of the respondent gave a fine example of lack of mutual trust among Dalits. On the social and political ground, even a selfless struggle launched by a Dalit in the interest of the communities is not supported by his community but if the same struggle is launched in the leadership of an upper caste individual, for taking the political mileage, is supported hugely by the same Dalits people. Such a lack of trust among same communities is generally not seen except Dalit community.

At the higher level this tendency among Dalits shatters any possibility of developing a Dalit issue as an independent Dalit movement in two ways. Intentionally, that issue related to Dalit Community is hired by an upper caste leader to take their own political mileage. In this attempt emergence of a Dalit leader through the mass mobilization of Dalit community from the grassroots level is hindered. Dalit Community do not

understand it. In this way Dalit issues get no representation of Dalits, neither at local nor at the higher level. In India and particularly in the backward community, it is generally seen that every mass leaders has started their career from the grassroots level. Nothing but public relations and broader recognition among communities have made them a mass leader. Without a broader recognition, none can launch a social revolution. This phenomenon is absent with the respect to Dalit leaders of Bihar. Mayavati in Uttar Pradesh became a mass leader only after the broader recognition of her community. She rides the trust of her community and due to the strong mutual trust her community also support her blindly to each and every concern related to Dalits state she raise. In the absence of this phenomenon, none of the single social revolution led by a Dalit leader has been observed in the contemporary politics of Bihar. Dalit leaders of Bihar need to win the trust of his/her community first. It requires developing a psychological bond among communities to put their trust on him/her blindly and throw a massive support every time when their leader makes a call. Even in the contemporary politics of Bihar a number of popular Dalit faces are present there but not a single Dalit leader, like Kanshi Ram in UP, to represent all Dalit Community of Bihar.

2.1 Dalit Religious Institutions: an Agency Of Brahminism

Suresh paswan, a highly devoted Ambedkrite and Buddhist also agree with Kishori Das that even in Buddhism the leadership or important positions are captured by upper castes. He tells that Ambedkar Buddhist India run by non-Dalits. The keys positions are held by persons belong to Koiri caste. The fact is that these institutions are mostly run for the welfare and betterment of Dalit and oppressed society and it must be well represented by Dalits and oppressed. The head of organization must be from these communities but the reality is that Dalits have to fight to get appointed even a single Dalit. After a long struggle the head of Ambedkar Buddhist India, Bihar, who belongs to Koiri caste, agreed to appoint first Buddhist saint (Bhante) from Dalit community. These dominant caste people do not want a Dalit to enter and held any important position there. Even they cannot tolerate becoming a Dalit Buddhist saint (Bhante). The same situation can be observed in the Buddhist schools run by Buddhist India Mission, in Bihar.

Ambedkarite social activists help those parents who cannot afford to educate their children to admit their child in Buddhist educational institute run by Buddhist India Mission. They also make poor Dalit children understand the importance of education to convince and to join these educational institutions. I interacted with some Ambedkarite activists to know the truth. One of the activists is of the opinion that there are many institutions like this are running for the welfare of Dalit and oppressed society but very shrewdly these educational institutions are captured by upper caste with the help of government and other officials. The very aim of these people is to make money. They are busy in how to catch maximum foreign funding rather than doing anything for the betterment of institutions and the students belonging to the depressed community. Funds are siphoning out through the corruptions. They do it shamelessly because if the institutions like this will be closed then it would be loss of Dalits and oppressed. However these upper caste people run these institutions but the reputations of Dalit Community are on stake. Sharing his pain one of the activist was of the opinion that education is most important thing for Dalits in their life. Without it Dalit can neither come to know their constitutional rights nor can they promote the mission of social transformation to establish social and economic justice. Dalits have been marginalized in each and every (material and non-material) aspect of their lives for centuries. It is the education by which Dalits can get something in their life. It is the only thing by which Dalit can achieve some respect and dignity in their life but these Brahminical forces have also captured these educational institutions intentionally.

Most of the teachers belong to upper caste in these institutions and they are busy in promoting the Brahminical culture. These teachers are appointed by those upper castes that are controlling these Buddhist institutions. Thus, they are killing the very spirit of Buddhism even in Buddhist funded institutions in very organized and planned way. The cost of destroying these institutions are being paid by Dalits, oppressed and poor of the state in the way of perpetuating their slavery under the same Brahminical society and culture. Another activist went on saying that this is the part of Brahminical mission to keep Dalit children away from the quality education. Their mission of keeping Dalits children away from a quality education serves twin purposes. On the one hand, it dilutes the any possibility of a strong anti-Brahminical movement; on the other, an illiterate Dalit

cannot challenge the Brahminical social structure. Thus, Dalit illiteracy gives an undisputed authoritative license to perpetuate their slavery under exploitative Brahminical culture. So in Bihar all government and non-government funded institutions for the welfare of Dalit, oppressed, minority and poor have become the NGO of Brahminical society. These institutions are serving the Brahminical interests. These institutions are playing great role to dilute the possibility of Dalit movement in Bihar.

3. Dalits and the Hindutva Politics

Observing the emergence of strong identity politics in the different regions of India based on castes and community such as Dalits, OBCs, Bahujan, Minorities etc. what is the significant phenomenon is that they have started to understand the importance of constructing a separate social, political and cultural category. The right wing forces started focusing on the construction of broadest possible political category cultivating the religious identity in India i.e. 'Hindutva'. It looks nothing but a sheer political hypocrisy because in the contemporary Hindutva movement and nationalist discourse, right wing has nothing to do with Dalit issues and their concerns. They just want to appropriate only the name of Ambedkar rather than appropriating his philosophy, principles and ideology. Ambedkar is not only an undisputed champion of depressed communities in India, but he is now ever growing global icon of social justice. Without appropriating Ambedkar, right wing forces cannot influence Dalit Community of India. Without appropriating Dalit Community into the Hindutva fold they cannot construct Hindutva a broader political category, and without constructing a broader category they cannot win the election to capture the power of the state.

On the one hand the right wing politics is based on discrimination, exclusion, oppression, graded inequality and hate monger politics, on the other hand, the politics of Dalit and marginalized sections of society is based on the inclusive, democratic and egalitarian principles. It starts with the assertion of their independent identities, which is guided by the principle of the politics of recognition, redistribution and establishment of socio-economic justice. It endorses a 'difference friendly world where mis-recognition, assimilation and subsuming one's identity into a major and dominant culture are no

longer price of equal respect and dignity'⁴. Dalits aspire to establish a just society in which different sections of society have equal opportunity as well as equal rights to cultivate their socio-political and religio-cultural freedom without a sense of inferiority, humiliation and fear of assimilation or losing or subsuming their identity into major and dominant political and religious culture.

The Hindutva politics does not want to recognize Dalit as a separate category. They want to subsume Dalits under the broader category i.e. Hindutva. The Savarna Hindus and other dominant castes still behave Dalits like untouchable, impure and unequal but disintegrable part of Brahminical Hindu society. The assertion of identity politics based on caste and communities have challenged this conception of the Brahminical Hindu society, on the other hand, it has claimed the equal share to the Depressed and marginalized communities in power based on the principle of socio-economic justice. Here, alternative religion based on liberation theology having different rituals and practices act as an interconnecting thread/binding force to generate solidarity, brotherhood and 'we feeling' amongst 'Depressed classes'. The inherent "religious themes form an essential part of the protest ideology because it provides the chief mechanism for the improvements of the self-image and self-respect, which enable the groups to establish an independent identity too. The religious aspect is as important as the economic, educational and political ones. All these aspects form part of the same protest ideology".⁵ For example, in the different regions of India, Dalits, with the help of Ambedkarite politics are constructing an alternative religious identity and challenging the hegemony of Brahmins and Savarna upper castes at both the social and political fronts.

Doing this, they are giving the voice of Dalit's grievances to formulate a 'Dalit dissenting culture'⁶ and to construct a 'Dalit counter space'⁷. Thus, cultivating the long due dissent

⁴ Fraser, Nancy (2003). *Redistribution Or Recognition: A Political- Philosophical Exchange*. Verso. Page-07

⁵ Chauhan, Anil (May-Jun., 2003). Dalit Politics and Identity. *Social Scientist*, 31 (5/6): 93-96. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518041>

⁶ For detail see, Eva-Maria Hardtmann (2009). *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁷ Fraser, Nancy (2003). *Redistribution Or Recognition: A Political- Philosophical Exchange*. New York: Verso.

and protest of Dalit community. They have been working on an alternative ideology to assert their independent identity independent from the Hindu religion. This is well associated with the process of ‘symbolic interactionism’⁸ which includes construction of alternative symbols, cultural resources, glorification of Dalit heroes, myths, stories, construction and deconstruction of histories, interpretation, re-interpretations of values, histories, myths and stories.

Thus, dissent and protest

“form a part of that ideology, which as a symbolic system of belief provides the motivating force, and gives the programme of action its legitimacy. The ideologies of protest movements among backward classes are characterized by relative deprivation in the religious, economic, political, civic and educational are as of social life. These are pivoted around conflict and opposition at different structural levels. Ideologies of the backwards classes movements are double-edged expressing the feeling of dissatisfaction, dissent and protest with the existing situation (with an awareness of relative deprivation) and working out a positive programme for removing the malady. The former typifies protest and conflict and the latter, social transformation and change” (Anil 2003: 94)⁹

This is why Dalit and Ambedkarite politics are giving the importance to socio-cultural politics and to construct a separate religion in the construction of a separate political identity of Dalit community. Now the next section will analyze previous chapters and the historical background of Dalit politics to search the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar

Literally saying, there is no history of Dalit politics as such in Bihar because of the absence of Ambedkrite and Dalit movement. However, there is history of popular leaders belongs to Dalit castes. What is difference of Dalit leaders of Biharis that they remained the face of Dalits but served the interest of different parties rather than serving the interests of Dalits. None of the leaders such as a towering figure of congress, Jagjivan Ram and Bholu Paswan Shastri took initiative for constructing an independent Dalit movement. However, Ramvilas Paswan, who very frequently claims himself a leader of Dalit community dared to constitute an independent political party but he failed to mobilize different castes of Dalit together to constitute them a single category like OBCs. No doubt they are by caste a Dalit but throughout their political life they remained agents

⁸ See, Eva-Maria Hardtmann (2009). *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁹ Chauhan, Anil (May-Jun., 2003). Dalit Politics and Identity. *Social Scientist*. Vol. 31, No. 5/6. pp. 93-96. Retrived from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518041>

of their non-Dalit parties. They worked for pursuing the interests of their parties to bargain the interests of party with Dalit Community rather than bargaining the interests of Dalit Community with their parties and respective governments. Another Dalit leader, Jitanram Manjhi shown some daring to take some decisions in favor of Dalits in his very short tenure of chief-minister-ship but when time has come to represent Dalit Community and their aspirations he sided with NDA to dig his own graveyard.

Jagjivan Ram, a towering figure of Congress party, contemporary of B. R. Ambedkar, he served as a deputy Prime Minister of India and holds the record for being the longest serving cabinet minister in India (more than 30 years, from 1946 to 1977)¹⁰. In one hand, he enjoyed the better position and power than even B. R. Ambedkar and any other Dalit leaders of India; on the other hand, in the same period Dalit Community of Bihar had continuously been marginalized from politics and the political participation in Bihar by upper caste and particularly Bhumi-hars. Except forming some organizations to fight with Untouchability under the banner of Congress, he throughout his political life he remained loyal to Indian National Congress, which used him as a Dalit face of the party and most importantly to counter Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.¹¹ For example, Jagjivan Ram along with Bholu Paswan Shastri pelted stones on Ambedkar and his supporters when B. R. Ambedkar and his supporters was on their way to Gandhi Maidan, Patna to address public meeting. Both along with some Congress supporters gave slogan 'Go Back Ambedkar' and forced him to return to Maharashtra without attending that meeting scheduled in Gandhi Maidan, Patna.¹² That cost the entire Dalit community of Bihar who remained aloof from a strong Dalit movement till date. It could have the beginning of the Dalit movement in Bihar and opened the space for an autonomous Dalit politics in the state, people say.

¹⁰ Secretariat, Lok Sabha (2005). Babu Jagjivan Ram in Parliament: a commemorative volume. Lok Sabha Secretariat.

¹¹ Sharma, Devendra Prasad (1974). Jagjivan Ram: the man and the times. Indian Book Co.

¹² This incident happened in November 1951, when Dr. Ambedkar was invited by Pichhda Verg Sangh (Backward Classes Association) President R. L. Chandrapuri to address the people of Bihar in Gandhi Maidan Patna. This fact has been revealed with the conversation with Dr. Rajeev Ranjan, an office holder of BAMCEF, Bihar, Keshari Prasad, office holder of PUCL and Dalit social activist, Buddh Saran Hans (Dalit Babu), former I.A.S. and chief editor, of Ambedkar Mission Magazine, and many other people of Bihar during my field work for PhD when I was trying to explore the reasons for the absence of an autonomous vibrant Dalit Politics in Bihar.

Some very popular Dalit leaders were the product of the Indian National Movement, who observed very closely the importance of establishing a separate cultural and religious practice in the integration of community and generation of solidarity, brotherhood and we feeling among individuals. For example, none can deny the role of celebrating ‘Durgapuja’ in Bengal and ‘Ganeshpuja’ in Maharashtra to unite people and generate solidarity among people during freedom movement. It has played a role of interconnecting threads to develop solidarity among the different community to unite against British colonial rule. In Bengal celebrating ‘Durgapuja’ has been observed more as a cultural aspect than religious i.e. to unite different communities against the British colonial power. Notwithstanding its importance, Dalit leaders of Bihar never tried to understand the importance of constructing a separate cultural and social identity of Dalit Community to unite and mobilize different castes of Dalit Community as single category against the exploitative Hindu social structure. So the absence of this interconnecting threads i.e. an independent religious or cultural identity of Dalit Community is biggest cause for the absence of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state. However, Kanshi Ram tried hard to start Ambedkrite movement with the full support of BAMCEF in Bihar but the decision of BSP having coalition with BJP in Uttar Pradesh, demise of Kanshi Ram and BSP decision to shifting of Bahujan politics to Sarvajan politics destroyed the strong effort of Kanshi Ram in the state.¹³

In the era of nineties when booth capturing or capture of ballot boxes, intimidation of voters were the strong phenomena of Bihar politics was the manifestation of ‘criminalization of politics’ and ‘politicization of criminals’. Dalits were the primary sufferer. In this condition state government was helpless to follow the ‘rule of law’ and other constitutional safeguards provided to individuals. Political parties were associated with ‘Gangs’ or Gangs were associated with parties. After coming of Lalu yadav, who always seems to boast that ‘maine logon ko swarg nahi swar diya’ (I have given voice rather than heaven to backwards, Dalits and exploited people of Bihar), it is true for Dalits of Bihar at the primary level of political assertion but at the broader political level,

¹³ Interview with Prof. R. S. Arya, Head Of Department Philosophy, Patna University, on 15 April 2015. He also worked with Kanshi Ram and he is still a member of BAMCEF in Bihar. He recognize himself as a Dalit social activist.

the only change was observed that the rule of dominant upper castes 'Dadas' (criminals) was replaced by the rule of OBCs (primarily by Yadavs), 'Dadas', goons and 'gundas' (criminals). The politics of Bihar turned to democratization of criminals' spaces in politics and society. It is the politics for the battle for might not for the rights. Finally, in the OBCs dominated identity politics major political spaces are captured by newly emerged feudal class of Bihar i.e. Yadav, Kurmi and other dominant OBCs. Dalits are still marginalized and remain the intimidated voters. One can observe that there are no established principles of politics in the state even in respect of identity politics.

4. Politics and Principles

It is the general notion that politics has no established principles. History is witness that 'politics and principles have seldom gone together' be it the case of the oldest democracy, largest democracy, newly adopted democracy. Be it communist regimes, authoritarian or dictatorship regimes. Even this has also proved relevant in the case of most of the charismatic figures like Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Roosevelt, Josef Stalin, Indira Gandhi, Mao tse Tung or Hitler and Mussolini. On the other hand, seeing the politics under highly fragmented society on the line of caste and other identities no principle can have universal applicability. The basic principle of the mainstream politics is based on Hinduism and 'Hinduism of every variety is very much in existence as a reference point of the world view of the oppressed section'¹⁴ which is incomparable with any existing society of the world. In this situation even the principle of identity politics of Bihar has neither gone with the principle of the 'Dictatorship of proletariat' nor has it gone through the politics and principle of neo-liberal democracy. What needs is the comparative historical analysis to understand the dynamics of Dalit and backward politics in the state. Their emergence was justified as a charismatic one on the basis of the emergence of subaltern politics in the state but both the streams of OBCs dominated identity politics neither followed the principle of subaltern politics nor they showed their political commitment to the subaltern and marginalized communities of the state. No doubt, they started their journey as an anti-Brahminical and anti-feudal character but in the absence of strong anti-Brahminical principle they are reinforcing the same

¹⁴ Bhambhari, C. P. (September 4-10, 1999). Dialectics of Caste and Casteism. *EPW*. P.- 2619.

Brahminical structure to become a neo-feudalist class. Particularly, Dalit Community of Bihar, in the absence of Ambedkarite politics, are still searching their political ground to challenge the traditional hegemony of mainstream politics as well as the newly establish hegemony of OBCs politics.

5. Reserved Constituencies and the Upper Castes Dominancy

It may be justified, at some extent that inequality is unavoidable in any society and it is equally applicable to Bihar but inequality of democratic right, inequality of opportunity, and representation and suppression of constitutional rights regarding the dignity and self-respect of individuals cannot be justified by any reason. This can be minimized if not eradicated by the conscious attempt of government. Government can minimize the gaps between poor and rich through the authoritative allocation of 'the benefits of the cooperation of society'¹⁵. While allocating the resources special treatment must be given to those who are not able to fetch the equality of opportunity due to their marginalization and suppression by a hegemonic establishment of a socially and politically privileged section of society. Under the hegemonic establishment based on Brahminical Hindu society Dalit Community of Bihar are still underrepresented at every aspects of life but irony is that even the representative and leaders of that marginalized and exploited section have not taken any kind of initiative to support their causes and grievances.

The Bochahan, which is the SC reserved constituency and got the longest representation by a single Dalit M.L.A. of Chamar caste, Ramai Ram. He had served this constituency 8 times from 1980 to 2010. He was defeated in last assembly election. I found the conditions of Dalit are worse, not better than the general constituencies. One cannot always blame Mahatma Gandhi and his hypocritical politics such as the politics of 'fast unto death' during the 'Poona Pact' in 1932. He was blamed that his 'fast unto death' destroyed the soul of the 'separate electoral system' for the Dalit community. Somehow, Gandhi shorted out the matter of 'Poona Pact', after blackmailing the British Government and Ambedkar for the abolition of the provision of 'dual representation', which was the inherently mentioned in the demand of separate electoral system. Possibly, this is the

¹⁵ For detail see, Jonathan Wolf (2003). *Robert Nozick: Property, Justice and the Minimal State*. Polity Press.

reason for the ineffectiveness of reserved constituencies for SC/ST. It may be true that after abolition of the provision of the 'dual representation' the Upper caste Savarna Hindus became the decider of fate of a candidate in the reserve constituencies. It is completely against the spirit of the reserve constituency for Dalit community because the constituencies are reserved for Dalits (SC) but the decider of the fate of the Dalits of those constituencies became the Upper castes.

Despite this fact, one can also not always blame upper castes Savarna Hindus for the deprivation of Dalits and backwards in every aspects of life. It may be true in the society like Bihar and other states also, but does it not looks an irony that if the 8 times MLA belong to that community had touched a single issue of Dalit community, priority wise, in every tenure then at least 8 major issues would have been solved. Thus, it seems me nothing but the lack of political wills of Dalit leaders to serve their communities is also the major cause for the multiple-marginalization of Dalit Community of Bihar. There may be various other reasons behind the politics of reserve constituencies for SC/ST but one most important reason is the poor level of (social, political, religious and cultural) consciousness. This clearly reflects in the conversation with Dalits of that constituency.

Dalits of this constituency are not only segregated, exploited and deprived in almost every aspect of lives but also intimidated by upper castes. They lack alternative imaginary and Dalit dissenting culture. Their material condition is so poor that they can sell their vote for just one time dinner and some money to prove the proverb 'jo na kare kali Durga, wo kare daru and murga (what cannot be done by Goddess Durga can be done by liquor and chicken)'. In these sub-human conditions where Dalits are not able to raise their voices for wages, they cannot go against the will of upper castes. They cannot even assert their identity. If their opinion depends upon the 'Desi Daru' (local made liquor) offered by the Upper caste then talking about the assertion of independent religious Dalit identity and an autonomous Dalit social and political movement is worthless. One of the basic reasons for the explained condition and situation of Dalits is the culture of an 'open elite system' among Dalit intellectuals.

This section will explain the irresponsible role of Dalit intellectuals and civil society in the state and how is it proved critical for the absence of a level of consciousness required

for the construction of an autonomous Dalit movement and understanding the importance of socio-cultural politics of Dalit and Ambedkarite movement.

6. An ‘Open Elite System’¹⁶ Of Dalits

Some Dalit intelligentsias under the control of Brahminical framework operate a non-institutionalized ‘open elite system’. The Dalit academia work for saffronizing cultural social and political resources of Dalits. ‘This dangerous group (as named by a respondent in Bihar) is proved ‘do muha sanp’ (the snake having two mouth/biting point at both ends) for Dalit community’. These people claim to be representatives of Dalits but their sole motive is to gain a share in power within the party for which they are acting as Dalit face. They are pursuing the interests of party rather than bargaining the interests of Dalits to his party. They come from almost every field such as politics, academics, social and cultural. This is clearly reflected in the way Dalit leaders of Bihar served the politics of Congress.

Dalits supported Congress whole-heartedly throughout the congress dominated Bihar politics but they were neglected because political spaces as well as party apparatuses were captured by upper castes. All policies and corrective measures taken under the affirmative action policies were not implemented in the same spirit because congress was dominated by upper castes. Upper caste people were interested in using Dalits as vote bank only rather than doing anything substantial for them. Moreover, every corrective actions such as land reform, issue of bonded labour and wages were directly related to upper castes. This argument is well taken by Christophe Jaffrelot by saying that ‘the Congress neglected the poor largely because the party apparatus was in the hands of upper caste notables who relied on vote bank politics to win elections.’¹⁷ Further he is of the opinion that;

“the affirmative action policies which the Congress initiated or inherited from the British did not correct these defects since the quotas were not fulfilled in the administration and the congress used

¹⁶I have taken this concept from M. Weiner (1967). Party Building in a New Nation – The Indian National Congress, University of Chicago Press, p. 470.

¹⁷Jaffrelot, Christophe (2003). India’s Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics. Permanent Black, Delhi.

the reservation of lower caste seats in the assemblies to its own advantage by co-opting docile untouchable leaders.”¹⁸

This is not the feature of the congress only. All other parties also do the same and even they are co-opting hardcore ‘lower stature’ Dalit and backward leader to weaken the base of Dalit and backward parties.

Further, it is also said that the history of Dalit leadership and Dalit politics has different connotation in the politics of Bihar. Some people trace the history of Dalit discourse in Bihar with the beginning of twentieth century. It was started with the formation of Bihar. However, the process of debating humiliating and demeaned social status of Dalit was already started at the time of united Bengal province when the conservative Brahminical thoughts encountered with modern values of democracy and ideals of western education. It was conceived that the Brahminical system, which is based on the rigid caste hierarchy is highly divisive and the notion of purity and impurity, superiority and inferiority and high and low status are the source of injustice to Dalit community.

Let me explain some more reasons for the absence of a level of consciousness among Dalit Community of Bihar to launch an autonomous Dalit movement and to construct an alternative culture to assert their independent identity through the process of ‘symbolic interactionism’.

6.1 The Irresponsible Role of Dalit Intellectuals and Bureaucrats

The notion of ‘paying back to society’ started by Ambedkarite movement was not well taken by Dalit intellectuals of the state. According to this notion the duty of providing a fair environment free from discriminations, exploitations and destitute and supporting their causes fall on the intellectuals of the society. Dalit intellectuals either ignored their duty or compromised to cultivate their personal interests at the cost of serving the Brahminical interests. Here, different kinds of Dalit intellectuals include Dalit leaders/Politicians, bureaucrats including all other government employees, Dalit scholars, small industries Dalit entrepreneurs and other members of civil society. Let me start with Dalit bureaucrats and other government employees of Bihar.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Most of Dalit bureaucrats and government employees have no interests in Dalit society. Through their working style they created such kind of apathy among their own communities that even their communities have no faith and respect towards them. These apathy and mutual disrespect among Dalit bureaucrats and Dalit society are the real hindrance in the way of Dalit empowerment of Bihar¹⁹. Dalit intellectuals primarily Dalit bureaucrats and Dalit leaders are selfish. They have reduced themselves merely under the domain their family. There is no effective organization of Dalit intellectual to discuss and debate Dalit causes. Neither at district level nor at the state level. Some social and political organizations of Dalits were formed but in the absence of intellectual backing and low level of participation, it died abruptly. Most of Dalit intellectuals including bureaucrats put lackadaisical interests to read and understand the writings as well as the mission of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Jyoti Rao Phule and other Dalit icons. This is one reasons of showing no interests to form a social organization or any other platform to discuss debate and fight for the justice for Dalit community. This lack of understanding makes them not showing the feeling of the pain of their communities and finally that make them not supporting any Dalit social and political organization in the state²⁰.

During my fieldwork, I also observed that Dalit intellectuals and educated persons do have the capacity and talent to serve their society but what they lack in real sense is the will to serve the society. They use to make excuses such as they don't come forward because of lack of social and political supports from their community. Here important question to understand is that whether the lack of political consciousness among Dalit Community or the lack of interests of Dalit intellectuals toward their social responsibility or both are responsible for not making a consolidated effort for an autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar. To understand this it needs to explore this issue further. Another important fact is that Dalit intellectuals and bureaucrats do not use their post for Dalit welfare like Dalit politicians. They have neither generated a faith in their communities by their working style nor have they shown a kind of personality to attract Dalit Community to get mass support when they start any social and political forum in the interest of Dalits.

¹⁹ interview conducted with Buddh Saran Hans, a retired IAS, an editor of Ambedkar Mission Patrika at his residence, Chitkohra, Post Office- Anisabad, Patna. Date- 16-04-2015.

²⁰ Ibid.

One of the retired bureaucrat is of the opinion that even the beneficiary of Dalit reservation including bureaucrats, Dalit intellectuals and Dalit politicians are using their post for own upward mobility, advancement and development. They are not using the benefit of reservation for the horizontal mobility of society, means for the upliftment of the whole Dalit community.

Another respondent went on saying that it is obvious that casteism in Bihar is rampant and particularly Dalit intellectuals, bureaucrats and politicians are highly casteist. They are highly Brahminical in their action and approaches. They are competing self-generated competition to become more and more Brahminical. Once they get a good job and position or get elected as a MLA or MP they start distancing from their own communities. They become self-styled 'Dalit Brahmin'. They start treating their own (Dalit) communities worse than real Brahmin. They associate themselves with the caucus of upper caste people where Dalits are not allowed to enter. This act of Brahminisation of Dalit intellectuals, bureaucrats and politicians is the real hindrance in the path of an autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar. For example Ramai Ram, a Dalit MLA of Bochahan reserve constituency of Muzaffarpur District acts as a orthodox Brahmin with the peoples of his own Dalit community.²¹ Further, he is of the opinion that Dalit intellectuals, bureaucrats and politicians are coward. They do not want to take risk for their society. They don't try to reveal the truth of Brahminical system. They don't even ready to support those people who take an initiative to reveal the truth of Brahminical system what to talk about fighting and taking leadership regarding this issue. They are so cheap that they don't donate even a fraction of their salary for the welfare of Dalit community. Observing these facts, I must say that intellectuals including bureaucrats and politicians of any society and community are the backbone for all kinds empowerment and the rays of enlightenment approaching to that community but this has not happened in Bihar. Some people also doubt about the role of Dalit writers and academia of Bihar.

It is duty of Dalit writers and intellectuals to educate, encourage and aware Dalit Community by their writings, evaluation, re-evaluation, interpretation and re-

²¹ This fact was revealed during the interview conducted with Suresh Paswas. He is an Ambedkarite social activist and Buddhist. He lives in Patna. He also helped me much to visit other interviewees

interpretation of history. They must have forecasted the vision and goals for Dalit Community of Bihar after analyzing the historical mistakes and other reasons of failure. It is their duty to educate people about the importance of the construction of an independent identity as well as the construction of an autonomous Dalit politics. It would have helped to organize Different Dalit castes to launch a collective effort and to fight for the common goal of liberation of Dalit from the Brahminical oppression. But Dalit academia failed to do their duty says Dr. Kishori Prasad, a Dalit activist of Bihar.

Replying the question of reasons for the absence of an autonomous vibrant Dalit politics in Bihar one of Dalit scholar and politician Dr. Sanjay Paswan is of the opinion that not only Dalit intellectuals and politicians ‘but society as a whole should ponder over’. It can be understood by analyzing the different phases of the development of Dalit society. For him, in the **first phase** we must consider that Dalits of India had been treated inhumanely for thousands of years. They were untouchable and outcaste and banned for any meaningful communication with the rest of society till the first half of the twentieth century. They have been so deeply humiliated for centuries after centuries to break their confidence so low that they themselves started considering themselves less than human. In this pathetic condition they cannot even resent what to talk about to assert their identity. This first phase is so pathetic to Dalit Community that he describe it a phase of ‘great darkness’ and to portray the situation he uses five words for the five alphabets of the word DALIT. For him,

If each of alphabets are used to portray the situation of Dalits today then they will mean: D for Deprived, A for Aggrieved, L for Lame, the one who has lost any faith in himself and who always needs external supports. I for Insecure, someone who always feel himself unsafe. T goes for Threatened, the community which always felt surrounded by threats (Paswan 2014: 265-66).²²

So, in this phase till the first half of the twentieth century Dalit were not in position to assert. This was the phase according to him of ‘contempt and atrocities’ for Dalit Community of India.

²² Paswan, Dr. Sanjay (2014). Cultural Nationalism and Dalit. Samvad Media Private Limited. Dariyaganj, New Delhi. Pp.- 265-66. He was BJP MP from Nawada Constituency Bihar, former State HRD minister in NDA government led by Atal Bihari Vajpeyee and the president of Bhartiya Janata Party, S.C. Morcha and presently he is national executive member of BJP.

According to Dr. Sanjay Paswan the changes experienced under the social reform movements and changing economic and political conditions under British raj adjoining the great efforts of Dalit intellectuals like Phule, Periyar and then Dr. B. R. Ambedkar can be considered the second phase of understanding Dalit socio-political conditions. He is also placing Babu Jagjivan Ram parallel to Baba Saheb. After the great efforts made by these Dalit icons, in this second phase, Dalit Community started to realize that they are also human beings. They have equal social and political rights to live with dignity in India. At the same time, the mainstream Hindu society was so deeply religious, orthodox and fanatic that what Dr. B. R. Ambedkar did was a clear repercussion and reflection of atrocities been done to Dalit community. It is none other than the Hindu religion and the oppressive hierarchical caste system is responsible for the bad social condition of Dalit Community and what Dr. Ambedkar did was very appropriate. Dr. Paswan considers his action a very appropriate example of ‘struggle and reaction’²³.

Further, talking about the period after the implementation of the constitution of India Dr. Sanjay Paswan is of the opinion that after the implementation of the right of adult franchise ‘there was no difference left between the ‘elite’ Brahmins and the ‘untouchable’ castes...Dalit emancipation which revolved around the goodwill and pity of elite class in the first half of the twentieth century, now gradually took shape of the fight for Dalit rights’. For him, after getting education and jobs after the implementation of reservation policy the understandings of Dalits are now different from illiterate. They are now socially and politically conscious. Now they are more annoyed and agitated than feeling deprived when they are discriminated from the people around them. ‘In this era the five alphabets of the word Dalit sounds different meaning’. Now D stands for ‘Dashing’, A for ‘Aggressive’, L for ‘Loaded’, I for ‘Instigating’ and T goes for ‘Transactional’. For him, in this period

Dalit became Dashing, ready to clash with any individual or institutions. He became ‘aggressive’ and aggressiveness became a part of his very nature. He is now ‘loaded’ his mind and psyche are full of thousands years of atrocities and exploitation. He has become ‘instigating, which means that the rest of the society now finds everything about him, provocative and instigating. He has become,

²³ Ibid, pp. 266-67.

‘transactional’ in the sense that in return of the discriminatory behavior meted out to him in the past he wants to compel the society to give him more and more (ibid: 267)²⁴

Further he is of the opinion that in this era ‘we do not need to view the condition of the Dalit society in terms of right and wrong. We just need to understand it. This is the necessary step towards a society of equality, which we want to build. It is impossible for two unequal groups to build communication without a struggle’.²⁵ He calls this phase the period of ‘Change, Reaction and Struggle’.

Declaring the road map for the twenty-first (21st) century Dr. Sanjay Paswan is suggesting that ‘Dalit society will have to change its identity’. He is naming this third phase, the phase of ‘Communication, Co-ordination and Dissolution’. For him, this phase is the deciding phase for Dalit community. This is the phase when they have to take risk. This is the phase when Dalits have to change their pattern of relationships with non-Dalits. They must develop a pattern of engagements. This will be the era when Dalits have to develop a proper communication and co-ordination with the help of mutual understanding and respectful understanding with non-Dalits communities. In this phase the meaning of all five alphabets of the word ‘Dalit’ will have to change in the following way. D will stand for ‘Daring’, A for ‘Assertive’, L for ‘Leading’, I for ‘Inspiring’ and T will go for ‘Transformational’. So, to develop a new way of social and political engagements and to decide the future course of action he is suggesting every Dalit that;

Dalit will have to be ‘daring’, rather than ‘dashing’. He will have to take risks. He will have to be ‘assertive’ rather than ‘aggressive’. He will have to acquire the capability of being firm on their stand, although with politeness. This will decide his new place in the scheme of things. Dalit society will have to make new beginnings instead of being ‘loaded’ with the things of the past. He needs to come into the ‘leading’ role. Along with this he will have to do something so that he becomes ‘inspiring’ for the rest of the society and not just ‘irritating’. And all of this will only be possible when the Dalit will come out of his ‘transactional’ tendency and acquire a mentality of being ‘transformational’ (ibid: 268).²⁶

On contrary, Dr. Amit Kumar, who belong to the same caste of Dalit community, he is also a politically active Dalit scholar of Bihar, is having complete different opinion about the same questions related to Dalit community. He is of the opinion that in the age when Dalit politics needs an ‘intellectualized politics’ like Baba Saheb Ambedkar, the

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 267.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. p.-268.

intellectuals of Bihar got politicized under the Brahminical ideology and philosophy to cultivate their personal interests and to dig the graveyard of Dalit politics in Bihar.

On the other hand, S. S. Das, Under Secretary to Government of Bihar having agreed with above mentioned different causes of the absence of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar, has mentioned a very important point. He is of the opinion that no Dalit leader of Bihar is the product of the grass-roots social mobilization. These leaders anyhow have/had become Dalit face. After getting elected they joined upper caste circle to behave like Brahmin. You can call them Dalit Brahmin seeing their attitude, behavior. They enclosed themselves in a non-Dalit caucus where Dalits have no accessibility and no possibility to communicate, discuss and debate Dalits issues. They discuss Dalit issues with non-Dalit people. After becoming a Dalit face (not a Dalit leader) for their party their understandings about Dalits had changed. They become loyal to their party not to Dalits. Further, the lack of Dalit consciousness is also one of the main reasons for the worse condition of Dalit movement and Dalit political mobilization in Bihar. Taking the benefit of the absence of Dalit conscious about the dignity and self-respect all political parties have reduced them foot-soldier. Even the left parties also treat Dalits nothing more than that. Intentionally, Dalits are not promoted to upper level leadership, such as in the decision making body. Even in RSS, 90 per cent foot-soldiers are Dalits and backwards only.²⁷

Dalit literature has its confrontational distinctiveness. It is not just the reflections of Dalit consciousness; rather it should be the symbol of revolt against the biased Brahminical literary stands which goes against the constitutional rights of Dalits. It should also not be under the discourse of victimhood, sympathy and pityness, rather it should be assertive to motivate construction of alternative identity and parallel institutions to challenge the hegemony of Brahminical hegemonic apparatuses. But the subaltern intellectual stream of Bihar has failed to create the counter space to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream Hindutva discourse to re-claim their claim of construction of an independent Dalit identity. They do not expose the 'nudity of Hinduism' by exposing the inherent

²⁷ Interview with Shiv Shankar Das, Under Secretary to Government of Bihar, Office of Advocate General, High Court Patna on April 20 2015.

contradiction of Hindutva ideology rather they involve in to fit these contesting narratives, myths, memories and histories under the Hinduism to construct meta-narrative to justify the dominance of Hindutva. For example, Dr. Suresh Paswam writes that ‘castes are not completely rigid and there is a fair amount of mobility among them. Higher castes keep sliding towards low status and lower castes keep climbing up high in the caste hierarchy all the time’²⁸ however, his writings are so vague that he even does not provide any example of it.

6.2 Dalit Academia Act as ‘Vectors of Brahminism’

Most of the people of Bihar are with the opinion that Dalit academia of Bihar acts as a production agent of Brahminical cultural and political resources. They work for saffronizing Dalit cultural and social resources as well as Dalits’ knowledge system. In Bihar, I observed absence of any kind of machinery which is needed to carry forward Dalit and Ambedkarite tradition. Even Dalit academia does nothing to stop or criticize the attempts of saffronizing Dalit culture and defacing of Ambedkar and his political ideas. Dalit academia indulges in the Brahminical ‘project of silence’²⁹. ‘It is a tactical Brahminical trick’³⁰ to keep Dalit intellectual silence, by offering them some notional post or position in political party. It is the process of saffronising Dalit identity and culture to give alternative saffronized meaning by deconstructing and reinterpreting Dalit myths, history, stories etc. This is an attempt to sabotage appropriate version of Dalit history that have found popular voice among Dalits and lower castes. It is the deliberate attempt of Brahminical society to mutilate all space and time created by Dalit and Ambedkrite movement to assert an independent Dalit identity and culture. Some Dalit intellectuals have become the source of raw material for Brahminical society to furnish a product of their taste as they want and give them. If Dalit writers give that taste and colour then readers do not suspect on intentions behind those writings.

²⁸ Paswan, Dr. Sanjay (2014). Cultural Nationalism and Dalit. Samvad Media Private Limited, New Delhi. Page- 189.

²⁹ Ambedkar Age Collective (2015). Hatred in the belly Politics behind the appropriation of Dr. Ambedkar’s writings. The Shared Mirror Publishing House, Hyderabad. P – 50.

³⁰ Roy, Arundhati (2014). The Doctor and the Saint. In Annihilation of Caste, The Annotated Critical Edition by S. Anand. Navayana, New Delhi.

Brahminical politics of maintaining their hegemony over the production and reproduction of knowledge and the knowledge production systems is very obvious. Ambedkarite movement challenges this Brahminical hegemony now by developing alternative knowledge production system then they came with the ‘production agents’.³¹ The production agents are those writers who belong to Dalit, oppressed and backward communities. These production agents help Brahminical society to establish authenticity to the saffronized meanings of ‘Dalit identity’ through the process of saffronising Dalit stories, myths, histories and culture. Shakyamuni calls these ‘production agents’ the ‘vectors of Brahminism’³².

These ‘vectors of Brahminism’ produce certain kind of knowledge mediated by certain worldview. This worldview is different from Dalit understanding and it is not to mediate but manipulate Dalit bahunjan knowledge. The specialty of this kind of knowledge production lies in upholding the idea of a particular section of people to counter the existing idea and knowledge of others. The irony of Bihar regarding Dalit mobilization, according to Buddha Saran Hans, is that ‘concerned Dalits intellectual has no established mechanism and agencies through which they can pass Ambedkar’s ideas and knowledge. However, a few Dalit intellectuals are interested to write and spread Baba saheb’s ideas and knowledge but still a bunch of written materials we have and what we are not able to do is circulating these written materials to Dalit Community of Bihar. Even some well educated Dalits are not aware of the great ideas and mission of Baba Saheb Ambedkar. In this condition one cannot think about an autonomous Dalit political mobilization in Bihar.’³³

On contrary to this, the Brahminical forces have well established mechanism and agencies as well as organizations institutionalized and funded by their parent organizations like RSS, BHP and political party BJP. So, their task of spreading that kind of counter arguments becomes easy. They creep their manipulated materials very easily into universities, libraries and all other academic and non-academic institutions across

³¹Ambedkar Age Collective (2015). Hatred in the belly Politics behind the appropriation of Dr. Ambedkar’s writings. The Shared Mirror Publishing House, Hyderabad. P-50.

³² Ibid.

³³ Hans, Buddh Saran is a retired IAS officer. He is the editor of Ambedkar Mission magazine and popularly known as DalitBabu among Ambedkarite activists.

India. Further, their agencies help to affect grassroots people. Each and every individual of these Brahminical agencies, institutions, and organizations are well aware of what they are doing. They are not only colonizing Dalit knowledge as what Naren Bedide (Kuffir) is meant to say about ‘The Colonisation of Ambedkar’³⁴ but they are manipulating it in the sense of what Badri Narayan talks about ‘saffronization of Dalit knowledge’³⁵. The available ‘ideological apparatuses’ may be competent but not enough to challenge the Brahminical apparatuses and to defend the ‘Ambedkarite mission’. The Dalit academia and intellectuals who could have played great role to deconstruct the mainstream Brahminical ideological constructions as a prerequisite of transcending Ambedkarite idea and philosophy has ignored their social responsibilities following the notion of ‘pay back to your society’. Without the process of ‘symbolic interactionism’ it is impossible to ignite the minds of mentally enslaved Dalit and ignorant masses to break the Manuvadi philosophical foundation of mainstream society.

The land relationship and economic dependence of Dalit on feudal landlords who are mostly belonging to the upper castes is another important reasons for the constructing any alternative organization, ideology and politics of Dalit community. It needs to explain in separate section.

7. The Land Relationship and Economic Dependence

The complex land relationship of Dalits and lower caste in Bihar is one of the major problems regarding their economic independence. Majority of Dalits are landless. Talking about land for agriculture, most of Dalits in the state makes no sense. They have constructed their make-shift houses either on the ‘gairmajarua land’³⁶, unused government land on road side or on the unused ‘benami land’³⁷ of upper caste. This is why Dalits always remain in the clutch of upper castes. When they start supporting Dalit movement or an independent Dalit leader who want to organize Dalit Community to fight

³⁴ Bedide, Naren (Kuffir),(2015). Excerpt of speech delivered by Kuffir at the University of Mumbai durring ‘The Colonisation of Ambedkar: Caste Politics behind Roy- Navayana’s Appropriation of Annihilation of Caste.

³⁵ Narayan, Badri (2009). Facinating Hindutva: Saffron Politics and Dalit Mobilisation. Sage, New Delhi.

³⁶The land which is not registered on any name but captured by upper caste and dominant people

³⁷ Gairmajarua and Benami land is same status but Benami land some time is the land exceeded beyond the ceiling limitation but somehow landlords manage hold over it. It is like Benami properties.

against the atrocities being done to them, upper castes start threatening them to look alternative place to construct their houses. Further, their livelihoods also depend on the working on the lands of those landlords. Unless the government will not implement any substantive land policy to bring some sort of independency talking about the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar in absence of socio-cultural movement is something extra-enthusiastic. So, their economic dependence on upper caste is the one major hindrance in the way of independent Dalit movement in Bihar.

Taking the concern of this issue, the state government constituted 'Land reform core committee'³⁸ in the convenorship of D. M. Diwakar, the director of A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Science, Patna. It is constituted for three purposes.

1. How to implement the government program of allotting 3 (three) decimal lands to each and every landless Dalit family for constructing home.
2. How to insure possession of land to all 'parcha holders' of land allotted through ceiling of government or the land allotted through 'Bhoodan' movement and

³⁸PATNA: The Land Reform Core Committee, set up by the department of revenue and land reforms last year, has stated that only about 69% parcha holders have been identified so far by the government from the list of 23,02,387 parcha holders.

The available data also states that only 94,711 parcha holders do not have legal documents of their land while land of 21,737 people has been restored to them after evicting the unauthorized occupants. The committee, however, raised several issues regarding the data, as they expect more than 94,711 people to be without legal documentation. The committee demanded fresh laws, saying the existing laws are old and not much relevant.

Committee convener DM Diwakar, whom I interviewed also, blamed the DMs and SPs for the situation claiming they did not follow the guidelines issued under the Bihar Land Reform Act.

Kishori Das, a member of the core committee from Sitamarhi, said, "During the tenure of Jitan Ram Manjhi, our work of documentation and allotment was much easier as meeting with DM was held in each district on a weekly basis to solve ground-level problems. The DMs were more serious about allotment then."

The committee also demanded proper laws and regulation for the functioning of Abhiyan Basera, a government programme under which homeless people will get 5 decimal land. "The government has indeed launched the programme but work has to be done at the ground level, which cannot be done without laws," said Diwakar.

To allot land to the people belonging to ST, SC and OBC categories, the committee has created a grievance cell. People can now telephonically complain on 8544412972 and 7857043992 to seek solutions of their land problems. Retrieved from: www.google.com on 06 April, 2016.

3. To study and suggest the viable way to implement this plan successfully.

Again, the irony is that this project is also directly related to upper castes. Dalits are having their 'parcha'/documents of land allotted by government through ceiling or the land are distributed among them through 'Bhoodan' movement but these entire lands are still in the hold of upper caste landlords. The 'parcha' (land ownership paper) was given to them in 1952-55. The limit of land allotted to them varies from 1 to 2 bigha (1 bigha is equivalent to 20 kattha and 1 kattha is equivalent to 20 decimal land in that particular region. However, the scale is different in different region in their local version but in decimal scale it is uniform for all region). After the bifurcation of the state in 2000, now Bihar is remained primarily agriculture based economy. Land issue is an important issue of every small or big Dalit movement initiated and launched under any political banner, be it left, or independent.

It become so important because without breaking the dependency of Dalits on feudal landlords Dalits will not be in position to challenge the social, cultural and political hegemony of these Brahminical forces. The only option is the self-assertion through education and empowered level of social consciousness of each and every individual of Dalits of the state but the irony is that the most reluctant approach of state government is seen towards the education system in Bihar. Let me explain a little the state concern about Dalit education.

8. Dalits and Their Education in Bihar

The key to Dalit assertion lies in the famous slogan of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, 'Educate, Organize and Agitate'. Without education, they can neither organize, nor can they agitate. Comparatively the literacy rate of Dalit community of Bihar is very poor. So does their social and political consciousness. Due to the poor literacy rate they don't understand the importance of this slogan. Neither they understand the importance of construction of their independent identity, nor do they understand the need of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state. During my fieldwork it was also revealed that they are also having the poor understanding about education. They think, education means nothing but job, if they don't get job then there is no meaning of getting education. However, this meaning is the

product of their poor social and economic condition. Another fact is that the conditions of government educational institutions are worse. Some people are of the opinion that the worse conditions of the government educational institutions are kept intentionally by the politician like Laloo Yadav. He used to claim that ‘maine Daliton aur pichhadon ko swarg to nahi lekin swar diya’(I couldn’t give Dalit and backwards material wealth but the most important thing I gave them is voice). The same Laloo Yadav was caught by media uttering, on the issue of education that ‘yadi Dalit aur pichhda pad lega to hamko vote nahi dega’ (if Dalit and backwards will get education, then they will not cast me vote). The simple meaning is that the educated voter cannot be made fool so easily. They will start judging what is good and bad for them and once they become conscious they will start questioning the governance. The coming of Nitish Kumar did not make any changes regarding the government educational institutions of Bihar. In fact, he worsened their condition more. Even today, getting quality education to Dalit and backwards in the state is almost impossible and private educational institutions are beyond affordable to them.

In this low level of education and under the absence of a level of consciousness for constructing an alternative social and cultural imagery and imaginary, one can easily understand the alternative religious orientation of Dalit community and their autonomy under these alternative institutions. The OBCs dominance in the Buddhist institutions tells the truth about this concern regarding the Dalit community of Bihar.

9. The Media and Dalits of Bihar

Media is considered, as the fourth wheel of democracy but Indian media is one of the most undemocratic institutions in the Indian democracy. According to some intellectuals of Bihar, Indian media including the local media of Bihar is highly Brahminical. Dalits are helpless since there is no representation of Dalits in media houses. Due to its highly undemocratic nature it does not give wide coverage of Dalit related issues. Even a heart breaking incident of Dalit massacre in Laxmanpur Bathe village in Bhojpur district or a very recent incident of a village of Bihar where all Dalit women of a village were raped by upper caste people/goons intentionally to teach them a lesson on the matter of elopement of an upper caste girl with a Dalit boy, got no media attention. It has wide repercussion in

the terms of Dalits thinking of helplessness. While protesting at Jantar Mnatar, Delhi against this heinous act Nandlal, who belongs to the same village, shared his anger in these words. ‘Hamlogon ki aawaz na Nitish suntan hai na hi Modi aur na hi thane me FIR darj hota hai. Man to karta hai hathiyar utha loon’ (neither state government nor center is ready to listen our voice. Even police are not ready to lodge FIR against those upper castes culprit. The only option we have left is to take arms in our hand). This example clearly indicates that ‘when justice is denied to them continuously their confidence become low and they will lose their faith in system’³⁹.

According to Buddha Saran Hans, newspapers, magazines, televisions, radios, etc all print and visual media are under the Brahminical monopoly. Government has systematically given media freedom to manipulate the facts and create the news according to the interests of upper castes. Today media is nothing but a medium to pursue the Brahminical interests. The representation of Dalits in all sectors of media is almost zero. For him, ‘I have seen a number of examples when a Dalit reporter demands to telecast or print the reality of an incidence related to Dalits, either he is sacked or fired to set an example for other Dalit reporters.’⁴⁰ Almost zero representation of Dalit journalists in all kind of media doesn’t mean that they are not eligible for the post; rather it is an act of negligence. For example; in November 1997 when the government of India constituted Prasar Bharti Board no Dalit journalist and writer was included as the member of Prasar Bharti Board. This is nothing but an act of refusing Dalit journalists intentionally so that no voice of Dalit society can be raised from the floor of media. It is also an intentional act of keeping media houses undemocratic so that their Brahminical propaganda can be propagated without any hindrance.⁴¹ Further, on 02 July, 1997, in the seminar organized by Indian Social Science Institute, Delhi on the topic ‘Dalits and the Print Media’ G. K. Sinha from Press Trust of India and Jaun Dayal, the editor of ‘Mid Day’ magazine, along with other upper castes journalists accepted openly that both media persons and media houses intentionally neglect news related to Dalit oppression.⁴²

³⁹ Hans, Buddha Saran (1998). Daliton ki Durdasha. Ambedkar Mission Prakashan, Patna. P- 12.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. p-13.

During my fieldwork, I found a number of people having almost same opinion about the systematic negligence of Dalit issues by the Brahminical media. They are of the opinion that the media is highly biased to upper castes. Media doesn't only neglect the news related to Dalit oppression but it also neglects Dalit social and cultural events as well as Dalit intellectuals, Dalit journalists and Dalit politicians. For example, in 1996, twenty years ago, B. N. Uniyal had a survey to study the participation of Dalit journalists in Indian media. After surveying 462 media persons, his finding was 240 brahmins, 79 punjabi khatri, 44 kayasth, 26 baniya, 26 christian, 26 muslim, 12 jain and 09 bengali.⁴³ Even not a single Dalit journalist was found. Still today the condition is almost same. Some Dalit journalists are in media but they are appointed as a news collector and reporters but not in any authoritative position like editor, director etc. Further, people are of the opinion that both national and local media are in clutch of upper castes. Dalit have no media so that they can spread their news related to Dalit assertion. This is why the humiliation, oppression, exploitation and pain of Dalit Community remain unheard and their social and political initiatives are failed. Still, Dalit Community of Bihar have obviously no corporate media to stand behind and according to Dalit camera: Through Un-Touchable Eyes, 'there is no other social media for Dalits-Bahujan outside the virtual media'. The almaments, universities and intellectual and academic world of India is hegemonised and captured by upper caste, anti-dalit people. Further, Dileep C. Mandal, ex-journalist and one of the most popular social media activists is of the opinion that, even today, these Brahminical media don't like telecasting the news related to assertion of Dalit community. In the age of social media, they are forced to take Dalit issues also. They are telecasting the news of Dalit oppression, atrocities and humiliation but the movement these Dalit start asserting themselves against these injustices this media stop making it news. This media is having such a Brahminical character that it like watching an oppressed, helpless and hapless Dalit; it cannot tolerate an assertive Dalit Community who are challenging these Brahminical forces. This is the reason that most of the movements related to the assertion of Dalit Community in the different states are getting the mass support. Due to the unresponsive attitude of Brahminical and corporate media these movement remains disconnected from the masses of the same communities having

⁴³ Uniyal, B. N. (1996). The Pioneer. EK Dalit Pitrakar ki Khoj. Published in the issue of Nov. 1996.

similar grievances against the Brahminical society. It does not get transform into the mass movement to shake the citadel of Brahminical social structure. This is equally applicable for Bihar.

10. The Role of Undemocratic Institutions

It is well known proverb that 'justice delayed is justice denied' but in Bihar in the most of the cases justice is denied to Dalit community. In Bihar justice is demanded by Dalit and backwards but granted to upper castes. There is no better example to justify my above argument than the verdict given by judiciary in the Laxmanpur Bathe Dalit massacre case. In Bihar the word justice and Dalit sound antonyms to each other. Where there is Dalit there is no justice and vice-versa. Despite it, none of Dalit leaders raised their voices in their support to bring them justice. In the absence of their supports Dalit have been losing their faith in the Brahminical system as well as Dalit leaders. Disappointing with the justice delivery mechanism of the state most of the social and political Dalit activists turned to the left politics or a radical left. They joined Naxalite movement. This is how highly biased judiciary have played their role, in some region, to destroy Dalit faith in the democratic politics as well as institutions of state.

So, the role of an Undemocratic Judiciary is above all the reasons to bring Dalit Community of the state in a situation of complete helplessness. Like media, Dalits have very low or almost zero representation in judicial institutions of Bihar. In the absence of Dalit representation getting fair trial as well as justice is almost impossible to Dalits. One of the respondents tried to justify his argument with the example of verdict given in different cases including 'Laxmanpur Bathe massacre' where Dalits are the party. That verdict was unacceptable to not only Dalits but also several other parties including the state government itself. Left parties promised Dalits that it would be appealed to the supreme court of India. Other parties like RJD and LJP demanded that the case must be handed over to CBI for fair investigation. All they did nothing but made Dalits fool. Except left and Naxal parties all other parties including the state government have been protecting 'Ranvir Sena' because it is a Bhumihar dominated upper caste organization. It is also known as a 'caste militia' of upper caste landlords. They were given clean chit even their involvement in the case was aired by media channels where a member of

‘Ranvir Sena’ was accepting their involvement clearly. Neither judiciary took ‘Suo motu cognizance’ nor did any parties make it an issue. Even no Dalit leader of Bihar showed interest to launch a strong movement against the negligence of Dalit issue to put the pressure on government. This makes Dalit helpless in the state.

Upper castes cannot tolerate a Dalit on the leadership position even on Dalit issue. This is equally applicable to all parties irrespective of ideology. In the contemporary politics of Bihar the incident of co-opting Dalit and backward leaders are found increasing. Bihar state convener of BSP revealed that at the local level BJP has been trying hard to co-opt every Dalit activists who have shown extraordinary potential to mobilize masses. Some Ambedkarite activists were threatened to bad consequences for misguiding Dalits. Only some educated Dalits are confident that the slavery of their community can be broken and this exploitative Brahminical social structure can be destroyed through a vibrant anti-Brahminical movement. A Dalit can also live a dignified and respectful life if each and every individual reject the Brahminical social structure to accept and practice. This could be done by a strong Ambedkrite movement but in Bihar Dalits have been cheated by the leaders of their own community who didn’t allowed Ambekrite movement to enter in the state. However, the craze of Ambedkarite movement and assertion of Dalit identity are increasing in new generation of Dalit community.

11. Last Assembly Election: the lost opportunity

What was new in the 2015 Assembly election in Bihar was a clear-cut polarization of votes among the Mahagathbandhan and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The *Mahagathbandhan* comprising Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Indian National Congress (INC) was representing the legacy of Backward castes (OBCs and Dalits) politics. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) comprising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) newly formed by Jitan Ram Manjhi and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) was trying to evolve a new socio-political alliance of forward castes, Dalits and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs). Both the historical arithmetic and the demographic composition of the State were tilting in the favour of Mahagathbandhan because the two major constituents of Mahagathbandhan RJD and JD(U) had already established their

strong socio-political identities and the supporting element Indian National Congress (INC) also never has an anti-Dalit or anti-Backward identity. However, Dalit and Muslims have been the crucial factor for the formation of government throughout the history of the politics of Bihar. In the last election Muslims had already taken their side, so the crucial factor for both was Dalit votes. Seeing the arithmetic of Lok Sabha election 2014 and Dalit voter's shift towards the NDA joining the hands of Jitan Ram Manjhi and Ramvilas Paswan with NDA psephologists were started calculating of new hope. But in the given circumstances developed by RSS and its other allies Dalits had no option but to strengthen the hands of Mahagathbandhan. Just Before the election, the dramatic emergence of Jitan Ram Manjhi gave some political analysts new hopes for the emergence of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state but his decision to join the hands with the anti-Dalit alliance NDA shattered this hopes. Once again, Dalits of the state had been forced to subsume under the dominance OBCs politics and chance of the emergence of an independent Dalit politics in Bihar remained due. Both Mahagathbandhan and NDA were anti-Dalit alliances. One of the BAMCEF leaders of Bihar, Dr. Rajeev Ranjan was of the opinion that in respect of Dalit interests even Laloo and Nitish both are already tried, tested and failed and observing the huge support of Dalit Community to Manjhi every possibility of independent Dalit politics were opened. He needed to just cultivate it accordingly. Like other opportunist Dalit leaders and due to lack of confidence he joined NDA. Thus, destroyed the possibility of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state.

12. Distinct advantage to OBCs politics

Notwithstanding with the historical precedence as set in the earlier elections in Bihar Assembly elections Dalit politics appeared to have started with a distinct advantage of an autonomous evolution as an eminent political force but with an act of felt cheated again by Dalit leaders it suffered again to subsume in OBCs dominant politics led by RJD, JD(U) and Congress(INC). Joining NDA alliance by Manjhi crushed many political ambitions of Dalit Community of Bihar primarily politically conscious paswan and chamar castes and the mushahar caste also which Jitan Ram Manjhi represent himself. The vote shares that Dalit Community hold independently did not get that flying figure what they deserve when contesting in alliance. In the alliance it got subsumed under the

prominent alliance partner's ability to translate their theoretical importance into real political force. And having observed in election during my field work the influence of NDA and BJP are limited to urban and semi-urban areas where it did well but in the rural areas it is only backward including Dalit politics has strong organizational strength comparatively to support their candidate and to mobilize vote for in their favour. Yet, Dalits have not created an independent organizational set up. The 2015 assembly election was contested for nothing but all about wooing the Dalits, Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) and Muslims. Together they constitute more than 45 percent of the state population but in the absence of their independent political organization they are forced to choose another alternative like OBCs political parties led by Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar. However, the emergence of Jitan Ram Manjhi raised an unprecedented hope among Dalit Community of Bihar to cause a real threat for Nitish Kumar and this was also a reason for coming two arch-rival together and the formation of Mahagathbandhan, the victorious alliance. But Manjhi failed to read the importance of the emergence of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state and he lost historic opportunity to become an undisputed leader of Dalit Community of Bihar.⁴⁴

In the democracy based on political parties leadership is the primary concern for electorate. After joining the NDA coalition of Jitan Ram Manjhi, the scale of providing leadership to Backwards and Dalits shifted to the favour of the *Mahagathbandhan*. It is not only on the matter of leadership but arithmetically the Mahagathbandhan got the expected advantageous position of winning the election because Dalits in Bihar alone constitutes more than 16.5 per cent of the state population. Not only has this but it also created a huge difference between organizational capacities. Together, both RJD and JD(U) organizations started working to attract Dalits and extremely backward castes(EBCs) and rest of things were done by the interplay of RSS and sister organizations of BJP. The issue of reservation, beefs, anti-Dalit comment by a NDA cabinet minister V. K. Singh and other attempts of communal polarization helped Mahagathbandhan to develop a broader category of OBCs including Dalits under the domain of backward to prefer Lalu yadav and Nitish kumar. This election of Bihar have

⁴⁴ Father Philip Manthra, teacher in St. Javior School, Gandhi Maidan Patna. He is a social activist and working for the upliftment of Musahar community in Bihar.

seen developing a new ‘mutual social dynamics’ between the supporters of Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar. It bridged the gap created between 15 years of rival politics, which will create potential threat to NDA in Bihar for a long time in future.

13. The Possible Social and Political Mobilization

Dalits of Bihar have never organized around their ‘social marginalization’ and the various forms of exclusion that they face in day-to-day life. Every Dalit related social and political initiative devoted to address the problem of Dalit mobilization has reduced to a part of an organized movement and touched only to a certain class of Dalit community because of the two reasons, first: the maximum populations of Dalits are wage labourers in rural unorganized sectors and they remain in clutch of upper castes. Second, the most of Dalit movements in Bihar moves around the one or two issues like reservations and discriminations only. Dalit movements in Bihar till date have not been launched in a complete sense having all issues related to the different sections of Dalit community. For example, the issues like reservation, discrimination and identity are only understandable to those who are educated and college going students but the reality is that most of Dalits of Bihar even today are not having access to colleges at all. However, in the last election for Bihar assembly the issue of reservation cost NDA hugely on the contrary it benefited ‘Mahagathbandhan’ hugely. The issue of reservation played a very supportive role to mobilize all backward and pro-reservation section together which has broader category than Dalit.

In the case of economically dependent Dalit Community this movements are limited to certain educated Dalit class only. The issue in Bihar is not only related to the exclusion but they are not economically so well to access the schools and colleges at first then one can come to the point of exclusion from the educational institutions. Most of Dalits are wage labourer either under the landlords in the state or forced to be migrated to the other states of India in search of labour. Even in the other states of India they are in clutch of upper caste. So they can’t raise the voice against their feudal lords and the repressive caste system and the same with the case of rights. Precisely, I mean to say that a single

issue cannot mobilize a whole community together to launch a strong independent social and political movement.

In the absence of Ambedkarite movement, independent socio-cultural assertion and its psychological motivational impacts, even in the urban area Dalit who are educated and those who can understand the meaning of an autonomous Dalit movement, compulsorily can't support the movement because their caste can be revealed and once their caste is revealed they may face the same problems what they had faced in their villages by the virtue of being Dalit. It does not mean that they don't possess that level of social and political consciousness to assert their independent identity but the big question here related to the economic independence i.e. the economic justice. Until and unless Dalit Community do not acquire some sort of economic independence from the upper caste, the independent Dalit movement in Bihar has to associate with other route such as social and cultural mobilization. Here the question of economic independence of Dalit Community and the vast economic disparity are not same but both are related to very different questions and issues.

As per as the issue concerned with the left movement and Dalit politics in Bihar then one thing is very clear that the left politics in Bihar is completely different from the left politics of the other parts of India. No doubt it has been very consistent, universal and cosmopolitan class approach in Bihar as other parts of India but along with the different kinds of oppression based on class, gender, religion, birth, position etc it has, in Bihar, also recognized the oppressions based of social, religious and cultural positions like caste and religion also. In Bihar the left politics has well recognized the oppression based on casteism and social exclusion more seriously after the emergence of BSP as a strong political force in UP and its intervention in Bihar. I don't know how I would describe left politics of Bihar? Whether I call it transformation or moving away from the universal left ideology and principles that the left stands for but I must say that it is the pragmatic, realistic and inclusive approach of left politics in Bihar. However, it doesn't succeed to capture the political power of state or a major political force, It talks about both the broader issues related to the economic independence and the class oppression i.e. the issues related to the economic and social justice.

On the contrary, the Communist politics of Bihar is not what we really call progressive and democratic but reality is that they are trying to acquire the rhetoric of nothing but populist politics. They are just trying to capture the imagination of Dalit and other backward caste and the rhetorical imagination of Dalit icons as well. Still, their manifesto does not recognize the oppressions and exploitation based on caste. They are also using Dalits and poor as a flag bearer (foot-soldier) only as same, what right wing organizations like RSS, BJP and other mainstream parties have done so far. They talk about democracy but one cannot find any democracy within the party structure. All the official and authoritative positions are captured by upper caste's people only. They talk about participation and representation along with other democratic values to insure in society and what they are fighting for, but we cannot find any example setting of fair participation and representation of Dalits and other backward society within their party. One can also observe a sheer dictatorship in the decision making process of party. Precisely, the authoritative structure and the character of governance are same in all the parties irrespective of their ideological stand and it is Dalits who are the ultimate victims under these politics.

In the politics of Bihar issues related to the economic and social justice got divided between left and backwards (including Dalit) politics. In the recent scenario the emergence of an independent Dalit movement cannot be imagine independently until taking a clear position on the all kinds of injustices being done to that community. The approach must be inclusive and collective regarding different kinds of economic, social, cultural, political etc inequality and injustices. Here introducing Vivek Chibber will be very relevant to understand the nature of left politics. He says that;

there is a clear position to take, which is that one cannot and should not set issues of Dalit identity against issues of Dalit class interests, because what they face is not simply economic exploitation but many things on top of that. Second, unless a movement for justice for Dalits is fundamentally based on class and economic justice, it will not address the needs of the vast majority of this section.⁴⁵

Beneficiary of Dalit reservation including bureaucrats, Dalit intellectuals and Dalit politicians are using it for their upward mobility, advancement and development. The

⁴⁵ Chibber, Vivek (2016). In the article; Dalit movement has to see itself as part of a class-wide movement. The Hindu, march 03, 2016.

class politics of left and the caste based Identity politics have been in conflict for long time in Bihar but the nature of identity politics in Bihar is something different from the other states of India in terms of assimilating themselves into the domain of (so-called) struggle of social justice of state. The identity politics of Bihar is dominated by other backward castes (OBCs) and the movements for social justice that moves around the social segregation, economic exploitation and political marginalization have been captured by these OBCs dominated identity politics. With the emergence of OBCs dominated identity politics all issues of social justice for which Communist and Dalits were fighting for, subsumed under it. Not only the issues rather Dalit politics itself subsumed under the OBCs dominated identity politics and later, it shift rightward to dilute the prospect of the emergence of an independent Dalit politics in Bihar.

There is another point about the left politics and Dalit engagements in Bihar that there is a long history of strong communist engagement with Dalit community in Bihar. No doubt left politics, particularly in Bihar, have been engaged with Dalit problems, their oppression and exploitation along with other injustices seriously but the problem with the left politics of the state is that it has never reflected within its internal functioning. Precisely, even the mission of socio-economic equality of left in Bihar keeps engaging Dalits for not interest of establishing socio-economic justice in society rather they use Depressed classes for their narrow political interests. They are not really concerned with the interests of Dalits rather they act as an agent of Brahminical forces to divide these classes to dilute the strong movement in the state.

Since, the issues of social justice have been captured by OBCs dominated identity politics and the long engagement of left politics with Dalits has succeeded to divide and dilute Dalit movement in the state. Despite this, seeing the good number of oppressed and observing the need of hour to launch a collective fight for justice the only option left in the state is to unite left and Ambedkrite politics. 'The left groups have to immerse themselves in the Dalit movement and other such struggles and show that they are fundamentally committed to the interests of marginalized groups'⁴⁶. I must add something to this argument that to mobilize people under broader agenda of establishing

⁴⁶ Ibid.

socio-economic justice the only new formation left to forge is Dalit, Muslim and EBCs. Dalit autonomous movement as such is almost impossible in the state because no doubt Dalit institutions and agencies do present in the state but they are active under different models i.e. Gandhian and Jagjivan Ram model of assimilative and reformative politics, Communist model and Ambedkarite models. All three models are active in the politics of Bihar with almost equal potential. The only new model is possible may be the model of Soshit and Banchit (Dalit and marginalized) formation. It needs to develop a commonsensical universal model applicable to alternative politics to all states. In the state like Bihar where Dalits have multiple engagements, this is possible only through engaging three liberation theologians Ambedkar, Gandhi and Marx together. The Communists and Ambedkarite must engage with the EBCs and Muslims/Minority in more pragmatic and democratic way.

Conclusion

Having close study of Dalit politics of Bihar one thing is very clear is that Dalit Community of Bihar have never organized around their identity of 'social marginalization' and the various forms of exclusion that they face in day-to-day life. Every Dalit related social and political initiative devoted to address the problem of Dalit mobilization has reduced to a part of an organized movement and touched only to a certain class of Dalit community because of the two reasons. First; the maximum populations of Dalits are wage labourers in rural unorganized sectors and they remain in clutch of upper castes. Second; the most of Dalit movements in Bihar moves around the one or two issues like reservations and discriminations only. Dalit movements in Bihar till date have not been launched in a complete sense having all issues related to the different sections of Dalit community. However, my observations say that despite this all negative point in respect of Ambedkarite politics, they lack a proper ideology and strong organizational support but educated Dalits are politically conscious and they are trying masses to organize and fight for all kinds of injustices being done to them. The absence of an all encompassing, all inclusive symbolism or identity can be seen beneficial in other way around as an open space to develop an alternative universal counter model of

depressed classes to challenge the privileged class hegemonic model of the mainstream politics.

Conclusion

If contemporary politics of Bihar seduces us into judging all political values and principles by a single standard, certainly it will be nothing but caste based identity politics. All other democratic values come later for understanding and analyzing the electoral politics of the state. Like any other states in India, caste based identity politics is a basic feature of the politics of Bihar. One can easily find the posters and banners of caste Mahasabhas on the roads of the state capital announcing the need of caste consolidation. Particularly, nearing the elections such caste activism would catch any body's attention. Consequently, it would not be unfair to conclude that the single most important factor that plays the most crucial role in the state politics is the caste consolidation and caste alliances.

Given this caste based mobilization in Bihar politics, one would imagine similar consolidation or conglomeration of caste groups broadly falling under the category of Dalit community. However, one is surprised to find that opposite as one finds almost complete absence of any Autonomous Dalit Movement based on the idea of consolidation of Dalit community for a significant intervention in the state politics. Given the size of Dalit population in the state one would imagine a kind of intervention by this community something similar to what has happened in the politics of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh or Punjab. Compared to these states Bihar has been a way behind in terms of consolidation of the Dalit community for waging struggle for its own wellbeing. This seems to be a good puzzle for the analysts of the state politics.

Let me also mention the way I have defined Autonomous Dalit Movement (ADM) in this thesis. ADM claims autonomy at both the social and cultural levels. Such a movement advocates an autonomous politics led by Dalits within the rubric of parliamentary framework. It proposes three basic criteria for defining an Autonomous Dalit Movement: a) identifying the oppressor and oppressed categories and the basis of oppression; b) struggle against the socio-economic and cultural structure to end the economic exploitation, social discrimination and cultural segregation of oppressed community; and c) the construction of an inclusive, more democratic and egalitarian alternative model based on the universal principle of quality, liberty and fraternity. This is the process of construction of heterodox tradition, which is inclusive, more

democratic and egalitarian. It is going on simultaneously in different regions of India with the broader mission for the liberation of Dalit community from the scourge of Brahminical Hindu social structure. There are states in which ADM is in advanced stage, whereas, there are state lagging behind. Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, could be considered as examples of the former and Bihar, Rajsthan and Madhya Pradesh are examples of the later. The puzzle is that Bihar had a strong democratic upsurge much before than Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Yet, it has not moved forward in the direction of ADM. Bihar lacks this alternative model, which acts as an interconnecting threads to develop new patterns of social and political relations between individuals of Dalit community. I have considered it as one of the major reasons for the absence of autonomous Dalit politics in Bihar.

This research aims at solving this puzzle. It wants to explore the reason behind this absence of ADM in the state. There could be various reasons for the absence. One of the reasons I have discussed here is the assimilative and reformative politics under the strong influence of Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. I have called it 'the Bihar model of Dalit politics'. It is well known that Gandhi's Champaran movement had a deep impact on Bihar politics. His struggle for the marginalized communities attracted people from these communities. Since then Congress Party had a sizable number of Dalit leaders and they were convinced about Gandhi's method of their emancipation. Consequently, a good number of leaders like Babu Jagjiwan Ram, Bholu Paswan Sahstri and Mungeri Lal played significant role in the politics of the state. I have argued that this model was based on reconciliation technique of Gandhi, however, it did not allow the Dalit community to consolidate its identity and the political role they acquired, remained mostly a gift by Congress instead of being earned through mass mobilization.

Another reason I have tried to explore is the Dalit community's engagement with the communist movement in the state. Almost all left parties in the state had a good base in the Dalit communities. However, the CPI (ML) had the strongest base as it picked up their struggle at the grass-root level. For several decades the party has struggle for the minimum wages, for gairmajurua land (land owned by the state) and more importantly for the dignity of the Dalit community. No doubt, under the leadership of CPI (ML) Dalit community achieved a lot in terms of their economic rights and the right to dignity. However, since the movement did not encourage the idea of identity

formation based on the caste exploitation and demeaned religious identity, there could not be any movement to reform the sources of identity. Particularly, when the left movement has become weak the mainstream parties have attracted their attention. Consequently, whatever they gained during these struggles it seems they have lost in last few years. Once again they remained fragmented.

My research in two Assembly constituencies of two districts has suggested that despite the left presence in these constituencies the issues related to the Dalit community remains in the margin. In fact, I was surprised to see that no political party even mentioned these issues either in their manifestoes or in their campaign. The third reason for the absence of ADM in the state could be the lackadaisical responses of Dalit community to the Ambedkarite politics. In last few decades Ambedkar has emerged as a Dalit icon helping the community to politically organize itself in the different parts of India, however, surprisingly enough this has hardly been a case in Bihar. I found a number of groups drawing upon Ambedkar's philosophy involved in organizing the community in the state. However, one can't say confidently that such organizations have any significant impact on the mobilization of the community for the electoral politics.

The above mentioned three reasons contributed to the absence of construction of an alternative Dalit socio-cultural consciousness to challenge the socio-cultural hegemony of the mainstream society. It is equally contributed to the absence of construction of an alternative social, cultural and political imaginary and the construction of Dalit dissenting culture to construct a Dalit counter space. These are considered important for the development of an autonomous Dalit movement (ADM) in the state.

There is no doubt that one may have many more reasons to explain the absence of the ADM. However, one of the reasons I have explored in much detail is the lack of alternative religious practices in this community. The central question, I have raised in this dissertation is about the relation between ADM and alternative religious practices. The survey of literature suggests that this is one of the least explored aspects of Dalit mobilization. I have tried to demonstrate that there is a strong link between the autonomous Dalit movement and alternative religious practices. It acts as an interconnecting thread to mobilize Dalit community. It is considered as

precondition to generate a sense of belonging, sense of solidarity, we-feeling and brotherhood among Dalit community. It also acts as 'cohesive force' to bind Dalit community together having the common lived experiences and sufferings. There are many reasons for the absence of ADM in Bihar but I have focused to find out that to what extent the lack of alternative religious practices of Dalit community can be considered as one of the reason for the absence of autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar?

After analyzing the literatures on the politics of Bihar in general and Dalit politics in particular and understanding the different models of Ambedkarite politics based of the identity of Dalit community, I got to know that as to how the spirit of an autonomous Dalit Movement in Bihar lost its relevance under the scattered engagements of Dalit community under different political formations of the state. Further, this spirit lost under the self-interpretative models of Dalit politics, personal political aspirations and multiple political contestations of Dalit leaders of Bihar. The studies of these phenomena are discussed in the first three chapters. The fourth and fifth chapters are based on the fieldwork undertaken the two Assembly constituencies of Muzzaffarpur and Jamui districts. In Jamui district, I have conducted my research in the Chakai Assembly constituency. It is non-reserve constituency with a sizable number of the Dalit community. As Chakai is closer to Jharkhand boarder there is sizable population of the scheduled tribe in this constituency. Though my focus was the Dalit community, I can say confidently that the situation is not different for the Tribal community too. Chakai is also known for the base of the Naxal movement. However, I did not find any intervention by them during the elections. I started my fieldwork thinking that the left presence probably would force the political parties to raise the issues concerning the Dalit communities. My second field was Bochahan Assembly constituency in the Muzzaffarpur district. It is a reserved constituency and for almost four decades it returned a prominent Dalit leader of Bihar, Mr Ramai Ram.

I chose ethnography as method of inquiry. I decided to conduct my fieldwork during the Bihar Assembly Elections 2015. This was a difficult election as in 2014 Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) came in power under the leadership of Narendra Modi with a massive majority. It was projected as Modi wave. In this Modi wave even Bihar returned large number of MPs for BJP. Since this Assembly election was just after the parliamentary election, BJP was expecting a similar support. What made this time

suitable for my fieldwork was the strategy BJP adopted in this state. As it was clear that Muslim and Yadav, which constitute a good chunk of voters in the state would not vote for the Party and other backward classes would support JDU, BJP focused mainly on the Dalit voters apart from Upper caste and EBC. For this purpose, BJP aligned with three different parties. LJP (Lok Janshakti Party) led by Ramvilas Paswan and his son Chirag Paswan, RLSP (Rashtriya Lok Samta Party) led by Upendra Kushwaha and HAM(S) [Hindustani Avam Morcha (Secular)] led by Jitan Ram Manjhi. This alliance was named as NDA alliance and the battle began between Mahagathbandhan [RJD and JD(U)] and NDA alliance. BJP forged alliance with two Dalit parties in the state to woo Dalit voters but what I observed during my fieldwork that Ramvilas Paswan has created a very negative image even among the Paswan caste. Howsoever big stature Ramvilas Paswan has owned but due to his different moves in different parties people were taking him opportunistic. Local people now call him 'be pendi ka lota' (the pot without base). The unprecedented emergence of Jitan Ram Manjhi gave some hope to Dalit community as I clearly observed the 'Swabhimani rally' in Gandhi Maidan Patna on 19th April 2015. But his decision to join BJP led NDA alliance once again destroy the hope of Dalits in the state. This move cultivated Paswan image in Manjhi as opportunistic and not interested in Dalits' interests. This image of both Dalit leaders became more pronounced when they start fighting each other on the issue of ticket share. Chakai was one of the hottest seats for both because of the two reasons. First; it falls in the Lok Sabha constituency of Chirag Paswan, the son of Ramvilas Paswan and Sumit Kumar candidature of the son of Manjhi mentor Narendra Singh and second; this constituency constitutes good population of Dalit, Tribals and OBCs

The method of this study is the ethnographic study based on participant observer of two limited political territories i.e. the state assembly constituency Bochahan and Chakai. As a participant observer I wanted to observe the symbolic dimensions of social, cultural and political behavior of Dalit community, equally focused on to observe and understand socio-cultural dimensions of their responses to the mainstream politics under the prevailing socio-religious and economic conditions. Election is a multi-phenomena event. It gives (a researcher) a unique opportunity to participate in everyday engagements of community/individuals through conversation, observing events, gossips, jokes etc. and other (formal and) informal speech acts. So,

I decided to work with one candidate in each constituency in order to get access to Dalit community in election campaign.

It helped me immensely to reach almost every village of Dalit community in those constituencies. I attended every meeting where the strategies for next day campaign were planning and demands and other concerns related to those constituencies of various castes were being listening. I participated in almost all forms of campaign i.e. door to door, meetings, rallies etc. It helped me understand the cultural and social events, the process of reaching on political decision, political mobilization, voting behavior etc. It helped me understand lively, and some time complex articulation of meaning to reach on the political decisions, which is not possible to explore without participating in various modes of the election campaign. The direct involvement with them and their political, social and cultural understandings during election time provided me an ideal opportunity to understand their pattern of political mobilization. That gave me an opportunity to understand symbolic dynamics of various modes of Dalit engagement and important insight to understand the process of Dalit political mobilization in the state.

This research has proved my hypothesis right that the available models of Dalit participation in politics have not allowed the consolidation of Dalit identity. Consequently, this community has failed in articulating its own interest effectively. For such a consolidation, I have argued, there is need of use of alternative religious practices effectively. The prevalent models of Dalit participation have taken up certain concerns of the community but they have not promoted any understanding of the real issues that the community has been facing. In both the constituencies, one see easily, that the community lives under the hegemonic dominance of the upper caste and the they continue following the conservative Hinduism. However, there is a counter trend of radicalization of Dalits done by the left parties. But this radicalization has put the caste issues under the carpet. As a result, broadly speaking the politics of Dalit community remains always dependent on the other community based political parties. It was very well reflected in the Bihar Assembly election in 2015.

Let me elaborate upon the steps I have taken to arrive on this conclusion. I will do this through discussion my chapters in little detail. The first chapter explains the relationship between Gandhian movement and the Dalit community in Bihar. The

argument I intend to put forward with the emergence of Dalit discourse in India and what were its eventual consequences on the Dalit discourse of Bihar. It deals with issue of engagement of the Gandhian movement with the Dalit question. I think Dalit issues remained within the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism and the Indian National Congress. Understanding the emergence of Dalit discourse in the mainstream Indian politics, this chapter also explains the different phases of Dalit discourse in Bihar. This includes the caste consolidation movements, the ongoing debates in the political and social forums of Indian National Congress and the beginning of Gandhian movement in Bihar. Further, it deals with the specificity of the 'Bihar model of Dalit politics' based on assimilation of Dalits into the mainstream Hindu social structure and the reformation of Savarna Hindu castes attitudes towards Dalits under the leadership of Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram. When the contemporary Dalit leaders of other states, where vibrant Dalit movement and politics are found, were constructing an independent Dalit movement against the socio-cultural segregation, economic exploitation and political marginalization of Dalit community to challenge the mainstream politics, the most popular Dalit leader of Bihar Jagjivan Ram associated himself with the Gandhian movement, which was under the hegemonic discourse of Hinduism. However, through the assimilative and reformative politics Jagjivan Ram succeeded to develop a completely different model of Dalit politics in Bihar but his approach failed in both essences i.e. assimilation of Dalit into the mainstream society and reformation of Savarna Hindus attitudes towards the Dalit community of the state. Understanding the failure, he made the call for construction of an independent organization of Dalit communities but not in the rubric of Ambedkarite conception of alternative socio-cultural and political organizations. Consequence of which was the absence of the construction of an alternative social, political or religious Dalit identity independent from Hindu society or as an alternative model of Dalit community to challenge the mainstream politics. This was thought necessary for the independent consolidation of Dalit communities in Bihar, which remained absent yet, so did the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement based on the liberation of Dalit community.

The second chapter discusses that when the Indian National Congress became the party of Savarna Hindu castes and Dalit aspirations faded away and the emergence of OBCs dominated identity politics in 1990s further marginalized them, then Dalits of

Bihar had now no option except to support communist organizations including extremists such as Naxalite and Maoist to break the hegemony of mainstream society. The mass support of Dalit community was also based on to express their anger -cum - rising political awareness and activism against their social and material deprivation. Taking the benefit of this, left organizations succeeded in capturing the mass Dalit aspirations of liberation to conceptualize the radical transformation of social and economic structure of state through the class based communist revolution. The alternative socio-cultural and political aspiration, this community once again subsumed under the theoretical conceptualization of communist revolution in the domain of collective interests of proletariat class. However, the practical way applied by Communist movement to develop intimate relationship with these sections of society and the symbolic practices of communist movements to earn strong commitment of Dalit community are completely against the alternative socio-cultural conception of Dalit community. The Communist movement is not only against the caste mobilization but they also do not support any religious mobilization. With the time, it is true that Dalit question based on multiple discrimination emerged within communist organizations but only after the emergence of BSP and Ambedkarite politics as strong forces in the neighboring state UP and growing sympathy of Dalits towards the BSP in Bihar. As I have explained in this chapter the communist movement in Bihar started considering Dalit questions only to mitigate the growing sympathy of Dalits towards the BSP and Ambedkarite forces in the state. Despite the consideration of Dalit questions communist organizations also remained under the hegemonic dominance of upper castes Savarna Hindus and Dalit even in these organizations remained just as foot-soldier like other political organizations of state.

As per as the issue concerned with the left movement and Dalit politics in Bihar then one thing is very clear that the left politics in Bihar is completely different from the left politics of the other parts of India. It has been very consistent, universal and cosmopolitan class approach in Bihar as other parts of India. Despite that along with the different kinds of oppression based on class, gender, religion, birth, position etc it has, in Bihar, also recognized the oppressions based of caste also. In Bihar the left politics has well recognized the oppression based on casteism and social exclusion more seriously but only after the emergence of BSP as a strong political force in UP and its intervention in Bihar. Observing this move, I don't know how I would

describe left politics of Bihar? Whether I call it transformation or moving away from the universal left ideology and principles that the left stands for but I must say that it is the pragmatic, realistic and inclusive approach of left politics in Bihar. However, it doesn't succeed to capture the political power of state or a major political force, It talks about both the broader issues related to the economic independence and the class oppression i.e. the issues related to the economic and social justice.

On the contrary, the Communist politics of Bihar is not what we really call progressive and democratic in its approach. The fact of the matter is that they are also trying to just acquire the rhetoric of nothing but populist politics. They are just trying to capture the imagination of Dalit and other backward caste and the rhetorical imagination of Dalit icons as well. There is no better example to justify my charge is the new slogan 'Jai Bhim, Lal Salam'. Still, their manifesto does not recognize the oppressions and exploitation based on caste. They are also using Dalits and poor as a flag bearer (foot-soldier) only as same, what right wing organizations like RSS, BJP and other mainstream parties have done so far. They talk about democracy but one cannot find any democracy within the party structure. Upper caste's people capture all the official and authoritative positions. They talk about participation and representation along with other democratic values to be insured in society. They claim this is what they are fighting for but one cannot find examples to prove their point of fair participation and representation of Dalits within the party. One can also observe a sheer upper caste dictatorship in the decision making process of party. Precisely, the authoritative structure and the character of governance are same in all the parties irrespective of their ideological stand and it is Dalits who are the ultimate victims under these politics.

It is true that the communist movements of the state failed to develop an alternative universal and broader class based culture around the working class movement against the ruling class, which was seen as emancipatory egalitarian theory as Ambedkarite philosophy. It is also true that they neglected issues like caste and religion but the assertion of Dalits in the state is not the unintended consequences of the communist movements. The hard work of communist cadres captured Dalit political imagination to replicate it into communist model. It was intended to take Dalit issues more seriously, however, not in the same line of Dalit and Ambedkarite politics, despite that the communist-Dalit bonds are still so strong in the state that Dalit parties itself

find tough to connect with their own constituents.

The third chapter evaluates the Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite model of autonomous Dalit movement based on the construction of an independent socio-cultural and political identity and institutions of Dalit community. What would the conceptual assumptions mean to Dalit communities in general and the Dalit community of Bihar? Whether they want to acknowledge the significance of their alternative identity to establish a kind of autonomy so that they can challenge the hegemony of mainstream social and religious dominance or they want to reinvent a different kind of structural relationships with the help of the production/construction of alternative institutions and agencies, which is contrary to Ambedkarite models present in other states? Understanding the broader impact of invention of new power relationship in the context of the changing dynamics and emerging paradigm of Dalit identity politics, I intend to address the following question: 'Is Ambedkar's model of socio-cultural politics based on the mission of liberation of 'Depressed classes' an identity politics? Alternatively, one may ask if the identity politics is a temporary mechanism of the broader mission of emancipation of Dalit community? Which have ultimate goal to establish socio-economic justice and a more inclusive democratic and egalitarian society in India based on universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity. I think that Ambedkar's idea of Dalit politics is not merely an identity politics, rather, it is aimed at the total transformation of society. It has twin approaches. On the one hand, it wants to inflict the guilt in the mainstream society for the discriminatory attitudes towards Dalit community; on the other hand, it tries to empower the Dalit community through the change in the cultural and material conditions.

To clarify my understanding, I took two successful models of Ambedkarite politics, which are practiced in Maharashtra and UP as examples. The Maharashtra model of Ambedkarite politics however subordinating the political mobilization of Dalit community is successful in term of socio-cultural assertion of Dalit community. On the other hand Ambedkarite politics of UP, which can be taken as post-Ambedkarite model of Dalit identity politics. However, UP model of Dalit identity politics subordinated the socio-cultural mobilization of Dalit community is also successful in terms of political assertion of Dalit community. Both can be considered as the part of whole Ambedkarite movement, which has goal of total transformation of society in

terms broader mission of establishing socio-economic justice and liberation of Dalit community. Both UP and Maharashtra model is not complete from the point of view I have defined ADM. Both the models have not ignored major concern of Ambedkar who wanted to combine the two aspects. These movements have worked on the 'either-or' model.

No doubt socio-cultural politics including conversion gives an independent identity to Dalit community but the empowerment infused in Dalit community in terms of self-respect and dignity through the political power cannot be undermined to the socio-cultural politics of Ambedkar. The difference between approaches of these models of Ambedkarite politics certainly suggest some other limitations of Ambedkar politics based on identity of Dalit community. Ambedkar made a very radical call for conversion while he was already established himself in the politics of India, at the same time he was also part of government and state. He tried to legitimize his move through his politics and position. Kanshi Ram however subordinated the conversion part of Dalit identity politics to start with the independent political mobilization of Dalits but at the same time he didn't negate the Ambedkarite philosophy to justify his political move. Thus, he followed the principle of social movement precedes political movement. It was certainly the same 'silent revolution' however the socio-cultural mobilization with the same spirit was absent. On contrary to both models, using his political position along with Gandhi, Ambedkar's contemporary Jagjivan Ram in Bihar, notwithstanding the importance of an autonomous Dalit movement tried hard to develop a completely different model of Dalit politics in Bihar based on assimilative and reformative approaches which was not based on an independent Dalit politics in nature blunted the scope of an autonomous Dalit politics in the state. These three different models followed by three Dalit icons in different states in India itself explain the complexity and limitations of Dalit identity politics that whether socio-cultural movement is the part of an autonomous Dalit movement? However, Kanshi Ram proved his point with the success story of BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

The contemporary Dalit leaders of Bihar reject all three models of Dalit politics available in India. They neither follow Ambedkar, nor do they try to construct a broader independent Dalit social movement like Kanshi Ram. They also reject Jagjivan Ram model with their opportunistic move to one party to other. They are not serious about social reform and cultural change. They are just confined to the political

calculation to remain an insignificant part of power politics. They don't only question their legitimacy rather they have made the mass Dalit population of state an insignificant part of the politics of state.

Fourth and Fifth chapters are the detail descriptions of findings during the field work in two sites (Bochahan and Chakai state assembly constituencies in Muzaffarpur and Jamui district of Bihar respectively). I took them as testing grounds to understand the two features of Dalit community. First; what are the reasons for the different political engagements of the Dalit community in Bihar, and second; how is Dalit community responding to the construction of an alternative socio-cultural and political model of Ambedkarite politics to challenge the hegemony of the mainstream social, cultural, religious and political institutions and structures. Are the responses to the Ambedkarite mission of the emancipation of Dalit community positive in terms of understanding and level consciousness? Whether any of these available models of Dalit identity politics working in the state? These are the questions I intended to explore in the both fields of case study. Bochahan is the SCs reserved state assembly constituency. It is very exceptional in two senses. First; it is the longest ruling constituency (almost 40 years) by a single Dalit leader, and second; it has been remained a constituency of non-mainstream political dominance since its creation. Neither Congress nor BJP candidate has won even a single time in the constituency. People voted for either candidate of Janata Dal and its constituent's parties or independent candidate. Even before the formation of Janata Dal people voted for the alternative to the mainstream political party. This constituency is the part of the district Muzaffarpur, which has been remained a vibrant place for the communist movement. It is also the place of the dominance of Paswan caste of Dalit community, which is the most politically assertive Dalit caste in Bihar.

The irony is that despite these facts the support to the Ambedkarite politics and understanding to the importance of the construction of an independent alternative socio-cultural and political organization of Dalit community are as low as one can find and so does their understanding about the ADM. These leading sections of Dalit community in Bochahan constituency failed to generate a level of consciousness to fight for their liberation from the exploitation, segregation and multiple-discriminations. They also failed to reinforce a level of consciousness to challenge the exploitative Brahminical Hindu society and reinforcing a sense of justice, self-respect

and dignity among 'Dalit-self'. Consequently, Dalit community failed to recreate a formal democratic discourse and sense of share in power to start a collective struggle through construction of an alternative institution and agency of liberation under Ambedkarite or post-Ambedkarite framework. In this absence of alternative construction or an autonomous Dalit movement Dalits of Bihar have never organized around their social marginalization and the various forms of exclusion that they face in day-to-day life.

The different castes of Dalit community in this constituency represent different political formations and the essence of an autonomous Dalit movement lost within the multiple political contestations. The strong caste feeling among them (Dalits) do nothing but to reinforce the same Brahminical construct of caste superiority and inflicting humiliation to other castes of same community as inferior to another. Except some pockets of Paswan caste that are politically highly assertive behind the leaders of Paswan caste only rest of the Dalit community is intimidated, segregated, exploited and marginalized. Particularly in Bochahan constituency where Dalit community is comparatively in better conditions than Chakai constituency, I found not even a single residence, home or hamlet having a single picture of Ambedkar or other such Dalit icons. On contrary to this every Dalit residences were full of the picture or statues of Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

In the absence of Ambedkarite politics in the region, I found lack of alternative social, cultural and political imaginary among Dalit community. Dalits are still mentally slaved, ignorant and deprived under the strong patron-client system. In the absence of Dalit dissenting culture even local Paswan leaders are very reluctant to construct an alternative socio-cultural identity of Dalit community. Neither they believe in the Ambedkarite politics nor do they attempt to challenge the Brahminical hegemonic discourses because they understand that cultural politics and identity politics are the same. In this lack of consciousness the some politically assertive Dalits of Bihar easily bypass the logic of Ambedkarite politics to become the blind followers of the opportunist Dalit leaders and finally to reinforce the same Brahminical construct exploitation and humiliation to other castes of their own Dalit community.

After observing the socio-economic conditions and cultural understanding of Dalit community of the Bochahan constituency through the ethnographic study as a

participant observer I can easily explained that Dalit community of this region has not reached to the required level of political and cultural consciousness who can understand the importance of construction of an alternative Dalit identity movement. None of the model of Dalit politics is working there in the direction of ADM. However, the resources for the autonomous Dalit movement (not sufficient for the cultural politics) are available to start the process but it has lost the essence under the multiple political contestation and personal political aspirations even at local level of Dalit leadership. The dynamic of 'symbolic interactionism' has also been distorted under the political contestation between different castes of Dalit community. The prevailing social and cultural differences based on caste and other identities, which are major determinants of construction of alternative identities of Dalit community, could have helped immensely to launch an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and other states. However, it failed due to the self-interpretative modes governed by personal political aspiration of Dalit leaders of state. It killed the spirit of collective Dalit political aspirations even under the post-Ambedkarite framework of Dalit identity politics.

Coming to the Chakai constituency, my second field of study better I introduced this constituency in respect of Dalit community as the worse state neglected area than the worse Naxalite or Maoist affected area. I found a Dalit village called Bhoodan Tola in Loha Lakadaha Panchayat that comes under Sono Community Development Block, where Dalits are sharing water sources with animals. That is not a government constructed pond rather it was down land where water lags after rains. Their level of consciousness are so low that they can not even understand the meaning of Dalit, Democracy, Vote, Government, State, Liberty, Equality and other values then what to talk about socio-cultural politics, Dalit dissenting culture and alternative politics. They are living their lives in the complete absence of social and political understanding under the individual struggle of survival, hopelessness and helplessness. They never organized against their exploitation, marginality, discriminations and segregation; however, they have strong dissent against the feudal forces as well as Brahminical Hindu society.

In this situation they become easy prey of Naxalite and Maoist organizations. They are sandwiched between the state machineries and the Maoist organizations. However, this is also the region where Sarvodaya Movement was very active. The

remains of Sarvodaya Ashrams are still there. Some are active but most of them are dis-functional. I visited all three Sarvodaya ashrams present in Chakai constituency. In the absence of state responses Sarvodaya activists either joined the political organization of their choice or chose to remain silent, as they are incapable to fight with the forces that inflict injustice to Dalit community. In the dominance and influence of Maoist organization inculcating the Ambedkarite spirit and idea are almost impossible until they achieve some level of material empowerment and literacy to understand the importance of organizing together against injustices being done to them. They do not understand the meaning socio-cultural Ambedkarite politics for the liberation and emancipation of Dalit community. However, in some Dalit villages I found Dalit engagements with Christian missionary and these missionary are working for the betterment of Dalit community as the non-political organization.

After analyzing the findings of these two fields of case study and the contemporary politics of Bihar the last chapter analyses the possibility of an autonomous Dalit movement in Bihar. It indicate that whether these Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite movements of Dalit community are more democratic and based on establishing socio-economic justice or not can be the subject of further research but after understanding its psychological and motivational impacts on Dalit community, I found it more assertive, more liberating and emancipatory to Dalit community than assimilative and reformative model of the mainstream politics. But the irony is that Dalit community of Bihar is still not responding positively to Ambedkarite politics. Baring some exceptions even Dalit leaders of Bihar do not endorse Ambedkarite politics in the state and so does the Dalit community. The Dalit leadership in Bihar has ignored both the aspects and that is a problem for the absence of ADM in Bihar. So, as the evidences found in this research suggest that there should be a movement within the Dalit community for consolidating its identity through alternative religions and construction of other independent Dalit social and cultural institutions and agencies. This would break them away from the hegemonic dominance of the Hinduism and of the mainstream political parties. It would enhance their bargaining capacity and capacity to articulate their interest better. So, this thesis suggests one step forward for possible ADM in Bihar, i.e. construction of an all encompassing, all-inclusive alternative socio-cultural identity. It may require bringing all liberation theologians

such as Ambedkar, Gandhi and Marx together, under the domain of universal principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity and the broader mission of establishing socio-economic Justice, meaningful social transformation.

Bibliography

Primary Resources

Desai, Mahadev H. (1936). HarijanSevak. Volume -4, Issue 1, 22 February 1936. Pp. accessed on August 2016, 3-4. <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

Desai, Mahadev H. (1936). HarijanSevak. Volume -4, Issue 1, 22 February 1936. <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

Gandhi, M. K. (1920). Young India. Volume Number 2, Issue 48. Accessed on January 26, 2017, <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org/journals-by-gandhiji/young-india>

Gandhi, M K. (1933). Harijan. Volume-1, Issue-20, June 24, P.- 3 Accessed on January, 2017. <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

---. (1933). Harijan(1933). 17 june 1933. Volume-1, issue-19. P.-2. Accessed on January, 2017 <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

---. (1934). Harijan. Volume-1, issue-52, February 2, . P.-1 Accessed on January, 2017 <https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org>

HarijanSevakSangh. (1933). The Annual Report October 1932 to September 1933, Accessed on January 21, 2017, <http://www.gandhcreationhss.org/>

State archive, Bihar. File number 317/32. Unpublished

State Archieve Bihar. File 28/1932

State Archieve, Bihar. file 23/1932.

Selected work of Mahatma Gandhi: Volume-4. Gandhi Sevagram Ashram, Wardha. Accessed on January, 2017 <http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org>

The Collected Works Of Mahatma Gandhi. Volume 59, accessed on August 2016, <http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/collected-works-of-mahatma-gandhi-volume-1-to-98.php>

Interviews and Written Communication

- Paswan, Paswan. (2015). Jila Parishad Bochahan, Muzaffarpur, Bihar.
- Kumar, Anil. (2015). President of Dalit Sena, Bochahan , Muzaffarpur, Bihar.
- Prasad, Kishori. (2015). Lohanipur, Patna, Bihar.
- Kumar, Amit. (2015). Research Scholar, Patna University, Patna, Bihar.
- Ram, Akal. (2015). Assitant Professor, Patna University, Patna, Bihar.
- Anand, Subedar. (2015). Residents of Patna, Bihar.
- Kumar, Shahi Bhushan. (2015). Research Scholar, Bhijpur, Bihar.
- Hans, Buddha Saran. (2015). Chitkohra, Anishabad Patna, Bihar.
- Madan. (2015). Sarvodaya Activist, Chakai, Jamui, Bihar.
- Singh, Bajrang Bihari. (2015). Interdependent Candidate, Chakai, Jamui, Bihar.
- Raj, Vishal. (2015). Director, Nav Jagriti Shiksha Manch, Chakai, jamui, Bihar.
- Kumar, Madan. (2015). Sangathan Mantri of Badmar Dam, Chakai, jamui, Bihar.
- Phoolchand. (2015). Teacher, Loha Panchayat, Chakai, Jamui, Bihar.
- Ram, Suresh. (2015). Jila Parishad, Chakai, Jamui, Bihar.
- Das, sheetal. (2015). Teacher, Charka Utkramit Madhya Vidyalaya, Chakai, Bihar.
- Kant, Vinay. (2015). Professor B N College, Patna University, Bihar.
- Bikkal, Vidyanand. (2015). Chairman, SC Commission, Bihar.
- Arya, R S. (2015). Professor, Darbhanga House, Bihar
- Dohre, G P. (2015). Former DGP, Bihar

Hans, Buddha Sharan. (2015) Retired IAS, Bihar.

Secondary Resources

Books

Alam, Sanjeev (2012). *Religion, Community and Education: The Case of Rural Bihar*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press.

Ambedkar, B. R. (1987). The Hindu Social Order- Its Essential Features. In Vasant Moon (ed.) *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches. Vol. 03*, (pp. 95-115). Bombay: Deptt. of Education, Govt. of Maharashtra.

Agarwalla, S. S. (1998). *Religion and Caste Politics*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication.

Anggrosino, M. (2007). *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Arun, C. Joe. (2007). *Constructing Dalit Identity*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

Atkinson, P. (1990). *The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality*. London: Routledge.

Banerjee, M. (2014). *Why India Votes?* New Delhi: Routledge.

Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing Focus Groups*. New Delhi : Sage Publication.

Barik, R. K. (2006). *Land and Caste politics in Bihar*. Delhi: Shipra Publication.

Brass, P. R. (1975). *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

Brewer, J. D. (2000). *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Chatterjee, Partha (1977). *Our Modernty*. kolkatta, SEPHIS-CSSSC.

Chaudhary, P. K. (2005). *Swarg Par Dhawa: Bihar Me Dalit Andolan (1912-2000)*. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan.

Das, K. C. (2004). *Indian Dalits: Voices, visions and politics*. Global Vision Publishing House.

Das, Abhilash (2009), KabirDarshan, KabirParakhSansthan, Allahabad.

Desai, A. R. (2005). *Rural Sociology in India*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

- Datta, Kalikinkar (1957). *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar-1905-1946*. Patna: Government of Bihar.
- Fernandes, Walter (1996). *The Emerging Dalit Identity: The Re-assertation of the Subalterns*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- Flick, U. (2007). *Designing Qualitative Research*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Fraser, Nancy (2003). *Redistribution Or Recognition? : A Political- Philosophical Exchange*. Verso.
- Ginsborg, P. (2005). *The Politics of Everyday Life: Making Choices, Changing Lives*. London: Yale University Press.
- Guru, Gopal. (2009). *Humiliation: Claims and Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hardtmann. E.M. (2009). *The Dalits Movements in India: Local Practices. Global Connections*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, J (1990). *The Philosophy of Social Research*. London, Longman (Second Edition)
- Ilaiah, Kancha (2013). *Untouchable God*. Kolkata, Samya.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe (2003). *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of Lower Caste in North India*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jaffrolet, C. (2010). *Religion Caste and Politics in India*. Delhi: Primus Books.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark (1982). *Religion as Social Vision: The Movement against Untouchability in Twentieth-Century Punjab*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- James Massey(ed.)*A Theology from Dalit Perspective*, CDS,
- Kothari, R. (1995). *Caste in Indian Politics*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Kumar, A. (2008). *Community Warriors*. Delhi: Anthem Press.
- Kunnath, G. J. (2012). *Rebels From the Mud Houses: Dalits and the Making of the Maoist Revolution in Bihar*. New Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Kumar, A. (2015). *Criminalisation of Politics: Caste Land and State*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication.
- Kumar, Raj (2010). *Dalit Personal Narratives, Reading Caste, Nation and Identity*. New Delhi: Orient Black Swan.

Lal, A. K. (1997). *Dalits In Action: An Evaluation of Bihar Dalit Vikas Samiti*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Lohiya, R. (1964). *The Caste System*. Hyderabad: Navahind Prakashan.

Lynch, Owen M. (1974). *The Politics of Untouchability*. New Delhi: National Publishing House.

Manohar, Dr. Murali (2009) (ed.), *Dalits and Religion*. Daryaganj, New Delhi: Atlantic Publication.

Mishra, V. (1999). *Selected Works*. New Delhi: A CPI (ML) Publication.

Narayan, Badri (2001). *The Making of the Dalit Public in North India, Uttar Pradesh, 1950- Present*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

---and A. R Mishra (1998). *Aajke Dalit Shudra, KalKeShasak-Malik NagvanshiPurohit*. Allahabad: Milan Pustak Bhandar.

--- (2004). *Multiple Marginalities: An Anthology of Dalit Writings*. Delhi: Manohar Publication.

---. (2009). *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

---. (2005). *Myth, Memory and the Politics: A study of the Language of Mobilization of Grassroots Dalit*. Project report. G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad.

Naik, C. D. (2003). *Thoughts and Philosophy of Doctor B. R. Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.

O'Dea, Thomas F. (1969). *The Sociology of religion*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited.

O'Hanlon, Rosalind (1985). *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma JotibaRaoPhule and Low Caste protest in the Nineteenth –Century Western India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Omvedt, Gail (1995). *Dalit Vision*. Delhi: Orient Longman.

---. (2002). *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Agenda*. New Delhi: Sage Publications

---. (1986). *Caste, Agrarian Relations and Agrarian Conflicts*. In A.R Desai (Eds.). *Agrarian Struggles in India after independence*. (pp. 168-95). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

---. (2002). *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Agenda*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Pai, S. (2012). *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Vols. Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge, Volume -3). New Delhi: Sage.

Paswan, D. S. (2014). *Cultural Nationalism and Dalit*. New Delhi: Samvad Media Private Limited.

Rajkumar, Peniel (2010). *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation: Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Rao, R. Sangeetha (1989). *Caste System in India: Myth and Reality*. New Delhi: India publishers and distributors.

Rao, A. (2009). *Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

Rao, M.S.A (1984). *Social Movements in India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Rao, A. (2009). *Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

Rawat, R. S. (2012). *Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in North India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

Robinson, R. and Kujur, Joseph M. (2010). *Margins of Faith: Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Sen, Amartya, Jean Derez (2013). *Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*. Princeton University Press.

Sen, Amartya (2010). *The Idea of Justice*. Penguin

Shah, G. (2001). *Dalit Identity and Politics* (ed.). New Delhi: Sage.

---. (2002). *Caste and Democratic Politics in India* (ed.). Delhi: Permanent Black .

--- . (2004). *Social Movements in India: A review of the Literature*. New Delhi: Sage.

---. (2006). *Untouchability in rural India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

The Shared Mirror. (2015). *Hatred in The Belly*. Hyderabad: The Shared Mirror Publishing House.

Thoppil, Ulahannan (2012). *God's Own Untouchables*. New Delhi, Times Group Books

Webster, John C. B. (2002). *Dalit Religion and Dalit Liberation: An Examination of Perspectives*. Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributers.

Williams, R. (1958). *Culture and society, 1780-1950*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

Yagati, ChinnaRao (2003). *Dalits' Struggle for Identity*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.

Zelliot, E. (1992). *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essay on the Ambedkar Movement*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication.

Journal

Alam, J. (1991). State and the Making of Communist Politics in India, 1947-57. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26(45), 2573-2583.

Alam, J. (1996). Behind the Verdict: What Kind of a Nation Are We?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(25), 1612-1620.

Alam, J. (1999). What is happening inside Indian Democracy?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(37), 2649-2656.

Alam, M. S. (2009). Bihar: Can Lalu Prasad Reclaim Lost Ground?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV(17), 11-14.

Aleaz, K. P. (2004). Some features of a Dalit theology. *Asia Journal of Theology*, 18(1), 146-167.

Ananth, V. K. (2005). Shifting alliances in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(1), 13-14.

Assadi, M., & Rajendran, S. (2000). Changing Shape of Caste Conflict. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(19), 1610-1612.

Ayrookuzhiel, A. M. (1994). The Dalits, Religions and Interfaith Dialogue. *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, 7(1), 6.

Bandyopadhyay, D. (2009). Lost opportunity in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV(47), 12-14.

Bandyopadhyay, S. (2000). Transfer of Power and the Crisis of Dalit Politics in India, 1945-47. *Modern Asian Studies*, 34(4), 893-942.

- Banerjee, S. (2002). Naxalbari: Between past and future. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(22), 2115-2116.
- Banerjee, S. (2008). On the Naxalite movement: A Report With a Difference. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 10-12.
- Banerji, R. (2011). Challenging Bihar on primary education. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVI(11), 33-39.
- Berntsen, M. (1988). *The experience of hinduism: Essays on religion in Maharashtra*. SUNY Press.
- Beth, S. (2007). Dalit Autobiographies in Hindi: the transformation of pain into resistance. *Swedish South Asian Studies Network*, 9.
- Bhalotra, S., Clots-Figueras, I., Iyer, L., & Cassan, G. (2012). Politician identity and religious conflict in India. *Unpublished manuscript, retrieved November, 14, 2012*.
- Bharti, I. (1990). Mobilisation of Agricultural Labour: Jehanabad Experience. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25(22), 1181-1184.
- Bhatia, B. (2005). The Naxalite movement in central Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(15), 1536-1549.
- Bhattacharya, B. (2000). Bihar after bifurcation: a challenging Future. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(43, 44), 3800-3804.
- Bhattacharya, D. (2006). Trail Blazed by Naxalbari Uprising. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(50), 5191-5194.
- Bhattacharya, D. (2012). Ranvir Sena Revisited: Feudal-Kulak Power and Lalu-Nitish Continuum. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(30), 28.
- Bhattacharya, G. (2009). Intra-state disparity in government expenditure: an analysis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV(26 &27), 231-237.
- Bhattacharya, S. (2013). Changing civilian support for the Maoist conflict in India. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 24(5), 813-834.
- Bhattacharyya, D. (2010). Left in the lurch: the demise of the world's longest elected regime?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51-59.
- Botvar, P. K. (2009). Alternative Religion—A New Political Cleavage?: An Analysis of Norwegian Survey Data on New Forms of Spirituality. *Politics and Religion*, 2(3), 378-394.

Brocheux, P. (1983). Moral economy or political economy? the peasants are always rational. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 42(4), 791-803.

Brown, G. K., Deneulin, S., & Devine, J. (2009). *Contesting the boundaries of religion in social mobilization* (No. 4). Bath Papers in International Development and Wellbeing.

Cameron, M. (2007). Considering dalits and political identity in imagining a new Nepal. *HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 27(1), 4.

Chandra, U. (2014). The Maoist movement in contemporary India. *Social Movement Studies*, 13(3), 414-419.

Ciotti, M. (2011). Remaking Traditional Sociality, Ephemeral Friendships and Enduring Political Alliances: "State-made" Dalit Youth in Rural North India. *Focaal*, 2011(59), 19-32.

Clements, P. (2005). A Rawlsian Analysis of the plight of Bihar. *Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID)*, 39(4), 3-29.

Dasgupta, C. (2009). The United Left Bloc in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV(10), 15-18.

Del Valle, J. (2013). Language, politics, and history: an introductory essay. *A Political History of Spanish: The Making of a Language*, 3-20.

Deshingkar, P., Kumar, S., Chobey, H. K., & Kumar, D. (2006). The role of migration and remittances in promoting livelihoods in Bihar. *Overseas Development Institute, London*, 1-47.

Deshpande, A., & Ramachandran, R. (2013). How backward are the other backward classes? Changing contours of caste disadvantage in India. *Center for Development Economics Working Papers*, 233.

Dirks, N. B. (2011). *Castes of mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton University Press.

Engineer, A. A. (1991). Remaking Indian Muslim Identity. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1036-1038.

Ganguly, D. (2000). Can the Dalit speak: Caste, Postcoloniality and the new humanities?. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 23(s1), 43-62.

Geevan, P. C., & Nigam, A. (2016). Bihar elections 2015 and the Left: A short march to nowhere. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(3), 13-15.

- Ghosh, S. (1974). *The Naxalite Movement: A Maoist Experiment*. Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay.
- Gorringer, H. (2005). 'You build your house, we'll build ours': The Attractions and Pitfalls of Dalit Identity Politics. *Social Identities*, 11(6), 653-672.
- Guha, R. (2007). Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian democracy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(32), 3305-3312.
- Gupta, C. D. (2010). Unravelling Bihar's 'Growth Miracle'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV(52), 50-62.
- Gupta, D. (2005). Caste and politics: identity over system. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, 34, 409-427.
- Gupta, D. K. (2007). The Naxalites and the Maoist movement in India: birth, demise, and reincarnation. *Democracy and Security*, 3(2), 157-188.
- Gupta, T. D. (1992). Yadav ascendancy in Bihar politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27(26), 1304-1306.
- Gupta, T. D. (1993). Problems of Left Assertion in Bihar: Patna Poll Lessons. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1279-1280.
- Guru, G. (1993). Dalit movement in mainstream sociology. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(14), 570-573.
- Guru, G. (1993). Dalit movement in mainstream sociology. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(14), 570-573.
- Guru, G. (1995). One-Dimensional View of Dalit Movement, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, Issue No. 2.
- Guru, G. (1997). *Dalit Cultural Movement & Dalit Politics in Maharashtra*. Vikas Adhyayan Kendra.
- Guru, G. (1998). Understanding Ambedkar's Construction of National Movement. *Economic and political Weekly*, 156-157.
- Guru, G. (2002). How egalitarian are the social sciences in India?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(50), 5003-5009.
- Guru, G. (2013). Freedom of Expression and the Life of the Dalit Mind. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 48(10), 39-45.
- Guru, G., & Geetha, V. (2000). New phase of dalit-bahujan intellectual activity. *Economic and political weekly*, 35(3), 130-134.

Hasan, Z. (2010). Gender, religion and democratic politics in India. *Third world quarterly*, 31(6), 939-954.

Hauser, W. (2004). From peasant soldiering to peasant activism: Reflections on the transition of a martial tradition in the flaming fields of Bihar. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 47(3), 401-434.

Heller, P. (2012). Democracy, participatory politics and development: Some comparative lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa. *Polity*, 44(4), 643-665.

Hindwan, S. (2010). Caste and class of violence in India: Assertion among Dalits. *Journal of Peace Studies*, 17(4), 01.

Hobsbawm, E. (1996). Identity politics and the left. *new left review*, (217), 38.

Jaffrelot, C. (1999). Caste politics in North, West and South India before Mandal. In *The low caste movements between Sanskritisation and Ethnicisation. Paper prepared for A Festschrift Conference India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Honor of Myron Weiner Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame. September* (pp. 24-26).

Jaffrelot, C. (2000). The rise of the other backward classes in the Hindi belt. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59(1), 86-108.

Jaffrelot, C. (2010). *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India*. Primus Books.

Jaoul, N. (2011). Manju Devi's martyrdom: Marxist-Leninist politics and the rural poor in Bihar. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 45(3), 347-371.

Jayaraman, R., & Lanjouw, P. (1999). The evolution of poverty and inequality in Indian villages. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 14(1), 1-30.

Jha, M. Pushendra (2012) Governing Caste and Managing Conflicts: Bihar, 1990–2011. *Policies and Practices*, 48.

Jha, S. N. (1970). Caste in Bihar Politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5(7), 341-344.

Kannabiran, V., & Kannabiran, K. (1991). Caste and gender: understanding dynamics of power and violence. *Economic and political weekly*, 2130-2133.

Kanti, S. T. (2014). Human rights and Dalits in India: A sociological analysis. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 36-40.

Karthikeyan, D., Gorringer, H., & Rajangam, S. (2012). Dalit Political Imagination and Replication in Contemporary Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(36), 30-34.

- Kennedy, J. (2014). Gangsters or Gandhians? The Political Sociology of the Maoist Insurgency in India. *India Review*, 13(3), 212-234.
- Kerkar, S. Religion and Politics in India. *Avalokana*, 23.
- Komalesha, H. S. (2015). Reconciling Gandhi with Ambedkar. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 50(34), 75.
- Krishan, A. (1997). *Ambedkar and Gandhi: Emancipators of Untouchables in Modern India*. Himalaya Publishing House.
- Kujur, R. (2008). Naxal movement in india: A profile. *IPCS Research Papers*.
- Kujur, R. K. (2006). Underdevelopment and Naxal movement. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 557-559.
- Kumar, A. (2009). Illegitimacy of the State in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(44), 8-11.
- Kumar, G. (2001). Panchayat Elections: Overcoming State's Resistance. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1681-1684.
- Kumar, L. (2000, July). Do we have A Theoretical Framework to explain Social Movement? Third System, Third Sector, Third Way-No Way. In *Fourth International Conference of the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR), Dublin, Ireland* (pp. 5-8).
- Kumar, N. (2000). Dalit and Shudra Politics and Anti-Brahmin Movement. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(45), 3977-3979.
- Kumar, P. (1999). Dalits and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh: Issues and Challenges. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(14), 822-826.
- Kumar, R. (1985). Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Poona pact, 1932. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 8(1-2), 87-101.
- Kumar, S. (1999). New phase in backward caste politics in bihar: Janata dal on the decline. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(34/ 35), 2472-2480.
- Kumar, S. (2004). Janata regionalized: contrasting bases of electoral support in Bihar and Orissa. *Regional Reflections: comparing politics across India's states*, 111-138.
- Kumar, S. (2004). New Phase in Backward Caste Politics in Bihar, 1990-2000. *Caste and Democratic Politics in India*, 34(34-5), 315.
- Kumar, S. (2008). Changing Face of Naxalites in Bihar: From Homelessness to Real Estate. *New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. Article, 2608*.

Kumar, S. (2009). Patterns of political participation: trends and perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(39), 47-51.

Kumar, S. Declining Naxalism from Central Bihar. *Journal of Defence Studies*, 4(4), 78.

Kumar, S., & Ranjan, R. (2009). Bihar: Development Matters. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(39), 141-144.

Kumar, S., Alam, M. S., & Joshi, D. (2008). Caste dynamics and political process in Bihar. *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, 20(1&2), 1-32.

Kumar, V. (2004). BSP and Dalit Aspirations. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(18), 1778-1781.

Kunnath, G. J. (2006). Becoming a Naxalite in rural Bihar: Class struggle and its contradictions. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 33(1), 89-123.

Kunnath, G. J. (2009). Smouldering dalit fires in Bihar, India. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 33(3-4), 309.

Lerche, J., Shah, A., & Harriss-White, B. (2013). Introduction: Agrarian questions and left politics in India. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13(3), 337-350.

Louis, P. (1998). State repression and people's resistance: Assessing social transformation in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33(21), 1228-1230.

Louis, P. (2006). Birth Pangs in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4946-4947.

Louis, P. (2007). Lynchings in Bihar: Reassertion of Dominant Castes. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26-28.

Mahadevan, P. (2012). The Maoist insurgency in India: between crime and revolution. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 23(2), 203-220.

Mahajan, G., & Jodhka, S. (2009). Religions, democracy and governance: spaces for the marginalized in contemporary India.

Mahajan, G., Pai, S., & Jayal, N. G. (1994). State and New Liberal Agenda in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1112-1116.

Maurya, S. (2016). Dalit and Its Resistance in India: An Empirical Study of Dalit Movements. *International Journal of Innovative Knowledge Concepts*, 4(6).

Mehrotra, S. (Ed.). (2014). *Countering Naxalism with Development: Challenges of Social Justice and State Security*. SAGE Publications India.

- Mehta, P. B. (2004). Constraints on electoral mobilisation. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(51), 5399-5403.
- Misra, A. (1993). Dalit Assertion: Possibilities and Limits. *Economic and Political weekly*, 28(50), 2701-2702.
- Misra, A. (1995). Limits of OBC-Dalit Politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30(23), 1355-1357.
- Moffatt, M. (1997). Revising caste?. *Reviews in Anthropology*, 26(2-3), 117-134.
- Mukta, P. (1995). *The Politics of Religious Nationalism and New Indian Historiography: Lessons for the Indian Diaspora*. Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
- Muralidharan, S. (2006). Religion, Nationalism and the State: Gandhi and India's Engagement with Political Modernity. *Social Scientist*, 34(3 &4), 3-36.
- Muthaiah, P. (2004). Politics of Dalit identity. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 65(3), 385-402.
- Nagaraj, D. R. (1990). Gandhi and the Dalit Question: Comparative Reflections on the Gandhian, Ambedkarite and Marxist Approach. 1990, 77-81.
- Nagaraj, R., & Rahman, A. (2010). Booming Bihar: Fact or Fiction?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV(8), 10-11.
- Narayan, B. (2001). Heroes, histories and booklets. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3923-3934.
- Narayan, B. (2004). Inventing Caste History: Dalit Mobilisation and Nationalist past. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 38(1-2), 193-220.
- Nigam, A. (2002). In search of a Bourgeoisie: Dalit politics enters a New Phase. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(13), 1190-1193.
- Omvedt, G. (1980). Caste, Agrarian Relations and Agrarian Conflicts. *Sociological Bulletin*, 29(2), 142-170.
- Omvedt, G. (1996). The anti-caste movement and the discourse of power. *Social Change and Political Discourse in India, Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*, 3.
- Oommen, G. (2000). The emerging Dalit theology: A historical appraisal. *Indian Church History Review*, 34(1), 19-37.

Pai, S. (1997). Dalit assertion in UP: Implications for politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32(37), 2313-2314.

Pai, S. (2002). *Dalit assertion and the unfinished democratic revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh*. SAGE Publications India.

Pai, S., & Singh, J. (1997). Politicisation of Dalits and Most Backward Castes: Study of social conflict and political preferences in four villages of Meerut District. *Economic and political weekly*, 1356-1361.

Palshikar, S. (1996). Gandhi-Ambedkar Interface:... When Shall the Twain Meet?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2070-2072.

Palshikar, S., & Deshpande, R. (2009, December). Redefining state politics in India: Shift towards comparisons. In *Introductory Note for Seminar on 'Contextualizing Maharashtra: Comparisons across States*.

Palshikar, S., & Kumar, S. (2004). Participatory norm: How broad-based is it?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(51), 5412-5417.

Panikkar, K. N. (1993). Religious symbols and political mobilization: The agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya. *Social Scientist*, 63-78.

Patankar, B., & Omvedt, G. (1979). The Dalit liberation movement in colonial period. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14(7 & 8), 409-424.

Pushpendra. (1999). Dalit assertion through electoral politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(36), 2609-2618.

Rai, H., & Pandey, J. (1981). State Politics in Bihar: A Crisis of Political Institutionalisation. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 42(4), 45-64.

Rai, P. (2013). Political representation and empowerment: Women in local government institutions in Bihar, India. *Stockholm University, Department of Political Science*, 10691.

Rajan, N. (2003). Left-Liberalism and Caste Politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2346-2349.

Ram, R. (2004). Untouchability in India with a difference: Ad Dharm, Dalit assertion, and caste conflicts in Punjab. *Asian Survey*, 44(6), 895-912.

Ram, R. (2008). Ravidass Deras and social protest: Making sense of Dalit consciousness in Punjab (India). *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67(4), 1341-1364.

Ram, R. (2016). Sacralising Dalit Peripheries. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(1), 33.

- Ramachandran, S. (2003). Casting shadows: Dalit assertion in Indian literature.
- Rao, A. (2009). *The caste question: Dalits and the politics of modern India*. University of California Press.
- Rawat, R. S. (2003). Making Claims for Power: A New Agenda in Dalit Politics of Uttar Pradesh, 1946-48. *Modern Asian Studies*, 37(3), 585-612.
- Rodgers, G., & Rodgers, J. (2011). Inclusive development? Migration, governance and social change in rural Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVI(23), 43-50.
- Rodrigues, V. (2011). Reading Texts and Traditions: The Ambedkar-Gandhi Debate. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVI(2), 56-66.
- Rorabacher, J. A. (2008). Gerrymandering, poverty and flooding: a perennial story of Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45-53.
- Ross, M. H. (1986). A cross-cultural theory of political conflict and violence. *Political Psychology*, 7(3), 427-469.
- Roy, B. (2002). Paradoxes of Dalit Politics in Uttar Pradesh. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 29(2), 107-116.
- Roy, D. (2008). Whither the Subaltern Domain?—An Ethnographic Enquiry. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(23), 31-38.
- Ruparelia, S. (2008). How the politics of recognition enabled India's democratic exceptionalism. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 21(1-4), 39-56.
- Samuelsen, G. W. (2011). *The Remaking of Caste Identity: Dalit Activists in New Delhi* (Master's thesis).
- Sarkar, R., & Sarkar, A. (2016). Dalit politics in India: recognition without redistribution. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51(20).
- Sen, A. (1983). Development: Which way now?. *The Economic Journal*, 93(372), 745-762.
- Sengupta, U. (1999). Too Hasty a Requiem for Laloo Yadav. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3106-3107.
- Shah, A. (2013). The intimacy of insurgency: Beyond coercion, greed or grievance in Maoist India. *Economy and Society*, 42(3), 480-506.
- Shah, A., & Pettigrew, J. (2009). Windows into a revolution: ethnographies of Maoism in South Asia. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 33(3-4), 225.

Sharma, A. N. (2005). Agrarian relations and socio-economic change in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 960-972.

Sheth, D. L. (2004). Globalisation and new politics of micro-movements. *Economic and political weekly*, 39(1), 45-58.

Sinha, A. (1996). Social mobilisation in Bihar: Bureaucratic feudalism and distributive justice. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(51), 3287-3289.

Sinha, A., & Sinha, I. (1996). State, Class and 'Sena' Nexus: Bathani Tola Massacre. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(44), 2908-2912.

Sinha, J. K. P. (1973). Emerging Trends in Bihar Politics. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 34(4), 471-481.

Skaria, A. (2014). 'Can the Dalit articulate a universal position?': the intellectual, the social, and the writing of history. *Social History*, 39(3), 340-358.

Skaria, A. (2015). Ambedkar, Marx and the Buddhist question. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(3), 450-465.

Smith, P. (2008). Going Global: The Transnational Politics of the Dalit Movement. *Globalizations*, 5(1), 13-33.

Sridharan, E. (2003). Coalitions and Party Strategies in India's Parliamentary federation. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 33(4), 135-152.

Srivastava, S. S. (2007). Violence and Dalit women's resistance in rural Bihar. *Indian Anthropologist*, 31-44.

Stame, F. (1984). The Crisis of the Left and New Social Identities. *Telos*, 1984(60), 3-14.

Subramanian, K. S. (2010). State response to Maoist violence in India: a critical assessment. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(32), 23-26.

Talshir, G. (2005). Knowing right from left: the politics of identity between the radical left and far right. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 10(3), 311-335.

Tiwari, M. (2010). " Didi" of Rural Bihar: Real Agent of Change?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV(33), 27-30.

Tsujita, Y., Oda, H., & Ghosh, P. (2010). Development and intra-state disparities in Bihar. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 45(50), 13.

- Vaitheespara, R., & Venkatasubramanian, R. (2015). Beyond the Politics of Identity: The Left and the Politics of Caste and Identity in Tamil Nadu, 1920–63. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(4), 543-557.
- Verma, V. (2011). Conceptualising Social Exclusion: New Rhetoric or Transformative Politics?. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVI(50), 89-97.
- Vicziany, M. (2005). Dalit responses to unemployment in contemporary India. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 28(1), 154-179.
- Vijayan, P. K. (2013). Caste identity versus class solidarity: Some speculative notes. *Sanhati. com*, 26.
- Visvanathan, S. (2001). Democracy, governance and science: Strange case of the missing discipline. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(39), 3684-3688.
- Wankhede, H. S. (2008). The political and the social in the Dalit movement today. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(6), 50-57.
- Witsoe, J. (2012). Caste and democratization in postcolonial India: an ethnographic examination of lower caste politics in Bihar. *Democratization*, 19(2), 312-333.
- Witsoe, J. (2012). Everyday corruption and the political mediation of the Indian state. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 47(6), 47.
- Yadav, M. (2004). Politics from Below. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5510-5513.
- Yadav, Y. (1993). Towards an Indian Agenda for the Indian Left. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2199-2201.
- Yadav, Y. (1996). Reconfiguration in Indian politics: State assembly elections, 1993-95. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 95-104.
- Yadav, Y. (1999). Electoral Politics in the Time of Change: India's Third Electoral System, 1989-99. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2393-2399.

Newspaper and Magazines

The Searchlight (This newspaper has published till 1963 after that it closed)

The Indian Nation

Hindustan

Times of India

Aaj

Dainik Jagaran

Sablog

Mithila Mihir