

**FORMATION OF POLITICAL IDENTITIES: A
STUDY OF DALITS IN MAHARASHTRA AND
UTTAR PRADESH**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "FORMATION OF POLITICAL IDENTITIES: A STUDY OF DALITS IN MAHARASHTRA AND UTTAR PRADESH" submitted by Mr. RAJKUMAR, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. This is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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TO
THE SEEKERS OF
ENLIGHTENED INDIA

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ABBREVIATIONS

AISCF	All India Scheduled Caste Federation
BAMCEF	Backward And Minority Classes Employees Federation
BRP	Bhartiya Republican Party
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
DP	Dalit Panthers
DS-4	Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti
ILP	Independent Labour Party
RPI	Republican Party of India
UP	Uttar Pradesh

CONTENTS

	PAGE NO.
1. INTRODUCTION	1-7
2. CHAPTER 1 DALIT POLITICS IN MAHARASHTRA: IN QUEST OF EQUALITY	8-40
3. CHAPTER 2 DALIT POLITICS IN UTTAR PRADESH: A STRUGGLE FOR POWER	41-67
4. CHAPTER 3 MAHARASHTRA AND UTTAR PRADESH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS	68-90
5. CONCLUSION	91-96
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	97-109

INTRODUCTION

Identity of Dalits has been one of the most debatable issues in the "Dalit Liberation Movement". Various claims and counter claims are made and contested, but on the existential level the fact remains that the Dalits and Hindus have been completely separated from each other. The segregation of the Dalits was "sanctified" by the "religious dogmas" justifying the "polluting" credentials of "untouchables" whose touch, shadow, footmarks, even voice or look was enough to defile the caste Hindus' "purity".

Numerous disabilities in social, economic, cultural, religious and political spheres never allowed the Dalits to be apart of the whole but confined them as a part. It was not only that the Hindus believed and practiced "untouchability" but worse they successfully made "untouchables" believe that they were "untouchables". This ideological stranglehold made the problem more complex and intractable.

Denial of basic civil rights by restricting their food, clothes, occupation and movement, the segregation to unhygienic outskirts of the village was absolute, rendering the Dalits in the perpetual state of enforced social backwardness, economic exploitation and political subordination.

As a result of overall socio-economic changes in the nineteenth century, the oppressed social groups also witnessed an improvement in their abject and appalling conditions. Social reform movements on the one hand and better opportunities for mobility on the other provided a new lease of life for the Dalits. They witnessed an overall improvement with some of them aspiring for

education, employment, politics and other strategic resources.

The establishment of democratic and secular political institutions provided the Dalits better economic and political opportunities. But the dominant groups for long continued to define the frame and paradigm under which, options for the Dalits were limited although they secured equal protection of law and the equality before law. But the two decades of constitutional functioning resulted in demand for greater distribution, participation and decentralization of political power. That way the problem of Dalits from the improvement in living conditions to the empowerment of community, has gone through three stages.

- (i) The problem of Survival and Access to basic resources.
- (ii) The problem of Dignity and Equality.
- (iii) The problem of Participation and Power sharing.

Assertion

The respective problems the Dalit faced in different phases met with different challenges from them. The first attempt was made by Chokemala, Kabir, Raidas and others condemning 'untouchability' but still holding on to the system as such in 'mediaeval period'.

The second phase of assertion came in the form of 'Adi Movement', claiming the indigenous status of Dalits. Phule and Ambedkar were part of this assertion hailing from the state of Maharashtra. It not only contested Hinduism but attempted to provide alternative to it, with more rational and humanistic tradition.

The contemporary phase of assertion is at the material level, trying to

displace the ruling class from the position of power, prestige and prosperity. It is the confrontational stage where the Dalits as equal participants are involved in protecting, preserving and promoting their groups interest through the peaceful process of political democracy.

The attempts on the part of Hindus to erode or subsume distinct Dalit identity have met with vitriolic and profound consciousness of identity and rights by the Dalits. The reformism of Hindus in the form of Arya Samaj and Gandhism was vehemently protested by 'Adi Movement' and Ambedkar.

After Independence, having faith in the nation building or developmental model and showing lot of patience and forbearance, the issue of identity and autonomy of Dalits remained at the periphery. But as the discrimination and exploitation became more subtle and vigorous, with the ruling castes virtual monopoly over the state apparatus, this situation forced Dalits to the conclusion that they might have to fend for themselves. This is not to be regretted for the essence of democratic process is that the people come into their own and fight for the group interest and not wait for others to do things better for them.

The Logic of Dalit Politics

The rationale of Dalits politics, apparently based on the principle 'government back to the people' demands the full participation of Dalits in formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well being of the group as well as the society as a whole.

The three ideas of 'educate, agitate and organize' to fight against the sanctified racism called Hinduism by putting an end to its corrupting and

corroding technique, for the establishment of an egalitarian and sane society based on equality, liberty and fraternity, explains the Dalit quest for political power. For political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community, specially if its position is being challenged constantly.

The Dalits have an inherent interest, not simply in rising in the system but in overthrowing it. For they are the most oppressed and exploited ones and any reform in the system will always render them in relative disadvantage. Therefore, the agenda of social transformation and economic emancipation requires the structural change in the system. with

- (i) Dalit as different and distinct identity emphasizing 'out caste' and 'casteless' credentials.
- (ii) Challenges to the dominant Hindu discourse on identity and socio-cultural history of India.
- (iii) Putting forward a synthesis of socio-economic alternative.

The Challenge to Dalit Politics

The delicacy of caste system by graceful accommodation of its very opponents has been the major problem, the Dalits have been facing in their movements. Therefore, the interest articulation and political mobilization have to address the condition of their existence for these limitations do not jeopardise their movement for the mobility.

The problem poses three major questions.

- (i) Identification of allies and opponents.

- (ii) The role of leadership in the light of 'buying off' technique.
- (iii) Distinction between ideology and strategy on the one hand and strategy and tactic on the other.

Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are the land of two different and conflicting cultures, representing different developmental stages of Dalit mobilization. Maharashtra is important for 'rediscovering the cultural history' of Dalits in the hand of Phule and Ambedkar and putting that agenda into the politics for the first time in pre independence era.

Uttar Pradesh acquires significance for experimenting the Dalit political agenda in substantially changed politico-economic environment in post independence era. The situation, formulations and strategy are different in Uttar Pradesh from that of Maharashtra, where the Dalits are trying to provide an alternative political elite and not simply satisfied in securing some concession from the existing non-Dalit ruling elites.

The Structure and Method

This study focusses on the changing role of Dalits in Indian society and more particularly in political democracy. The politicization of caste which was the preserve of the 'upper caste' Hindus finds its anti-thesis in independent Dalit political mobilization in two most important states of India, i.e. Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. This study focusses on these two states. It has been divided into three chapters dealing with the horizontal pattern of mobilization to differential

1 The readiness of the caste system to accomodate its opponents by offering personal mobility for time being.

pattern of mobilization, signifying two different phases of Dalit assertion, namely, equality and confrontation.

The first chapter covers the limited political action in the state of Maharashtra, initiated by Dr. Ambedkar. Although the chapter covers the politics till recently, the emphasis has been on the period from 1936-1956, for it provide the framework for our classification of second phase of Dalit assertion as the problem of equality and dignity. The Independent Labour Party, The Scheduled Caste Federation, and subsequent RPIs which serves the main problematic of Dalit politics mainly division, cooption and strategy in post 1956 era, are the focal points of this chapter. The chapter discusses the independent horizontal Dalit polarization.

The second chapter deals with the broad based differential pattern of political mobilization through political organization, party and ideology in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Although it examines Dalit initiatives from 1920s onwards, the emphasis is on the post Independence period. The functioning of constitutional safeguards provides a good base for middle class Dalits to stand on their own and find alternative for the dominant groups in the state. The style of functioning and programme of BAMCEF, DS-4 and the B.S.P. form the basic content of this chapter, mainly dealing in political history of the state for the last two decades.

In the last chapter of this study an attempt is made to examine the under-currents in the Dalit politics of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. Since the two states represent two models of protest by the Dalits, the relative success of

Maharashtra in pre independence era and better prospects of Uttar Pradesh are located in the socio-economic environment the Dalits were involved in. The factors responsible for Dalits assertion in U.P. and Dalits' toning down in Maharashtra are analysed.

The Methodology and Data Collection

The methods used in this work are historical and analytical. This study is based on some primary sources, mainly the Uttar Pradesh chapter depending upon the party official documents, but otherwise on secondary sources which include books, journals, magazines, newspapers and other relevant sources.

CHAPTER ONE
DALIT POLITICS IN MAHARASHTRA:
IN QUEST OF EQUALITY

The Mahars of Maharashtra are the most dominant Dalit community politically and socially. They account for about ten percent of the present day population of Maharashtra. The next two larger groups are Chambaras, 1.3% and Mangs, 1.8%.¹ All other groups are very small which hardly comprises one percent of total population. Thus Mahars are predominantly major group of the state. Of all the Dalit groupings they alone have used 'political methods and means'² most consistently, unitedly, and effectively, to elevate their social and economic status. Not only after the declaration of independence on August 15, 1947 but before that also this group has worked as a harbinger of emerging aspirations and expectations of hitherto exploited and suppressed societies in India. Around 80% of Buddhists of the state are from Mahar community and therefore Buddhist has become synonymous with Mahars in social vocabulary.

Dalits are found in almost every Maharashtrian village as a numerical minority living in the specially carved and located localities called 'Mahar Wadas'. Following two Marathi proverbs explain the contradictory contextual existence of the group in Maharashtra. First, wherever there is a village, there is a Maharwada, and second, as far as Mahars have gone there is Maharashtra. While the former explains the low status and dependency of Dalits to serve the

1. Census of India-1991

2. E. Zelliot, From Untouchable to Dalit, Essays of the Ambedkar Movement, Manohar Prakashan, 1992, New Delhi, p. 86. it covers — sharing in administration and government through safe guards — representations and political participation.

village,³ the latter explains the might and prominence they have had in creating Maharashtra.⁴

According to some sociological theories the Dalits were probably the original inhabitants of Maharashtra.⁵ These groups were conquered and expropriated by Aryan hordes who invaded and occupied the plains of India thousands of year ago.⁶ The very word 'Maharashtra' seems to have been derived from the word 'Mahar'.⁷ The word 'Mahar' is derived from the word 'Maha', meaning 'terrifying' and 'ari' meaning 'enemy', thus Mahar's literal meaning is 'terrifying enemy'. The known military tradition and Ambedkar linking them with the great Nagas⁸ of present day Nagpur seek more explanation than required available means or records:

With these scanty references, it is not very easy to establish the history of Dalits and process of change they have undergone with different civilization's (ups and downs). Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that they had fought various

3. N.D.Kambli, *Deprived Castes & their Struggle for Equality*, Ashish Publishing House, 1983, New Delhi, p. 22.

4. Iravati, Karve, cited in Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 87.

5. W.N.Kuber: *Ambedkar: A Critical Study*, People's Publishing House, 1991, New Delhi, p. 321

6. The whole Aryan-invasion-racial theory suggests this formulation with British populatrizing it and Phule giving it a native twist.

7. V.T.Jadhar, *Maharashtra's Mahar* cited in Kamble Op.Cit, p. 47.

8. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables*, Bhim Publication, Jalandhar, 1948, p. 78.

battles for different political heads from Peshwa to Shivaji to the British.⁹ "Though their record of military service dates back to the pre-British period and may lend some plausibility to their claim to status of a martial group, it was their entry into the British Army which proved significant for the subsequent history of Mahar movement".¹⁰

The traditional role of Mahars in a village has been of a Balutedar or Watandar (in north India Jajmani system) for serving the village as a whole and receiving the minimum recompense from the village community. They were supposed to arbitrate in "boundary disputes' and were rightly known as the 'sons of the soil'; act as the watchman, mending the village wall, serving as guide and messenger to government servants, calling landlords to pay land revenue at the village Chaudi, sweeping the village roads, escorting the government treasury, tracing thieves, carrying death notices and messages to other villages, bringing fuel to the cremation ground, and removing the carcasses of dead cattle from the village".¹¹ And therefore, they were known as the son of the soil. Given the nature of the jobs and the respect Mahars have in the role of arbitrations, their relationship with the land in the past could not be ruled out. Altekar maintained that Mahars' hereditary duty in former times may have involved membership of

9. Zelliott. Op.Cit. p. 89

10. Ibid, p. 91. Zelliott, Op.Cit 91, A military monument at Koregaon near Pune serves as a local point in the history of Mahar heroism when 22 out of 49 names of soldier fought against Peshwa in 1818 are Mahars- in Sir Patric Cadall 'History of the Bombay Army (London: Longmans Green & Co. 1938), p. 154-55

11. Zelliott, Op.Cit; p. 87.

the village governing body.¹²

Besides these hereditary duties imposed upon them rendering 'polluting status', they were at the same time involved in some rituals and religious obligation for which they were paid in kind, cattle and 'watan'. Like many other Dalits groups, they were the landless labourers with small patches of land which were too small to feed whole family. Few the among Mahars were also involved in trading and *malguzari*.¹³

Mahars were probably over-represented among the casual and unorganized section of labour in the cities. The area where textile industries existed provided enough collective concentration to constitute a relatively strong base for a social movement. These areas very soon witnessed a different kind of cultural assertion by Dalits who had already stopped spending on 'Ganpati' and other 'religious festivals' of Hindus. In Bombay Presidency Dalit leadership grew under the pressure of the increasing demand of their people.

It seems, there was very limited independent agitation or organization before Ambedkar emerged on the scene around 1920. Till that time caste Hindu reformers held the stage which to a large extent, was inspired (forced) by Mahars' initiative.¹⁴ Here a distinction has to be made between Satya Shodhak

12. A.S. Altekar, *History of Village Communities in Western India*, Oxford University Press, 1927, Madra, p. 43.

13. Zelliott, *Op.Cit*, p. 89.

14. Gail Omvedt: *Dalits and The Democratic Evolution*, Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in the Colonial India, Sage Publications, 1994, New Delhi, p. 103.

Samaj¹⁵ (Truth Seeking Society) and other caste Hindus patronizing reform movements for "it provided important sponsorship for Dalit organizing and did so with a perspective of alliance and autonomy much more than the patronage control of the more conservative upper caste elites".¹⁶ And it seems, in accordance with overall Dalit strategy for the autonomy of the Dalit movement was (is) the basic concern but it was to be an autonomy in alliance with non-Brahmins.¹⁷ Ambedkar had already maintained that "it is obvious that these three classes (Untouchable, Shudras and Tribals) are natural allies. There is very ground for them to combine for the destruction of Hindu social order".¹⁸

The year 1917 saw the beginning of the decline of caste Hindu patronage, like "Depressed Class Mission" of Vithal Ramji Shinde who was actively working for Prarthana Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha and the rise of a new self-directed Dalit intervention in social relationships. This period was particularly congenial for political movements as almost all the communities were being mobilized around the issue raised by the Montague Chemsford Reforms with immediate issues of who would represent the Dalits.

15. It was established by Jotiba Phule who gave the racial theory of Aryan invasion & conquest.

16. Gail Omvedt; *Cultural Revolt in a Colonia Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Northern India (1873-1930)*, Scientific Socialist Education Trust, Bombay, 1976, pp. 151-152.

17. Gail, Omvedt: *Dalit Visions: The Anti-Caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian Identity*, Orieng Longman, 1995, New Delhi, p. 43.

18. *Writings and Speeches of Ambedkar, Vol. 4*, Government of Maharashtra Publication, p. 115-116.

The halfhearted efforts of caste Hindus in improving the conditions of Dalits and their apparent deep interest in 'representing' Dalits and drawing them into the 'nationalist mainstream' was obvious in the programmes and conferences some of these organizations and individuals tried to stage. In almost all the activities of these organizations and individuals Dalits had no 'presence' or 'say' for it was more of an elite formation and propaganda than any genuine concern for the people targeted. Relatively politically conscious Dalits felt cheated and "decisively rejected the pro-Hindu integration option represented by the Maratha leader V.R.Shinde and some Nagpur Dalit leaders".¹⁹

It was in this situation that Ambedkar provided the alternative leadership to lead his people, to fulfil the aspirations of Dalits in general and Mahars in particular. Ambedkar, the first graduate among Dalits in Maharashtra passing from the Elphinstone College who spent three years at Columbia University and one year at the London School of Economics with the financial support from the 'Gaikwad of Baroda'.²⁰

The beginning of his public life, dedicated to the 'liberation' of 'slaves' "dehumanized" and "socialized as never to complain" with the clear conviction that "untouchability constitutes a definite set of interest which untouchable alone can speak for",²¹ Ambedkar took three steps in that direction. He submitted

19. Gail, Omvedt, The Dalits and Democratic, Op.Cit, p. 158.

20. As a precondition, Ambedkar had to work with Gaikwad for some time. The bitter experience of caste discrimination convinced Ambedkar for good that the fight is a must, with lots of early experiences of prejudices and humiliation.

21. Zelloit, Op.Cit, p.98.

testimony to the South Borough Committee on reforms, appeared at two major Dalit conferences during 1920, and initiated a journal called "Mook Nayak" (voice of the mute)²². In his testimony he opposed the 'dictatorial monopoly' of other over the Dalits and tried to impress upon that Hindus would not voluntarily agree to surrender their privileges vis-a-vis Dalits.

As a fall out of challenging reformist leadership, an independent conference of Dalits under the banner of 'All India Depressed Classes' Conference' was organized at Nagpur on May 30-31'1920 with Shahu Maharaj²³ as its president. In fact, in Maharashtra the conference initiated one major political position: a rejection of so called existing nationalists' politics and alliance with the non-Brahmins' movement. Here the most controversial figure of Maharashtra, the Maharaja of Kolhapur, was the natural choice for Dalits. Moreover, movement of Dalits saw S.S.S. as the natural ally²⁴ started by Jotiba Phule, who was another anti-Brahminical social revolutionary.

Dalits had been consistently demanding political safeguards since 1919.²⁵ Ambedkar had already put forward the demand for separate electorates. Later on he founded the 'Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha' in 1924 for bringing about the socio-

22. Gail Omvedt, The Dalits and Democratic, Op.Cit, p. 156.

23. The Famous anti-Brahmin Maharaja of Kolhapur had already helped launce Ambedkar's political career with a conference held at Kolhapur state village of Mangaon on 20th March, 1920.

24. Balishkrat Bharat in Gail, Omvedt: The Dalits and Democratic, Op.Cit, p. 149.

25. S.K.Gupta, The S.C. in Modern Indian Politics
Triloknath, Politics of the Depressed Classes
Pradhan, Emergence of Depressed Classes

political awareness amongst the Dalits. As a result of his demand for representation, he was nominated as a member of Bombay Legislative Council in 1927.²⁶ In 1930 he started the 'Nasik Temple entry Satyagraha'.

Another major achievement of Ambedkar's articulate use of the parliamentary process,²⁷ was his selection as one of the two depressed class members for Round Table Conferences in London in 1930-32.²⁸ In that sense Ambedkar was not only successful in taking the needs of Dalits to the highest power circles but also got them separate electorates, only to be taken back by Mahatma Gandhi.

Although Mr. Gandhi was successful in "saving a society (Hindu) from turning into itself and committing collective suicide, in his finest hour, through Poona pact, after he took fast unto death against separate electorates "to Dalits which Ambedkar later termed it as the monumental blunder and felt cheated through out his life."²⁹

The real issue involved here was whether caste Hindu's claim to represent Dalits was legitimate or Dalit should fight for their own rights. On the

26. See Bombay Depressed Classes and ab original tribes committee Report (Bombay, 1930) O.H.B.Start Chairman

27. He has testified to various commissions and committee: Royal commission on Indian currency and finance, University Reform Commission, & Simon Commission.

28. Rao Bahadur Rettamalle Srinivasan, the leader of the Depressed Classes within the Madras Legislative Council other deligate to R.T.C.

29. Ravinder Kumar: Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Poona Pact 1932, in Jim Masselos (ed), Struggling and Ruling : The Indian National Congress (1885-1985), Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 1986, p. 96-100.

ideological ground it means, whether removal of untouchability would serve the purpose or the abolition of Chaturverna or caste system itself, so dear to Gandhi³⁰ and other reformists.

Whether the Hindus represented by Gandhi & Congress will abide by the Poona Pact was never beyond doubts as it was 'the greatest experiment'.³¹ During this period of "coopting and corrupting", the Dalits brought to Ambedkar the final disillusionment with Hinduism and its reforming credentials. Which Gail Omvedh calls-the turning point. Now the 'autonomy and independence' from Hinduism and Congress seemed to be an inevitable precondition for 'the emancipation of Dalits. "You must stand on your own feet and fight as best you can for your rights. Power and prestige will come to you through struggle"³² for "it is out of hard struggle and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition".³³

Ambedkar had been applying various methods of Dalit mobilization and temple entry was one such (first) method. Clarifying his intention he said, "I started temple only because I felt that that was the best way of energizing the Dalits and making them conscious of their position. As I believe I have achieved that I have no more use for temple entry. I want Dalits to concentrate their

30. Source Material on Dr. Ambedkar and Movement of Untouchables, Vol. 1, p. 100-101

31. C.Raja Gopala Chariya, Bombay Chronicles, 26 Sept. 1932 cited in Gail Omvedt, The Dalits and Democratic Evolution p. 175.

32. Dhanjay, Keer: Dr. Ambedkar :Life and Mission, Popular Prakashan, 1994, Bombay, p. 168.

33. Ibid, p. 127

energy on politics and education".³⁴

The social and political turmoil seemed to have far reaching consequences for two decades to come as in past there was more and more emphasis on self help. The other wanted to have an 'integration attitude' at least in social terms. A letter published in a daily indicates the mood- "Hindu politicians now embrace the Dalits partly because of the latter's meteoric emergence into the political life of the country, and partly because of the apprehension of their own position in future. They would now be ready to include the untouchables among Brahmins and not merely among Hindus, if Dr.Ambedkar wants it. This is the real condition today".³⁵

It would not be inappropriate to quote Gandhi here on the significance of his fast unto death over separate electorates. "They (Dalits) do not realize that the separate electorate will create division among Hindus so much that it will lead to blood shed. 'Untouchable' hooligans will make common cause with Muslim hooligans and kill caste Hindus".³⁶

The communists, unlike the aggressive Hindu fundamentalists, did not felt it worth intervening positively and saw 'the anti-untouchability, varnasharam

34. Letter to B.K.Gaikwad, March 3, 1934, Source Material cited in Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 95

35. The Times of India, Jan. 2, 1932, Source Material Vol. I, p. 104. cited in Omvedt: The Dalit and Democratic Evolution. Op.Cit, p. 176.

36. Mahadev Desai: The Dairy of Mahadev Desai, Translated from Gujrati and edited by Valji Govind Desai (Ahmadabad, Navjeevan 1953), this is a record of Gandhi's life from 10 March 1932 to 4 Sep. 1932-a period of intensive concern with untouchability, p. 301.

vyawastha' struggle as "a great blow to the 'freedom movement'. For, this led to the division of the peoples' attentions from the objective of full independence to the mundane cause of the upliftment of Dalits".³⁷

According to the Government of India Act 1935, the general elections were to take place in 1937. Various social groups started preparations for the forthcoming elections. The Dalits, who by this time had acquired a very good deal of political training under Dr. Ambedkar's leadership in Maharashtra, had no political outfit to voice their grievances and concern.

At this critical juncture, Ambedkar took the lead and the foundation of Independent Labour Party was formally declared on 15th August 1936³⁸ by Dr. Ambedkar as its president and treasurer. In a situation where Congress and the communists refused to take the Dalit issue in proper way it became necessary for Ambedkar to infuse new blood into the Dalits so as to enable them to be self reliant and self respecting human beings... and their a training to struggle for their own emancipation under the banner of a political party of their own.

I.L.P. was mainly formed to advance "the welfare of the labouring classes". According to one estimate, 70% of labour to market is supplied by Dalits.³⁹ The word 'labour' was used instead of depressed classes because

37. E.M.S. Namboodiripad: A History of Indian Freedom Movement, Social Scientist Press, 1986, Trivendrum, p. 492

38. R.K. Kshirsagar: The Political Parties founded by Dr. Ambedkar in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, The Emancipator of the Oppressed, (ed), K.N.Kadam, Popular Prakashan, 1992, Bombay.

39. R.S.Rao: Ambedkar & Maoletung. Sanjivayya Institute of Socio-Economic Studies, 1996, New Delhi, (Introduction)

"labour includes depressed classes as well".⁴⁰

I.L.P. declared its manifesto before the elections which promised the principle of state ownership and management of industry. It also promised aid to agriculturists through Land Mortgage Bank, Cooperative Credit societies & Marketing societies, reforms in Khoti talukdar and watan system, free and primary compulsory education with special safeguard to Dalits. There was a pledge to bring a fair mixture of castes in the administration of the system.

In the 1937s elections fifteen seats were reserved for SCs. The I.L.P. won 12 seats and three general seats.⁴¹

The executive committee was represented by the people of different communities and those caste Hindus who had worked with Ambedkar were given places in the committee.

As it happened in many other areas, initially I.L.P. leadership was not able to win over non-Mahar group as much as it could get confidence of Mahars.⁴² The two numerically small Dalit groups, Chambhars and Mangs, seemed to adopt two different approaches. While the former, the wealthiest and ritually 'highest' appeared more inclined towards Hinduism, Sanskritization⁴³ and therefore Congress. It resulted in 'getting far' from other Dalit groups.

40. I.L.P. Manifesto, 1937.

41. Zelliott. Op.Cit, p. 106

42. This has been the major criticism plank for its being dominated by one particular community, Gail Omvedt calls it foundation caste.

43. M.N.Sriniwas, it has never worked for any untouchable group

Barbara Joshi sees it as one of the major draw back of the Dalit movement faced in the beginning.⁴⁴ In fact this group had already achieved some degree of economic advancement with their leather works ⁴⁵ providing more opportunities in a changed economic and industrial environment under the British rule, and their near monopoly because of the 'polluting' nature of the occupation which in consequence rendered the occupations and occupants 'untouchable' to caste Hindus.

Notwithstanding the untouchable origin of the group, the Chambhars could not see Ambedkar and to be more precise, Mahars as their leader, though he had consistently been asking all 'untouchables' to unite. ⁴⁶ In fact the secretary of Depressed Classes Association and upcoming Scheduled Castes Federation was to be a Chambhar, P.N.Rajbhoj, yet the group as a whole did not put its might behind Ambedkar. Taking note of the problem Ambedkar had frequently been attending the group's conferences. He also gave a detailed reply to 'criticism' raised at a Chambhar conference in 1939.⁴⁷ Ambedkar accused Congress for their derisive tendencies was 'putting Dalits against each other. Although Mahars fought for the right to enter in the police training school at

44. B.R.Joshi: Untouchables! Voices of Dalit Liberation Movements, Selectbook Service Syndicate, 1986, New Delhi, (Introduction), p. 4.

45. In North India leather workers are known as Chamars

46. Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 61-62

47. Bombay Chronicle, July 4, 1939 cited in Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 107.

Nasik, it was all non-Mahars who were admitted.⁴⁸

Another major group which constitutes around one percent of the state population is Mang, the most backward, economically and educationally of the three Dalit groups of Maharashtra. Because of the relatively worse 'conditions of existence' and the operation of 'graded inequality' in the 'ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt' to use Ambedkar words. The group could not accept the Mahars as their leaders although both of them were forced to live in almost same economic hardship and cultural degradation by being treated as untouchables indiscriminately.

The relatively better economic standing or prosperity caused the mistrust between the two, although Ambedkar in a reply to a letter accusing him for being a leader of Mahars only in his Janta in 1941⁴⁹ tried to dispel the doubts showing that Congress would lead them no where. Nevertheless, the fact remained that these groups stayed aloof or alienated from I.L.P. to a large extent.

Zelliot held responsible for 'the announcement' of renouncing Hinduism in 1935, and creating further problems for inter group solidarity and integration among various Dalit groups.⁵⁰ That way the leadership, more or less, remained with the Mahars.⁵¹ The approach towards Hinduism and Sanskritization, with

48. Ibid, p. 107.

49. It was started by Ambedkar on June 14, 1941,

50. Zelliot, Op.Cit, p. 107

51. Ibid, p. 106

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Mahars rejecting caste system and Hinduism as a whole, are far ahead in using modern means of political participation than other groups who were still sticking to Sanskritization or ritualistic mobilization.⁵²

Despite all this the I.L.P. "served as an eye opener and guide to the people with comprehensive programme and radical ideology with Ambedkar's well studied, thought provoking and penetrating speeches".⁵³

Ambedkar weekly, 'Janta' served as the best mouthpiece of the organization and the I.L.P. was projected boldly "as a party of workers and peasants. The fight against casteism was taken as a necessity for creating peasant-workers unity, and the Congress was condemned as a party controlled by exploiting classes which could neither end exploitation nor fight vigorously against British imperialism".⁵⁴

Giving top priority to the social issues the ILP aimed to reconstruct society on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.⁵⁵ Some of the major proposals and bills they introduced in the assembly include asking for abolition of Mahar Watan, the hereditary bonded service imposed on Mahar. Another important bill was introduced by Shri Bhaurao Gaikwad for deleting the contemptuous appellation "Harijan" for the SCs. Given the strength of opponents

52. O.M. Lynch: Politics of Untouchability, Social Mobility and Social Change in a City in India, Columbia University Press, 1969, New York, (Introduction) p. 7

53. W.N.Kuber: Ambedkar Op.Cit, P. 217

54. Gail Omvedt, Dalit and Democratic Revolution, Op.Cit, p. 194

55. Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches Vol. I. p. 57

the bill was not passed.⁵⁶

The party however had a short life. During the World War II (1939-45) political activities in India came to a standstill. Dr. Ambedkar declared a freeze on the activities of the ILP and instituted the S.C.F. in its place.

All India Scheduled Castes Federation (A.I.S.C.F.)

By this time Ambedkar was convinced that Dalits themselves, as separate from Hindus and Congress, could bring the meaningful changes in the objective condition of their existence as the 'hegemonic violence' had to be fought with and from the position of power.

The next step of the Dalits associated with Ambedkar was a move further in the direction of separation from caste Hindu society.⁵⁷ Since caste Hindus did not respond in the manner Dalits did to ILP, it convinced Ambedkar further that caste consciousness, being strong, prevailed over class consciousness. Accordingly, a National Convention of Depressed Classes was called at Nagpur from 17-20 July, 1942, where approximately seventy thousand ⁵⁸ people from various part of the country attended the conference. In the meanwhile Ambedkar was declared as Labour minister of Viceroy's Executive Council. Ambedkar exhorted the jubilant, 'enthusiastic and faithful gathering, "now we are not a subsection of the Hindus, but distinct element in the national life of India, as separate and distinct as Muslims. Therefore, we want separate political rights as

56. Keer, Op.Cit, p. 301

57. Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 108

58. Keer, Op.Cit, p. 348

against Hindus. My final advice to you is educate, agitate and organize, have faith in your self. With justice on your side, I don't see how we can lose our better. Our objective is to achieve all sided progress of our people... we must have political power. We can achieve this political power on our organization strength. Hence we need to organize under a banner of national level political party".⁵⁹

Eventually, under the initiative of Dr.Ambedkar All India Sheduled Castes Federation (S.C.F.) was unanimously formed amidst cheers. The convention passed some extra ordinary resolutions⁶⁰

- (1) Separate Dalit identity be accepted.
- (2) Dalit representation in state and central ministries.
- (3) Seats be reserved in govt. services.
- (4) Separate village settlement away from and independent of Hindu

villages as they are the parents of all disabilities Dalits are suffering from.

(5) Demand for separate electorate was renewed on the ground that "in any joint electorate even with reserved seats Dalit would be over whelmed by caste Hindu voters".⁶¹

- (6) Dalits should be given uncultivated lands for their livelihood.⁶²

All their resolutions were important for the Dalits. It was a sort of

59. W.N.Kuber, Ambedkar, Op.Cit, p. 218

60. Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 108-109.

61. Gail Omvedt, The Dalits and Democratic Revolution, Op.Cit, p. 217

62. K.N.Kadam, (ed) Ambedkar, Op.Cit, p. 156

blueprint of future activities of the party. In the general elections for the provincial assembly in March 1946, SCF was completely routed by the Congress in adverse political situation and scarcity of means. The party debacle was mainly due to the joint electorate system, where the Hindus did not cast their votes in favour of SCF candidates. They were apathetic towards them.⁶³

Dr. Ambedkar appeared before the Cabinet Mission⁶⁴ on behalf of SCF and demanded their representative in the proposed constituent assembly and the special safeguards awarded to Dalits already, be made an inseparable part of the constitution itself.

Neither the British nor the Cabinet Mission made any reference on these issues. Against the apathetic attitude of the Cabinet Mission and Congress towards Dalits, SCF started a 'satyagraha' on 15th July 1946 at Poona under the leadership of P.N. Rajbhoj. Thousands of Dalits participated in it. This satyagraha was launched at various places of the state mainly Bombay and Nagpur.

There-after Dr. Ambedkar went to London in Oct. 1946, submitted a memorandum to the British P.M. Mr. Attlee, and other leaders and tried to convince them, but in vain.

Both the demands for separate electorates and separate settlement for Dalits were ignored by the British even though, as Zelliott has put it "there was a

63. Ibid, p. 157

64. Capined Mission was set up for deciding the nature of future constitution for India, by discussin with various leaders of different political parties and communities

longstanding and widespread opinion among the Dalits that separate electorates were necessary for them to be truly represented in the legislatures".⁶⁵

Meanwhile elections to the Constituent Assembly were held. Ambedkar could not get elected from the Bombay Legislative Assembly, as there was no member to support his candidature, later on with the support of Muslim League he got elected from the Bengal Provincial Assembly. After the partition the seat was lost and later he was elected from Bombay Provincial Legislature in July 1947.

In March 1947 he prepared a memorandum envisaging state socialism, Parliamentary democracy and special safeguards for Dalit.⁶⁶

On 27th April 1947 the Constituent Assembly resolved to abolish untouchability.⁶⁷ A red letter day as the vow of Dr. Ambedkar was fulfilled, "that if I failed to do away with the abominable thralldom and inhuman justice under which the class into which I was born, had been groaning, I will put an end to my life with a bullet".⁶⁸

On 29th August'46, Ambedkar was appointed the chairman of constitution drafting committee. Later he resigned from 'labour ministry' on 27th September 1951 due to a difference of opinion with Nehru on the issues of allotment of

65. Zelliott. Op.Cit, p. 109

66. Later it was published in the form of a brochure under the title State and Minorities.

67. Constituent Assembly Debate, Vol. I, p. 441

68. For Detail See, Thus Spake Ambedkar, Bhagwan Das. Vol. I. Bhim Prakashan Jalundhar,

portfolio, the Kashmir issue, foreign policy and mainly Hindu Code Bill.⁶⁹ Once again he assumed the role of opposition leader.

The first general elections under the new constitution were held in Jan.1952. SCF in alliance with Praja Socialist Party, fought the elections on following lines: Full faith in parliamentary democracy, equality and liberty, land distribution, and one state one language. It wanted to cooperate with Backward Classes (BCs) or any other party whose principles were not antagonistic to SCF.⁷⁰

SCF could not do much politically in these elections because of inadequate resources, general apathy towards Dalits movement, the fight against Congress which was a major party, and 'not so helpful' alliance with Praja Socialist Party.

However Ambedkar got elected from the Bombay Legislature to Rajya Sabha in March 1952. The SCF had witnessed a crucial period in the history of modern India, from 1942 to 1956. However, SCF was 'a step backward from 1930's radicalism'.⁷¹ As obvious by the name the efforts to form a broad based party of Dalits and peasant workers, as attempted in ILP, could not be materialized.

In social terms, it was an indication that caste Hindus as such had not won

69. Keer, Op.Cit, p. 525

70. Kadam. Op.Cit, p. 160-161

71. Gail Omevdt, Dalits and Democratic Revolution, p. 217

the goodwill of the Dalits⁷² and therefore there was no alliance in politics too. Nevertheless, SCF maintained most of the ILP programmes regarding alliances and peasant workers demands and also Ambedkar continued to be labour minister to put a radical programme before the working class.⁷³

Having worked for the oppressed groups who were economically, socially and politically deprived, Ambedkar was quick enough to understand its futility without any meaningful intervention by self reliant Dalit power. And therefore he was drawn to more grass root group solidarity mobilization with greater emphasis on 'learning the use of political means' before entering into the real power politics. Under these conditions one had to remark, "the Depressed Classes, under Ambedkar leadership, are becoming more and more conscious of their position (separation not unity with Hinduism) perhaps in a short time a cry will go for Maharistan".⁷⁴

As Ambedkar drafted the constitution and became minister in Nehru Cabinet⁷⁵ aiming at cooperation although not federation ⁷⁶ with any other

72. His union with the communists could not produced favourable results in I.L.P. later Ambedkar described them as 'bunch of Brahmin boys'

73. Gail Omvedt, Dalits and Democratic Revolution, Op.Cit, p 21

74. Jayakar to Sprue, 7 April, 1941, Letter J65 in SPme collection National Library, Calcutta

75. Moris Jones, W.H.: Government and Politics in India, London: Hutchinson University Librery, 1964, p. 87

76. The Times of India, 12 Jan. 1950 Bombay, cited in Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 112.

organization to avoid "our independence being put into jeopardy", ⁷⁷ and with the intention of securing as much for Dalits as possible in politically fragile ⁷⁸ situation, he managed few provisions for Dalits before drifting away from the government, on Hindu Code Bill.⁷⁹ "In political negotiations the rule must be what is possible. That does not mean that we should be content with what is offered. No, It means that you must not refuse what is offered when you know that your sanctions are inadequate to compel your opponent to concede more".⁸⁰ Ambedkar seemed to have best realized it during the period of 1917 to 1951 in cooperation with government and Hindus before leaving them for final separation.⁸¹

AISCF, as worked out by Ambedkar, despite its 'not so good' electoral performance, did wonders in mobilizing Dalits as it "was a national party of Dalits"⁸² although "its main strength had been among the Mahars of Maharashtra".⁸³

During the last fifteen years of his life Ambedkar asserted himself as the

77. Ibid, p. 112

78. The British did not recognize any special Dalit interest, therefore Dalit had to be content with limited safeguards only

79. Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 112

80. Ambedkar Writings and Speeches ,Vol. I , p. 229

81. As his final step for group identity Ambedkar embraced Buddhism on 14th October 1956 at Nagpur with the half million followers.

82. Weiner, Party Politics in India, p. 226

83. Palmer, The Indian Political System, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1961, London , p. 210

"political representative of Dalits, as a special interest group within a statist, capitalistic democratic structure".⁸⁴ Zelliott has also maintained the same position that this period was very crucial for the formation of political identity of Dalits for, "the actual function of the party (SCF) under Ambedkar's leadership from independence to 1956 was to see that special treatment and provisions were properly used, that the discrimination and injustice still practiced was brought to public notice and that the seats reserved for SCs in legislature were filled by people under obligations to speak for Dalit interests".⁸⁵

This can be concluded that, "the Mahars have chosen the secular axis by persuing educational attainment, higher education and by articulation of interests through political participation". Conversion to Buddhism was only an extension of the political mobilization stated earlier.⁸⁶

Post Ambedkar Era

The late Dr. Ambedkar left two separate but complementary legacies to his followers. One was the embracing of Buddhism on 14 October, 1956 at Nagpur with half a million followers, and other was the formation of 'Republican Party of India' which indicates a hope for a broader base than the Dalits alone.⁸⁷ It was designed to replace the scheduled caste federation. The

84. Gail Omvedt, Dalits and Democratic, Op.Cit, p. 55

85. Zelliott, Op.Cit, p. 55

86. W.N.Kuber, Builder of Modern India Dr. Ambedkar, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1990, New Delhi, p. 148

87. Zelliott, E., From untouchable to Dalit, Manohar Prakashan 1992, New Delhi, p. 140.

RPI which was formed after his death, in 1957 was "meant to be broad based enough to articulate the aspiration of all those segments of Indian society subjected to social discrimination",⁸⁸ and economic exploitation.

The newly earned self-respect and dignity after Buddhist identity was to carry forward and as the new democratic setup started functioning in political arena, Ambedkar had already identified the aims and objective of the RPI as same of the Indian constitution i.e. liberty, equality, brotherhood and justice.⁸⁹

The RPI had some workable objectives which could be summarized as follow.⁹⁰

- (i) To organize the oppressed and other sections, specially the Buddhist, the scheduled castes, tribes, and other backward classes.
- (ii) To organize farmers, labourers, industrial workers and other workers depending on wages.
- (iii) Ensuring justice for the minorities.
- (iv) To fight against the atrocities committed on the oppressed and to get their various disabilities removed.

Apparently it was designed to take care of all the issues of the poor and depressed on more secular basis, with due emphasis on the Dalits and their

88. Gokhle, Jayashre, *From Concessions to Confrontation*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1994.p. 212.

89. *Why only Republican Party is a must?*, Hindi Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 9th edition, Lucknow, p. 9

90. Omman, T.K., "Scheduled Castes and Tribes" in Dube, S.C. (ed): *India Since Independence: Social Report on India (1947-1972)*, Vikas Publication, New Delhi, 1977, p. 55.

related problems. Initially the RPI did remarkably well so much so that the period from 3rd October, 1951 to 3rd October, 1959 is considered as the "Golden Age" of the party.⁹¹ During this period its leaders had concentrated their efforts on acceptance of genuine demands of the Dalit and when not successful, they offered united protest. Many of their prominent leaders were elected to the parliament in 1957 elections where they raised very pertinent issues concerning their constituencies.⁹²

Broadening the Base

the RPI established established various fronts which helped the party to reunite different sections of the people into its political organization.

- (a) It renovated the Samta Sanik Dal in 1957 to maintain discipline in the party meetings by recruiting volunteers and corps, especially the young people. The S.S.D. was formed by Dr. Ambedkar in 1928.
- (b) Literature forms the backbone of any movement. The RPI contributed immensely to the formation of Dalit Sahitya Sangh. Its first convention was held under the chairmanship of B.D.Kamble in 1850 in Bombay.
- (c) Ambedkar maintained that the development of a country can be measured by the progress its women have made. The RPI organized all India Women's Conference under the president ship of Smt. Shatabai Devi in 1957.
- (d) All India Republic Student's Federation was established to spread awareness among the students. Workers Association was also formed to

91. Jogadand, Dalit Movement in Maharashtra, p. 73.

92. Ibid, p. 67.

inculcate awareness about the rights of the labourers.

(e) Communication is the life line for the development in every sphere. The political socialization and political culture require their own means of communication. The RPI took pains in publishing its journal "Prabudha Bharat means enlightened India" which was started by Dr. Ambedkar himself.

(f) Propagation of Buddhism seems to have been one of the major objective of Dalit politicization in Maharashtra. The RPI made some demands concerning the Buddhist i.e. reservation benefits to Buddhist, holidays on Buddha and Ambedkar anniversaries; construction of Buddha Bihar at conversion sites (Deeksha Bhumi) in Nagpur, and to stop atrocities against the Buddhists.

Split-the Hall-Mark

The RPI experienced its first setback in 1959 when B.D. Kamble disassociated himself and formed his own RPI.⁹³ The original group remained with the B.K. Gaikwad. Later Prof. R.D. Bahndari, one of the important leaders who wanted Dalits to act as a pressure group within the Congress, joined the Congress itself in 1965⁹⁴ the 1962 elections, Gaikwad group fought in alliance with Sanyukta Maharashtra Samiti⁹⁵ While Kamble group reached an agreement with Jansangh and the Swatantra Party, and made futile attempt for alliance with the Congress.

For the 1967 elections RPI worked out an alliance with the Congress and

93. Jagadand, Dalit p. 69.

94. Gokhle, Jaya Shree, Op.Cit, p. 231.

95. Prabudha Bharata, Jan. 6, 1962

as a result it lost its militancy for adopting compromising tendencies.⁹⁶ This politics of compromise was not endorsed by the whole leadership of the party. This time B.D.Khohragade left the party and formed his own group in 1970. In April 1974 two groups came together and formed fifteen member presidium. Later in the year Khobragade was elected as the party president. Unhappy with the development, R.S.Gawai formed his own group. In Nov., 1975 Gawai was elected as the party president to further witness three fold split, led by Gawai, Khobragade, and B.C.Kamble.

In addition to the problem of limited constituency and unsatisfactory alliances and the splits which occurred at intervals ostensibly over the issue of communism, Congress and more importantly over the question of leadership. In spite of the unity and cohesion of the Buddhists, these quarrelings and factionalism had not let a powerful leader emerge since the death of Dr. Ambedkar. And there was an impression that "Each man is a little Ambedkar, it is like brothers quarreling over their inheritance."⁹⁷

Dalit Panthers

Frustrated by the ongoing in-fightings in the RPIs and the gruesome atrocities committed on the Dalits in rural and urban areas indiscriminately, the Dalit youths of Maharashtra under the leadership of Raja Dale and Namdev Dahsal formed the most militant and aggressive organization; 'The Dalit Panthers' in 1972. This phenomenal development represented both a

96. Ibid,

97. Zelliot, Op.Cit, p. 144.

generational change and growing political consciousness among the under-privileged sections in Maharashtra.⁹⁸

The powerful writings and call to combat the growing atrocities on the Dalits in rural areas made the Panthers very popular.⁹⁹ The Dalit Panthers' movement was greatly inspired by the Black Panthers movement in America. "Black is beautiful" found its reminiscent in "Dalit is dignified".

Importance

The Dalit Panthers encouraged the demoralized Dalits to fight against the atrocities. The myth that the Dalits were mute and passive was exploded by giving calls to counter attacks on the exploiters. The opportunistic tendencies of RPI leadership were checked to a great extent. This was a great rumbling to the in-human caste system with broadbase mobilization. A debate on Ambedkarism could start with Panthers applying unconventional means and approaches to their emancipation.

The split tendencies of RPI found their counterparts in the Dalit Panthers also. Namdeve Dhasal and Raja Dhale with their inclinations toward communism Buddhism respectively parted company and subsequently split into various folds

98. Singh, Nihal, "The Caste War", India Today, March 16, 1980, p. 15.

99. Some 1100 Dalits were killed during 1967-70 by the caste Hindus. Rape, discrimination and exploitation too common to be repeated., Shakar Rao Kharat in Sadhna, Marathi Journal, October 14, 1972, cited in Mrughar, Lata, Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra, Popular Prakashan, 1991, Bombay , p. 73

forming numerous Dalit Panthers organization throughout Maharashtra.¹⁰⁰

On the one hand the leaders were influenced by the individualistic attitude of capitalistic society making them aspire for the position on par with the ruling classes. On the other, they were equally concerned over the humiliating conditions experienced by the Dalits. They were torn between the "proletarian spirit and bourgeois aspirations" as Gokhle put it.

There was not much difference, between the Panthers and the RPIs going by the tendencies of the split. Almost the same tendencies, for which they attacked the RPI leadership, reappeared in their own policies and politics with almost similar results.¹⁰¹ But certainly there were some ideological reasons which began from the very manifesto of the organization. Dhasal was suspected to have been working for the communists (CPI). Dhale felt that the communists were using the Panthers to infiltrate and gain a foothold in the Dalit localities to spread communist movement.¹⁰² On the other hand Dhasal thought that Dhale was limiting the movement to the particular group.

The Dalits struggle is for prestige as well as for subsistence. And, of course, the social prestige was more important of the two, because it has been denied to them for centuries. However, the cultural, ideological and economic aspects are interwoven aspects of the caste system, and therefore, should not be

100. Mrughar, Lata, *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra*, Popular Prakashan, 1991, Bombay, p. 84.

101. *Ibid*, p. 213.

102. Gokhle, *Op. Cit*, p. 282.

dealt separately. This background provided the reasons for splits in the Panthers in the form of one group emphasizing Buddhism, which remained the main group and Dhasal propagating Marxism with which the Dalits have always been apprehensive. Confronting the value system by a group not equipped in any way i.e. financially or organizational, it was difficult to survive against the heavy hand of the government machinery. But the Panthers served their purpose to a great extent.

The Calculated BAMCEF

The Backward And Minorities Class Employees Federation was formed in Pune on 6th December 1973 by a group of Dalit employees, primarily the Mahar Buddhists, in government factories. It was the most advanced segment of Dalit community. The organization was non-political, non-religious, and non-agitational (detailed description in the next chapter) and was based on more personal feelings of obligation towards the community.

This organization under the leadership of Kanshi Ram was active in many social activities taken up by the Dalit employees. Medical Aid and service centres were organized in Ulhasanagar, Amravati and Nagpur.¹⁰³

To spread the "mission" of Dr. Ambedkar to the "down trodden masses" the Ambedkar melas were organized where the activists of the organization renewed their contact with the rural Dalits, and their problems and thereby engulfing the disparities perception and existence.¹⁰⁴ These mass awakening

103. Gokhle, Op.Cit, p. 236.

104. Ibid, p. 237.

Ambedkar Melas were reminiscent of "Jalsas" mounted in 1930s and 1940s by the Dalits in Maharashtra. These Melas were the rallying points for rural Dalits.¹⁰⁵

To mobilize the other sections of the Dalit community specially youth and women DS-4 — Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti —, as an off-shoot of BAMCEF, was formed on 6th December 1981 under the leadership of Kanshi Ram. D.K.Khaprade was the leading light of the organization in Maharashtra. It was used as the testing or frontal organization to infuse confidence among the Dalits by taking public stands, organizing Dharna, Demonstration and big cycle marches. The most important aspect of these two organizations was their total refusal to react to the agenda set by other, including Dalit parties (RPIs and Dalit Panthers). Even the controversy regarding Marathwada University could not provoke the BAMCEF reaction. As a matter of policy the organization were single mindedly on creating cadre and awareness. And since this was led by the most advanced section of the Dalits, the thrust was positively on capturing the political power directly, and not through compromises and concessions. And therefore, the backwards and minorities were identified as the target groups to do away the prevailing exclusivist tendencies of Dalit politics in Maharashtra. But as apparent the success did not come as desired and Bahujan Samaj Party could not produce the local Maharashtrian leadership which paved way for the formation of Bhartiya Republican Party by Prakash Ambedkar in November

105. Ibid, p. 237.

1984.

The formation of Bhartiya Republican Party was a reaction to the faction-ridden RPI and Panthers. The party raised the issue of common concern irrespective of caste, class and religion. From the very beginning attempts were made to mobilized the people on the issue of land which resulted in getting the confidence of the people. Its principled enmity towards Congress led it to the side of CPI(ML) and Janata Dal as logical consequence.¹⁰⁶ Prakash Ambedkar was elected to the Rajya Sabha with the help of Janata Dal. The political performance of the party thereafter in winning the seats has been far below the satisfactory level.

After the 1995 elections to State Assembly when not even a single member of any Dalit faction was elected to the legislature, surprisingly, though they all came together of Dalit they could not win a single seat in 1996 general elections, despite of their alliances with some left and centrist parties. It makes a surprising revelation that unity or disunity, either way, the Dalits are the losers in the political battle of Maharashtra, indicating that Dalits have to rethink, reformulate their ideology and strategy for competing with the dominant ruling elites of the state.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the various splits in RPI and Dalits Panthers or other Dalit organizations, BAMCEF and B.S.P., the Dalit politics continues to survive, even if its survival seems to reflect little political

106. Jogdand, P.C., Op.Cit, p. 95.

significance or power over the course of decision making. It has been more or less others' appendage (Congress). Still, it occupies no mean significance as a vehicle for Dalit political participation and has always been active as a powerful pressure group.

The existence of, otherwise, fragmented political leadership promises of an autonomous Dalit political intervention. The merit of such exclusivism is open to debate in the parliamentary democratic set up, where majority matters. It also has the ideological importance of having a definite impact on the consciousness of Dalit community in Maharashtra.

CHAPTER TWO
DALIT POLITICS IN UTTAR PRADESH:
A STRUGGLE FOR POWER

The Dalits of Uttar Pradesh who constitute around 1/4 of the total state population have come to acquire a position of prominence in short period from where "many Dalits were gathered together in little groups by their Thakur overlords and marched to the polls in order to ensure that they voted for the Jan Sangh. They were able to impose their will in this way, by threatening impoverished folk with such economic sanctions as the denial of opportunities for field labour, withdrawal of share croppings' privileges and calling in of the loans".¹

The above passage introduces the pathetic socio-economic environment in which the Dalits are segregated, and their mode of exercising 'adult franchise' in the state of U.P.. It was the 3rd general elections of 1962. The limited but successful functioning of the constitutional safeguards, for last four decades has brought out many perceptible changes in the socio-economic conditions of the Dalits, providing them a standing and sense of self-respect and dignity. But the most remarkable change has been witnessed in the political behaviour of the group. The beneficiaries of the policy of positive discrimination seems to have provided the much required independent political leadership to the masses of the Dalits in U.P..

The social group which command the means of production also command ownership and facilities needed in production process and socio-economic sustenance. In almost all the regions of U.P. this group comprises 'upper', 'higher', 'clean' or 'Dwija' castes. At the other extremity of the scale is located the enormous volume of landless labourers mainly from if not entirely

1. Kothari, R. and Weiner M. (ed.), Indian Voting Behaviour (Calcutta, 1965), p. 175.

from 'unclean' 'polluting' and 'outcastes'. Their employment as agricultural labourers through out the state explains their widespread distribution evenly, which further integrated them with the larger village community.²

The canal irrigated cash crop farming with increased commercialization and market, contributed immensely for the Dalit participation in secondary and tertiary sectors but for being illiterate and unskilled they are employed largely as menial workers in the urban areas, carrying the burden of village based structure further.

The middle class Dalits which emerged in late sixties, provided the much political leadership for the Dalits to come the political means for enhancing the group interest. Under the leadership of this highly assertive and mobile group, the docile and politically passive Dalits who had habit of voting enblock to the dictate of their patrons, in the short period seems to have realised the potential of their numbers and that the "Independent access to political power through parties that challenge established norms and structure, can accelerate their access to resources and opportunities that support upper caste dominance."³

The politicization of the Dalits in U.P. can be traced back to the beginning of present century. The first Dalit organization of recalcitrant and significant nature was formed in 1917 by the Dalits of Agra, "the Jatav Warriors Association". After seven years another organization called "Jatav Pracharak Mandal" came in to being.

Contrary to the popular beliefs the process of self evaluation and reformation had already began long before Ambedkar's influence on the Dalits

2. Briggs, The Chamar, Low Price Publication, p. 19.

3. Rudolph and Rudolph, Modernity of Tradition, Orient Longman, 1969, p. 64.

of U.P.. But before the Adi Hindu movement, these attempts were more in direction of accommodation within into the system ⁴ through the process of Sanskritization ⁵ aiming at respectability and higher status, which virtually means drifting away from rest of the community ⁶ and getting accommodated into the Hindu fold.

The role of Arya Samaj was very important as they were successful in convincing some of the Dalits of the mobility within Hindu society. They tried to initiate vedic practices ⁷ among Dalits and emphasizing 'the 'low caste' origins of figures such as Valmiki and Vyasa to show that Dalit too had a part in the "creation of its great literature".⁸ The Arya Samajists were propagating that an "individuals castes status was achieved and not ascribed... but the Dalits did not identified themselves with the Samajists".⁹

But in the process Dalits gave up many practices of 'polluting behavior' and some time adopted even more orthodox ¹⁰ Hindus way of behaviour for the

4. Chamars who claimed themselves as Jatavs in west Uttar Pradesh asked for Kshatriya Status. Mataprasad-Uttar Pradesh Ki Dalit Jation Ka Dastavege, Delhi Kitab Ghar, New Delhi, 1995, p. 20.

5. M.H.Srinivas maintained, that it had never worked for Dalit. See Caste in Modern India, p. 49-50
Kancha, Ilaiah: Why I am not a Hindu?, Samayo Publications, 1996, Calcutta, p. 69-70.

6. B.Joshi holds this tendency as the biggest drawback of Dalit movement in its initial stage, See, Untouchables Voices of Dalit Liberation Movement, p. 7

7. W.N.Kuber, Ambedkar: A Critical Study, People's Publishing House, 1991, New Delhii, p. 347

8. Gail Omvedt, Dalit Visions, Orient Longman, 1995, New Delhi, p. 39-40

9. W.N.Kuber, Ambedkar, Op.Cit, p. 347

10. O.M. Lynch, Politics of Untouchability, Columbia University Press, London, (1969) Introduction, p.3

acceptability and accessibility to the strategic resources i.e. wealth, prestige and power. It should be remembered that till then there was no alternative to the Sanskritization, although it had never produced favourable results before either.¹¹

By 1910, more than fifty Shuddhi ceremonies raised the number of samajist to around 2,00,000 mostly drawn from the purified 'untouchables'.¹²

The Arya Samajists also tried to give one mythological justification for the degraded existence of Dalits and remedy "by following the teachings of Swami Dayanand". Vishnu, the mightiest god of Hindu cursed the last emperor of Chanwar dynasty' which is also known as "Surya Wanshi" the whole of your clan is vanished from the earth today onwards. Left outs would be called "chamars", you become lower to Shudras".¹³

Not-with-standing these attempts this was not enough for Dalits.¹⁴ A major revolt against Arya Samajists and identification-integration with Hinduism took place, and by the mid-twenties the movements like Adi Hindu (Original Indians) became vanguard voices of assertive Dalits.¹⁵ The argument given by the new radicals was on the lines of Jotiba Phule that the Dalits are the original inhabitants' of India and the caste system and the untouchability has been

11. H.A. Gould The Hindu Caste System, The Sacralization of a Social Order, Chanakya Publication, 1897, New Delhi, p. 449

12. Gail Omvedt, In Caste and Class, (ed), K.L.Sharma, Ravat Publication, Jaipur, 1990, p. 161

13. C.P.Jigyasu, Origin, Existence and Population of Chamars, (Hindi), Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1991, Lucknow, p. 11

14. Radical Hindu Reformists like Swami Agnivesh represent this tradition of Arya Samaj.

15. Gail Omvedt, Dalit Visions, Op.Cit, p. 40

imposed upon them by the foreign Aryans¹⁶ who invaded Sindh around 1760 B.C. ¹⁷ and enslaved its people. These groups traced their origin to Harrapa civilization and claimed that 90% of today population is originally the indigenous people which is being looted and exploited by nomadic Aryans.

The "Jatav Vir Mahasabha" got one of its member, Bohare Khemchand appointed to the U.P. Legislative Assembly. He proposed some welfare schemes for the Dalit and gave testimony before Simon Commission in 1928. In 1930 'Jatav Youth League' was formed which supported Ambedkar claims for representing Dalits in Round Table Conference in London against Gandhi.¹⁸ But as in Maharashtra the Mahars, their counterparts were fighting for temple entry, they were also trying to gain "Kshtriya Status" and the change of the heart on the part of Hindus.

As Adi Hindu movement was simultaneously in progress, Ambedkar declared his intentions of leaving Hinduism in 1935,¹⁹ with this the so called process of Sanskritization came to an abrupt halt. "By 1940 they (Dalits) were drawn into Ambedkar movement. Outside Maharashtra, it was the north Indian Chamars who provided the strongest base for the Scheduled Caste Federation".²⁰

After this the attempts to realize the status of citizens based on a secular axis became the agenda of Dalit mobilization in the state. With the new

16. C.P.Jigyasu, Bharat Ke Mool Niwasion Ke Sabhyata, (Hindi), Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1993, Lucknow, p. 87

17. Ibid, p. 78

18. W.N.Kuber, Ambedkar: A Critical, Op.Cit, p. 347

19. At the Mahad Conference Ambedkar declared "I will not die a Hindu"

20. Gail, Omvedt, in K.L.Sharma, Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p. 160

democratic institutions functioning in the society, power base shifted from religion to politics. The political participation appeared to be the way out for Dalits.²¹

The embracing of Buddhism by Agra Dalits indicated the mood of Dalits in the state and the acceptance of Ambedkar's leadership. Since Agra Dalits were involved with Ambedkar's struggle at least symbolically a circle of the separation from Hinduism was completed. The theme "we are the original inhabitants"²² provided ideological and historical justification to Dalits to demands for "land to the tillers and government back to the people".

The Republican Party of India which provided the political space for new Dalits aspirations could not hold its flock together after a brief attempt of building Dalit-Muslim unity at least in western U.P.²³ In the future elections the performance could not be repeated and most of the leaders deserted the party for the Congress or other parties. B.P.Maurya the most prominent of all the leaders crossed over to Congress party and Sanghpriya Gautam to Jansangh. That way Dalits felt cheated by their own people -the enemy within- and subsequently they deserted RPI, which soon lost its existence in the state.²⁴

Lack of grass root mobilization and subsequent 'independent style' of functioning by the leadership, without any control by the masses, still illiterate and politically uneducated, made these leader easily get away from their parent party. In fact the support by the Dalits to RPI was more became of its affiliation

21. O.M.Lynch, *Politics of Untouchability*, Op.Cit, p.217

22. Jigyasu, *Mulniwasion*, Op.Cit, Introduction;

23. It won 3 MPs and 8 MLAs in 1962 elections.

24. Zelliott, *From Untouchable To Dalit. Essays on Ambedkar Movement*, Manohar Prakashan, 1992, New Delhi, p. 143

to Ambedkar and caste loyalties rather than for any calculated political mobilization with material interest. The playing down of the emotions by these leader did not provoke any rumblings in Dalits outlook.

The Era of Cooption

With time the militancy of the mobilized sections was blunted by the grand technique of corroding and corrupting. Without any firm economic standing either, the leadership nor the organizations resist help getting absorbed into the establishment. As the new orientation and agenda failed, it frustrated the aspirations and expectation of 'emerging revolution'.

By the middle of 60s, Congress started losing ground in the northern states and was gripped in all round economic and political turmoil.²⁵ Dalits suffered from these crises in a variety of ways for being landless labourers and unskilled workers. They were at the receiving end of most of the attacks confronting aggressive backlash whenever they tried to move ahead and asked for more dignified place and reasonable wages.²⁶

The so-called 'economically better placed class' or middle class was no better and its position was equally tension-ridden and more ambivalent²⁷ and its sense of relative deprivation was more intense. As beneficiaries of positive discrimination policy, they had secured a bit more economic security than their lower class brethren. But they were denied mobility on social and cultural levels. They faced a permanent 'condescension and oppression' from their caste Hindu

25. India faught two wars with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965 respectively

26. Gail Omvedt, in K.L. Sharma, *Caste and Class*, Op.Cit, p. 1
Z.Hasan, in *The State Political Process and Identity* (ed.) by Hasan and Khan, Sage Publications, 1989, New Delhi, p. 264-65

27. G.Omvedt, In *Caste and Class*, Op.Cit,p. 160

co-workers. This was more due to the reason that the Dalits at large were still 'degraded' and those 'upgraded' were 'a deviation' supposedly coming to this position more because of an untouchable origin rather individual deserving. It was 'not only that they were assumed to be incompetent but the so called incompetency was assumed to be untouchable in its origin.

All that resulted in very low self-esteem of the Dalits and having a headstart "once the beneficiary gets his post he may thereafter fear the withdrawal of the policy. Believing himself as unable to compete with others and developing vested interest,²⁸ this created a situation of 'semi limbo' pulling up and down "away from the sudden blackness of their past estate, but don't get no where, but neither do they reach some where".²⁹

The process of Sanskritization was only immediate and visible alternative to these individuals which means alienation from their own community members, notwithstanding the fact that it has neither worked for individuals nor untouchable³⁰ since they were below the 'pollution line' and always formed the receiving group.³¹ Issacs sees it as responsible for not letting any independent political mobilization and identity to emerge by creating divisions among

28. Duskain, In Untouchables in contemporary India, (ed), M. Mahar University of Arizona Press, 1972, Tuscon, p. 169.

29. Ibid, p.396

30. M.N. Srinivas, Caste in Modern India, p. 49-50

31. Issacs, India's Ex-untouchables the same logic has been extended to the policy of positive discrimination and it always makes compromise with the self respect of the group concerned by receiving concessions from the state and to overcome it, some Dalit assert that they don't accept help even from the God, see. Untouchables- (ed), B.R, Joshi, Op.Cit, p. 79

themselves.³² This situation led to the failure of Dalits to produce other leaders of independent nature. It raises the question of what becomes of those Dalits who do attain college education and urban employment. Their major preoccupation appears to be with meeting the needs of immediate kin and families and few are using their time and talent to form an organization to further the community interest for the betterment of Dalits in general.³³

It was an easy but articulated way out, for the policy of positive discrimination siphons off and silence the most able young people who might otherwise would have provided effective leadership to community fellow beings.³⁴ The policy of positive discrimination which aimed at integration of new groups with the rational and democratic mainstream, could not be materialized.³⁵ and in many cases it had been proved counter productive. The growing tensions and hostility with decreasing job opportunities have magnified manifestations.³⁶ The entry of Dalits in modern professions like law and medicine, was secretly resented by the other colleagues. This resentment stems from three causes viz. deep seated hatred towards Dalits, increased competition and jealousy on account of protective discrimination.

In the urban areas there seemed to be a bit inclusion of this group but when identified, they have been rejected and humiliated as an object of pity and -----

32. B.R.Joshi, Democracy in search of equality, Select Book Service Syndicate, 1986, AVON, (Introduction) p.3

33. M. Mahar, "Untouchables in Contemporary India", Op.Cit, 1972, p. 424-27.

34. M.Galenter, Untouchability and the Law, in Mahars Untouchables, Op.Cit, p. 292

35. Ibid, p. 262

36. Ibid, Also see Sachidananda-The Harijan Elite, Tomson Press India Ltd. 1977, p. 166

contempt. Therefore the group's progress could be described as 'too slow and too little'.

This limited elite³⁷ with limited resources and access to the strategic positions should not be written off as an aberration as the policy of positive discrimination seems deliberately creating a class of 'genuine representatives' who not only protect the interest of the community but also project itself as the role model for rest of the community for, "only of ability and ambition enable some Dalit to be at the top of the pinnacle can the mass below realize its potential".³⁸

The policy of positive discrimination as such has very limited scope and significance for "if untouchability is a set of disabilities imposed on a certain group, the removal of it means ending the exclusion and humiliation practiced by others. It has nothing to do with granting benefits to the individual members of these groups".³⁹

By now the groups away from the root and far from the goal had to rethink its strategy and plausibility for social and cultural mobility. The perpetuation of centuries long discrimination and humiliation even in the modern rational bureaucratic institutions i.e. academics, bureaucracy and politics, compounded the irrelevance and futility of adopting the traditional model of mobilization.

It is of great importance to note that with the new political institutions

37. N.Ram, *Beyond Ambedkar*, Har Anand Publication, Delhi, 1995. p. 287

38. Zelliott, *from untouchable*, p. 62 also see Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and Democratic Revolution*, p. 224-25

39. L.Duskin, *In Untouchable in Contemporary India*, (ed), M.Mahar, *Op.Cit*, p. 175

theoretically providing equality before law to each and every citizen and 'untouchability abolished',⁴⁰ the sources of legitimacy were fast disappearing. Now the political participation as Lynch maintains provided the functional alternative of Sanskritization for Dalits. Issacs had already identified Sanskritization as stumbling block for Dalits to enter into politics on independent basis.

Fully realizing the futility of individual economic upgrading,⁴¹ they emphasised westernization and greater interaction among themselves, and taking full cognizance of Ambedkar's advice of taking positive pride in their self identity, provided the base for 'Dalit is dignified. And as all Dalits faced similar problems they should unite in the name of untouchability to fight it collectively and effectively.'⁴²

There was an increase in the associative activities of the Dalits and this limited elite as suggested by Fiske as the main organizer⁴³ of Ambedkar's birth and death anniversaries celebrations, Ravi Das Jayanti and Buddha's Jayanti giving Dalit the sense of recognition however limited. There was a total rejection of traditional world view that provided legitimacy to caste inequalities as nothing more than the perpetuation of the principle of super ordination-subordination and exploitation.⁴⁴

40. Article 17 of the constitutions abolished the 'untouchability'

41. Sachidananda, *The Harijan Elite*, Op.Cit, pp. 126-27.

42. B.Joshi, *Democracy in search of equality* p. 81, Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1982, Delhi,

43. Fushe, S.C.Buddhists Association in M.Mahar, *Untouchables*, Op.Cit, p. 141

44. Ramaswami, Ray, and V.B. Singh, *A Study of Harijan Elite*, 1987, p. 102.

After the debacle of RPI in U.P., there was more and more emphasis on grassroots mobilization by creating consciousness and awareness of the degraded existence and perpetrated exploitation and discrimination. As the people could not control their leaders in RPI, there seems to be an attempt to get control over the leadership⁴⁵ and a need was felt of creating committed leadership before going to power politics.

As these groups were facing problems in their respective work places, they started forming their own organizations to solve their day to day problems. As all of them come through reservation and face almost similar problems, it was but likely to generate a common discrimination which helped them to rediscover a common assertive and demanding identity as ⁴⁶ the Dalit, irrespective of sub groups and regional barriers.

The government employees not only formed their organizations but also became more responsive to community gatherings, ⁴⁷giving the hope and aspirations for achieving some thing which their brethren had already achieved. This group became a sort of role model to many assertive groups.

All these activities in the over-all turmoil and socio-political context which the society was facing during that period and subsequently growing frustration and despair with the pace of growth that generated expectations ⁴⁸ in the commoners on the one hand and increasing hostility, rejection, alienation with the sense of inadequate distribution and misrepresentation, on the other

67. Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Vision*, Op.Cit, p. 67

46. Sachidananda, Op.Cit, p. 170

47. Sachidananda, Op.Cit, p. 168.

48. B. Joshi, *Democracy*, Op.Cit, p. 23

created a condition where the relatively better placed Dalits and commoners saw each other as their best protectors. This in turn generated and expedited a need for the greater identification, autonomy, and participation in the political institutions, realizing strong and persistence importance of politics in deciding the power equation in the society.⁴⁹

Out of this situation these middle class Dalits, educated and semi-educated⁵⁰ whom Fiske called, 'modern men' provided the impetus to most of the organizations that arose from the late 1960s. One of the most important organization that emerged during this period was BAMCEF (Backward And Minorities Communities Employees Federation) which was officially formed on December 6,1978.⁵¹ With a different orientation and style of functioning in Indian politics. This group could not have become a fulfilled political party because in doing so there was apprehension that even a political party manned by the Dalits will eventually be controlled by non-Dalits. Moreover, if the Dalits form their own party it will handicap the effective leaders still further because most of the leaders who will join such a party because of their genuine concern for the community definitely be defeated in elections by caste Hindu overwhelm majority and manaeuvring.⁵² This will clear the way for upper caste to find some stooges to contest on their party and become puppet in their hands.

Its structure and formation was in contrast to all Dalit organizations or Dalit based organizations. Its formation was deliberate and emerged after Kanshi

49. Ibid, p. 169,

50. Gail Omvedt, In Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p.159

51. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan Samaj Party, A Book Centre for Dalit Education, 1994, New Delhi, p. 7

52. Ramaswami & Singh, Op.Cit, p. 108.

Ram, its founding president, resigned from the service. It has consistently refused to assume a reactive and agitational stance which in practice, has meant, staying away of many Dalit struggles, even the Namantar struggle of Marathwada University.⁵³

Their refusal to join ⁵⁴ reactive agenda set by others has been more of an orientation by BAMCEF to decide its own political direction than simply due to the fact of its members being the part of government, and their inability to join in struggle activities.⁵⁵

Second while it had Dalit as its strongest base, there was a concerted attempt from the very beginning to include all backwards and minorities, the term S.C. or Dalit does not even appear in the name of the organization. While the Dalits probably have the majority among the claimed two lakhs educated employees including about 500 Ph.D. holders, more than 3,000 MBBS/MS degree holders, 15,000 scientists and around 70,000 other graduates and post graduates. Half of the members are involved in U.P..⁵⁶

BAMCEF as it is considered is ' a brain bank, a talent bank and a financial bank' of the oppressed and exploited in the society to accelerate its mission and be ahead of times, with the basic objective of paying back to the society and discharging their community obligation.

BAMCEF stands for a purposeful social cause. This is a movement of the

53. Gail Omvedt, In Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p. 162

54. Ibid, p. 162

55. Its way of functioning seems similar to RSS which works through frontal organizations and never takes direct stance and involves in grass root mobilization.

56. R.K.Singh, Kanshi Ram Aur BSP (Hindi), Kushwaha Book Distributors, 1994, Allahabad, p. 88

educated employees by the educated employees but not for the educated employees.⁵⁷ It seems that the organization was formed as a long term supportive and parent organization for the further political thrust.⁵⁸

BAMCEF is an unregistered, loosely constructed but nevertheless desirable organization. With non-religious, non-political and non-agitational nature of the organization,⁵⁹ the major contribution in terms of its goals has been in producing cadre for the Bahujan awareness, for the help of their own movement which is led by Kanshi Ram. The members of the group have organized several cadre camps on Sunday evenings in the Dalit localities. The obvious objective was to create 'Bahujan Activists' of conviction. The members of the group were addressing the Dalit masses in the villages, urban localities and government offices. Being the most advanced segment of the society, with better understanding of the problems Dalits face, a link was established between lower classes, middle classes and upper classes of Dalits.

The group was supposed to help in developing a group of activists articulated and capable of speaking for the rights and against injustice done in the name of community. These meetings were invariably started with Ambedkar message that politics is key to the all problems and Kanshi Ram is leading the mission with great conviction and sincerity. They were told "The Dalits are what they are today not because of poverty but because they have become poor because their human rights have been robbed. Once their human rights are

57. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan, Op.Cit, p. 7

58. Gail Omvedt, In Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p. 161

59. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan, Op. Cit, p. 7

restored their poverty will be automatically cured".⁶⁰ The emphasis was on the issue of social transformation on the one hand and communicating and convincing of Kanshi Ram's leadership on the other. The focus was to create awareness of fighting for social and economic justice through political means, by capturing political power.⁶¹

In fact from the very beginning the BAMCEF was emphasizing discipline and ideology. An I.A.S. officer had to give a patient hearing to the fourth class employees preaching in the cadre camps. This group with good economic standing also provided base and ideological drive to the Dalit masses. From one estimate majority of its workers are engaged in U.P.⁶²

Dalit Soshit Sangharsh Samaj Samiti (DS-4)

As sufficient number of political activists were prepared, through the cadre camps of the BAMCEF Kanshi Ram formed Dalit Shoshit Sangharsh Samiti on Dec. 6, 1981. As the cadres became restless, it was to be engaged in public affairs. Now the agitation become inevitable, the DS-4 started as the agitational wing of the movement,⁶³ a frontal or lead organization of BAMCEF. It was developed to tap the resources of employees' families as well as the small community of Dalit professionals.⁶⁴ It was a step forward in the

60. Rajshekar, V.T., Gopinath M., Dalit Movement in India, Dalit Sahitya Academy, 1994, Bangalore, p. 35

61. R.K.Singh, Kanshi Ram Aur B.S.P. Op.Cit, p. 91

62. Ibid, p. 88

63. Ibid, p. 89
Gail Omvedt, In Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p. 163
Ambed Rajan, p. 7

64. B.Joshi, Untouchables, Op.Cit, p. 108.

movement or as they call it in fulfilling 'the mission' to create confidence and awareness in the Bahujans. Any member of the society could be the member of this organization excluding the government employees.⁶⁵ It was not merely a political party but a political force for agitation and mobilization. This organization was composed of the "resource less sections of the society, students and woman as well as doctors and engineers".⁶⁶ Here a link between BAMCEF and DS4 could be maintained as most of the BAMCEF activists persuaded their family members and relatives to be the members of DS4 and participate in the mass awareness programmes started by the DS4. "When we get educated in Baba Sahab's thoughts, we need not even think of agitation. We are automatically lifted from one to other. Agitation simply follows education... Similarly agitation leads to organization. As we agitate, we automatically get organized without even our knowing it and without even a paise expenditure".⁶⁷

The DS4's first major social action programme was a renunciation of the 'Poona Pact'. This pact has brought about the integration of some Dalits to caste Hindus. Kanshi Ram's message was published in his book "The Chamacha Age". It ascribes that the poona pact was the beginning of process in which the educated elites of Dalits were turned into simple puppets of 'upper castes'. They must reject this role and instead direct their energy, service and talent forwards breaking caste hierarchy as inequality.⁶⁸

The DS4 activists started cycle marches from Kanya Kumari in south,

65. R.K.Singh, Op.Cit, p. 91

66. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan, Op.Cit, p. 8

67. Rajshekhar & Gopinath, Op.Cit, p. 53.

68. Kanshi Ram, The Chamcha Age, An Era of Stooges, 1982, New Delhi

Kohima in the north east, Porbunder in the west and Puri in the east on 0 Dec.1982. It converged at New Delhi on 15th March 1983. Over three lakhs people participated in these events which lasted for 100 days with an impressive rally at boat club New Delhi to profound and propagate the principles of 'equality with self respect'.⁶⁹ The DS4 although not very neatly and formally constructed outfit yet it had a workable structure and branches were formed for specific purposes. There had been "propaganda wing" the most powerful and popular among the masses, women wing and student wing. The later two although were never fully developed nevertheless they worked in their respective areas.⁷⁰

Buddhist Research Centre has been responsible for providing intellectual and strategic impetus to the movement. It works extensively on history's 'real interpretation' by rewriting history from the perspective of indigenous people, creates new myths and demolishes old ones in accordance with circumstances and producing literature for the 'mission'.⁷¹ Thus DS-4 provided the background and activists for the political action.⁷²

Bahujan Samaj Party

By now the politics has emerged as the avenue through which the Dalits look forward to finding solution to their many problems. And now Bahujan Samaj Party was founded on 14th April 1984 as the political arm of its President

69. B.Joshi, *Untouchables*, Op.Cit, p. 109-117

70. R.K.Singh, *Kanshi Ram*, Op.Cit, p. 92

71. Ibid, p. 85.

72. Ibid, p. 94

Kanshi Ram. The Lok Sabha elections held that year saw B.S.P. as a critical force cutting the Congress votes. In these elections B.S.P. secured around 10 lakhs votes throughout India but mostly in U.P..

Around 50 seats of Assembly were won by non-Congress parties because of the presence of B.S.P. The B.S.P. altogether polled around 7 lakhs votes in the Assembly election of U.P. in 1984.⁷³ With the committed cadre camps by BAMCEF and huge rallies organized by DS-4 throughout this period, B.S.P. was able to mobilize and convince some Dalits into its fold.

In December 1985 in Bijnaur by-election B.S.P. candidate Miss Mayawati captured around 61,000 votes. The Congress candidate Mrs. Meera Kumar⁷⁴ could manage to win just by 5,000 votes. It was 95,000 less than what the Congress candidate had won with, in the last election.⁷⁵ In Hardwar by-election in 1986 B.S.P. proved its mettle coming second securing an impressive 135,000 votes.⁷⁶ In these elections the Dalits voted for the B.S.P. and the emphasis of mobilization and campaign was to convince them of the B.S.P.'s credentials. Miss Mayawati makes a powerful orator and excellent organizer.⁷⁷

After this election the B.S.P. started a year long social action programme, against untouchability, inhumanity, injustice, insecurity and inequality. It was conducted through Dharna, Cycle marches starting from 15 August 1987 to 15

73. Illustrated Weekly, March 1987, quoted in K.L.Sharma, Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p. 163

74. Meera Kumar is the daughter of late Jagjiwan Ram, erstwhile most influential Congress Dalit leader for around 5 decades.

75. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan, Op.Cit, p. 9

76. Year Long Social Action Programme, The B.S.P. Pamphlet, dated 15-8-1987

77. Kancha, Iliaha, Why I am not a Hindu, Op.Cit, p. 83-84

August 1988.⁷⁸ Small and big public gathering, pamphlets distribution, demonstrations and cadre camps were the main organizing mechanism with emphasis on discipline, and also keeping in mind the limited resources party has at its disposal.⁷⁹

Another by-election which was held in June 1988⁸⁰ was the landmark for the B.S.P. as it finally heralded the 'new arrival' in Indian politics. Kanshi Ram secured 18% of the total votes against Sunil Shastri son of Lal Bahadur Shastri (Congress candidate) and V.P.Singh backed by 23 organizations and parities with five CMs of Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana. B.S.P. made this election a three sided contest and "throughout most of the campaign infact it appeared that the B.S.P. with relatively low funding had the most enthusiastic and vigorous campaign".⁸¹ The campaign centered around "Vote Hamara Raj Tumhara Nahi Chalega Nahi Chalega" (Our vote and your rule, won't do, won't do). The attitude of high castes appeared to be "it should be either Congress or opposition but not the B.S.P. under any circumstances".⁸²

This election proved very important for B.S.P. and all other parties started taking note of the emerging "Khatre Ki Ghanti" (alarming bell) as H.N.Bahuguna described it. Kanshi Ram described the oppositions as coming

78. Ibid,

79. Ibid,

80. Political scenario was fast going undercharge. with the Bofors controversy at peak, V.P.Singh who had left the party Congress, emerged the consensus choice against Congress and corruption.

81. Gail Omvedt, In Caste and Class, Op.Cit, p. 164

82. Ambed Rajan, Op.Cit, p. 10

together of all Brahmanical elements, "When all communists with their red brigade reached Allahabad to help V.P.Singh, Babri Masjid Action Committee, Ram Janm Bhumi Action Committee with Sangh Parivar along with Communists worked very hard for Raja's victory. They all were very angry with B.S.P. candidate who does not have a single inch of land. They did everything for Raja's victory because even after land reform he is having 8,000 acres of land".⁸³

It is not just by chance that B.S.P. had contested all these by-election so effectively.⁸⁴ It was a calculated and deliberate move for "by elections could be fought very well with the help of all activists from U.P. But in general elections every one fights his own battle rendering one weak and scattered"⁸⁵

The vigorous fights in these by-elections of Bijnaur, Hardwar and Allahabad not only gained votes for the B.S.P. but more importantly it provided the much required popularity amongst its targeted group, i.e. the Bahujan Samaj. It gave the commoners a feeling of himself, and a party of their own.

In between B.S.P. continued with its social awakening programmes throughout the year. Another year-long programme was launched from 15 August 1988 to 15 August 1989 called "Five Fold Social Transformation Movement".⁸⁶ The five points of the programme were:-

(1) Struggle for self respect

83. Bhartiya Mazdoor Kisan Andolan,
B.S.P. Pamphlete, 15 Aug. 1988

84. V.B.Singh, (eds), in Electoral Politics in India, A Changing landscape (ed), Subrata Kumar Mitra and James chiriyan kandath, Segment Book, New Delhi, 1992. p. 241.

85. Kanshi Ram's Speech at Itawa on 27 Oct. 1991

86. Five Points Programme for Social Transformation, B.S.P. Pamphlet on 15-8-1988

- (2) Struggle for liberation
- (3) Struggle for equality
- (4) Struggle for annihilation of caste and building bridge of brotherhood in the broken society.
- (5) Struggle against untouchability, injustice, atrocities and terror against 85% majority Indian population.

The B.S.P. has its own publication and runs its own newspaper. For literature is a very powerful means for creating awareness among the masses. It is a weapon for struggle. And in India the development and origin of these papers was precisely done as the instrument of struggle. For the simple reason of media being dominated by "Manuwadis" the B.S.P. runs its own weekly in seven languages including Hindi and English for last fifteen years unabated.

The aim of the literature is claimed to establish a society based on equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. Its emphasis or thrust is more positive while it rejects all other myths, history and literature as status-quoist and maintaining, protecting, preserving and promoting 'upper caste' hegemony. It inculcated the feelings of self respect, brotherhood, confidence, equality and courage. It portrays Indian history as Aryan and Mulnivasi conflict in which Mulnivasis are subjected and humiliated by the foreign intruders. It invariably emphasizes the fight against injustice done to Dalit. The source of inspiration has always been Periyar, Phule, Narayan Guru, Shahu Maharaj and Dr. Ambedkar.

It also emphasizes rationality, in day to day affairs, advocates modernization and materialistic and progressive ideas while rejecting all superstitions, religious fundamentalism and other worldly attitude and tendencies.

Basically, the literature tries to educate Dalit of their historical roles thy

have to play drawing inspiration from the past and strength from the present. That way B.S.P.s literature has its own perspective. Very different and antagonistic to Brahmanic perspective on history-present and future. In B.S.P.s literature 'human' is the central figure. "Human Liberation" is the aim. On the one hand it talks of exploitation Dalits have to go under Brahmanic rule and on the other create anger against caste system and suggesting its solution by capturing the political power.⁸⁷

First election victory to B.S.P. came after 5 year of its inception that is in 1989 general elections when it got 13 MLAs elected to U.P. Assembly. It secured around 11% of popular votes. Its firebrand leader Miss. Mayawati the Party's General Secretary got elected from Bijnaur Parliamentary constituency, baffling media, political analysts and dominant political parties.⁸⁸

Through another social awakening programme B.S.P. organized conferences for Bahujan Samaj's 6 different constituents to awaken them and to make them realize that the 'Bahujan Samaj is safe only with the B.S.P.'.⁸⁹

- (1) "Muslims are safe with B.S.P." conference at Muradabad (U.P.) on 10-09-89
- (2) "SCs are safe with B.S.P." conference at New Delhi, on 13-09-89
- (3) "OBCs are safe with B.S.P." conference at Kanpur on 01-01-89
- (4) "Sikhs are safe with B.S.P." conference at Ludhiana on 08-10-89
- (5) "STs are safe with B.S.P." conference at Bilaspur on 15-10-89
- (6) "Christians are safe with B.S.P." conference in Banglore on 21-10-1989.

87. R.K.Singh, Op.Cit, p. 107.

88. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan Samaj, Op.Cit, p. 12

89. Bahujan Samaj is Safe with the B.S.P. The B.S.P. Pamphlet dated 10-9-89

These conferences cleared many doubts from the mind of the people as policy for each segment was put forward judiciously. The common historical roots, appalling and abject conditions of living as common problem perpetuated by the common Brahminical enemy and therefore, combine fight for the common solution by capturing political power, were the focal points of the arguments.

Ambedkar's 100th birth anniversary was commemorated throughout India. He was awarded Bharat Ratna and his portrait was installed in the central hall of the parliament.⁹⁰ The B.S.P. in its own way of celebration took a "social transformation Prachar Yatra of 130 days starting as usual on 6 Dec. 1990. This yatra went through 13 states and created "wave and history"⁹¹ wherever he went he was received amidst tumultuous welcome, where thousands of activists and supporters came to express their solidarity with Kanshi Ram, whom they lovingly call "Bade Sahabji". When the Prachar Yatra touched Delhi on 15th March, it culminated in a huge rally which took many political bigwigs by surprise and shock. After the journey of around 5,000 kms, in 130 days, the yatra ended in Mhow⁹² Madhya Pradesh on 14th April, 1991.

In November 1992, Kanshi Ram made his maiden entry to the parliament from Itawa in U.P.. The B.S.P. took special care in demystifying Congress and B.J.P. that itself was in power. Despite a joint opposition the B.S.P. won the election on its own strength and strategy. Contrary to the general

90. This has been first demand put forward by RPI in its charter of demands 1960s onward, Op.Cit

91. Ambed Rajan, My Bahujan, Op.Cit, p. 12

92. Mhow is the birth place of Dr. Ambedkar and therefor of great significance for Dalit movement.

impression Samajwadi Party contested and opposed B.S.P. and secured 80,000 votes while B.S.P. secured 146,000.⁹³

After the demolition of Babri Masjid B.S.P. entered into an electoral alliance with Mulayam Singh Yadav. The credentials of Mr. Yadav were never beyond doubts but for the first time after 9 year of its inception, political exigencies made the B.S.P. to have an alliance with him.⁹⁴

As both the parties were not considered serious contenders for the power in Lucknow, they could not get the proper coverage and media attention. But when results were declared, they emerged as the second largest group and formed the govt. with the help of Congress and Janata Dal.⁹⁵

It was a phenomenal victory for B.S.P. which secured 69 seats. B.S.P. with its own ideology and strategy could convince the people and it was for the first time that centuries long suppressed and oppressed had a direct say in the governance of the state.

This election also proved the viability of the 'Bahujan Samaj' which B.S.P. wish to build on its own strength and orientation. In 1989, 1991 and 1993 elections it secured 10 to 12% of votes. All the parties fought 1989 elections on anti-Congress plank.⁹⁶ The joint opposition and Congress could not stop the B.S.P. securing 11 percent of votes.

The 1991 elections were fought in another wave "Hindu Majority" stance

93. Interview with Kanshi Ram 25th March 1993, Amar Ujala.

94. Kanshi Ram, Interview, Amar Ujala, 29 March 1995, New Delhi

95. BSP-SP alliance got 177 seats and BJP got 177 in the house of 425 members.

96. All rightists, centrists (minus) Congress and leftists parties faught these elections together.

of B.J.P. which was not enough to erode B.S.P.'s support base and it maintained both its tally of members and percentage. The B.J.P. fought this election separately and secured majority in U.P..

And in 1993 also it secured 11% votes but substantially different in nature as it contested only 152 seats leaving rest to its electoral partner.⁹⁷ After these elections the popularity and acceptability of the B.S.P. increased many fold. B.S.P. along with S.P. formed the government bringing the dispossessed to the centre stage.

The political intricacies of alliance resulted in the pull-out of B.S.P. from the government after one and half years. On 3 June 1995 B.S.P. formed its own government in U.P., the biggest and the most important political state of India. As Mulayam Singh Yadav did not respect the conditions of alliance and wanted to assert his party supremacy not only in the politics of the state but also at the expense of Dalits and other non-privileged groups.⁹⁸

B.S.P. perceived quickly that Mr. Mulayam Singh was working under a well calculated move to wipe out B.S.P.'s support base. "Who will tolerate all this. We have to sustain what we had already achieved",⁹⁹ said Kanshi Ram. To avoid the perceptible threat to the organization and its support base, B.S.P. accepted support from the B.J.P. One supporting the move quotes Ambedkar that self interest is an essential motivating element in politics and "what makes one interest dominated over other is power. That being so power is needed to destroy power. There may be problems of how to use power, but there can be no

97. A.R.Akela , Kanshi Ram, Reflections of Press, (Hindi), Interview with Kanshi Ram, Anand Sahitya Sadan, 1995, Aligarh, p. 65

98. The Hindu, 4 March 1995

99. Asia Tomorrow, 15 July, 1995

question that without power on the one side, it is not possible to destroy power on the other side... the untouchables (Dalits) are therefore under an absolute necessity of acquiring political power as much as possible".¹⁰⁰

Hailing as 'Birth of a Dalit regime' and commenting further on the self respect and perception of Dalit another maintained "They would feel sense of belonging with the state which they never felt all these years".¹⁰¹ It was further held that it is more important psychologically and to the credit of B.S.P. that they used an 'upper caste' party to assert Dalit identity.¹⁰²

From June 5 to September 17,1995 the B.S.P. governed the U.P., and the 1996 general elections are indications of its mounting strength when it got 21% of votes winning six parliamentary seats.¹⁰³

Throghout its tenure the B.S.P. government tried to maximize the mobilization of the most backward classes and the Dalits by starting various developmental schemes i.e. Ambedkar Village Developmental Programme and organization of huge public rallies. After the collapse of government the B.S.P. organized "Swabhiman And Sawdhan" rallies for Bahujan Samaj in almost every districts of the state.

The declaration of 1996 general elections results has proved beyond doubts the completion of Dalit integration as a political group, and ensuring a definite and solid strength to its leadership confirming that they themselves will decide their own course of action.

100. Quoted from "Changing political equations" in social action, p. 342, July 1995, Vol. 3,

101. Ambrose Pinto, The Birth of a Dalit Regime, in Social Action, July, 1994, vol. 3, p. 352

102. Ibid, p. 352

103. The Hindu, 10-06-96

CHAPTER THREE
MAHARASHTRA AND UTTAR PRADESH:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The real challenge to caste and caste based institutions after Buddhism, came in the state of Maharashtra. Two most important figures in this respect are Jotiba Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. They tried to impress upon the trickiness of "Hinduism" which Ambedkar called the official doctrine of Brahmanism. Therefore not only the displacement of the "Brahmanism" but the whole Aryan legacy with all its cultural and ideological manifestations has to be destroyed as a pre-conditions for the liberation of Indian people and emergence of a true Indian nation. This is the theme of 'Dalit liberation movement'.

A firm and autonomous Dalit movement, attempting unity of all exploited and suppressed sections in India to materialize the 'ideology and the principle of' land back to the tiller and government back to the people' was inevitable phenomenon given the social structure based on the caste system and outcaste status of Dalit the most suppressed and oppressed and there by the most interested and competent to establish caste less society.

The betrayal on the part of Congress in not keeping off the reserve constituencies on the one hand and patronizing devicive the policies of "Harijan Upliftment" with the notion to make wrongs appear to the very victim as though they were his privileges; the most telling example of false consciousness on the other made the Dalit suspicious about the reform credentials of the Hindus. Equally more important and contributing in this disillusionment of Dalits was the mechanical understanding of objective conditions by the left movements. They refused to recognize fundamental and driving force of Indian reality i.e. caste

system and therefore the Dalits could not believe them given the centuries long discrimination and exploitation they had to face on every day basis. Dalits left with no choice had to opt for their own model emphasizing cultural and ideological dimension while not ignoring the economic aspect altogether. The state socialism was advocated by Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) throughout as their agenda for redistribution of economic resources.

Now the emphasis was to assert the cultural identity by Dalits as independent and autonomous from the so called over emphasising Hindu identity. The plurality of interests has been the core of liberal democratic institutions. And in the primordial societies the mobilization and interest articulation on the communal basis, when other means are closed, should not be rejected as communal or casteiest. For it takes time for a shift from old to new institutional means of mobilization in the obvious absence of class or capitalist society.

The first assertion was made in renewing the demands for separate electorate which Dalits had given up in the "Poona Pact". Not only that but a demand for separate village settlement for Dalits was made holding village system responsible for all the sufferings of Indian people. By now the fallout of joint electorate was widely felt and was singled out as the most decisive mechanism to vivisect the Dalits by siphoning off their most able ones and putting them against their own brethren.

Caste as an enclosed class remained only at theoretical level as the electoral system was just being ushered in and being aware of the pathetic and

appalling overall Dalit situation they were not prepared to put it in the caste war kind of mode outside electoral political system. Moreover Indian history has been dominated by the calculations and conspiracies, the mere violence could not convince Dalits of its desirability and viability, for the ideological and cultural issues have to be fought not in the battle field, but in almost every sphere of life, for history rears out the prepositions that political revolutions have been preceded by cultural and social revolution. And therefore, the cultural transformation before any meaningful political upheavals, was core to Dalit quest for dignity and honour. Now the formation of Dalit groups like, Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) was logical culmination for overall educating the Dalits about their cultural past as well as to prepare them to face the modern day challenges.

The Hindu and Muslim communalism were the overriding political realities by 1940s. Now there was a tendency to brand Hinduism as the central cultural identity of India other than Muslims. It got its implicit acceptance in both the Gandhian model and the Nehru model of secularism while Communists showing more inclination towards Nehru. This as a matter of fact underplayed the caste and local identities. It made the Dalits suspect that not only their new formed respect in their identity is eclipsed but after the transfer of power they would be left hopeless in the hands of their exploiters. But mainly because of the pioneering efforts of Dr. Ambedkar Dalits got some constitutional safeguards ensuring corrective measures to the historical wrongs and a check on future discrimination. These measures were intended to have a great bearing on the

functioning of political democracy in an essentially undemocratic society.

The mobilization and participation of Dalits in the period of transition required them to be more responsive to the prevailing circumstances and bring the desired changes. Ambedkar symbolizing the Dalit consciousness and pattern of mobilization, was quick, to ask for separate electorate but considerate enough to sign 'Poona Pact', from vehemently opposing congress to accepting ministerial berth and chairmanship of Constitution drafting committee.

And when the circumstances required, the Poona Pact was renounced with the contempt it deserved as monumental blunder and after drafting the constitution Ambedkar had no hesitation in declaring the intention for burring the same edifice. When he could not serve the purpose of his association with the national government, Ambedkar wasted no time and resigned from the ministry on the question of Hindu Code Bill.

In the fight against the three thousand years old structure of Brahmanism and its accompanied burden the Dalits were ultimately successful when they got replaced Manusmiriti by the Constitution which aimed for creating an egalitarian society based on the principles of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". The point to remember here is that the process was never complete as they were more in the nature of theoretical formulations contradicting the prevailing social norms, political rules and cultural identity in the India society.

Ambedkar's pronouncement that we will be ruling community found no taker during his lifetime. And moreover he was addressing, not the immediate generation, but the future generations through his political and ideological

formulations. The middle class a must for the change of the guards was nowhere in the scene. That group not only have to be self sufficient but also must inculcate the skill to outdo the dominant elite with confirmed obligation for paying back to the community they represent.

Restricted education , employment to position of power never near to Dalits and their access to strategic resources always unequal, were adequate enough to make Dalits docile. The limited access to these centers in the forms of constitutional safeguards was to ensure that the beneficiaries always careful about the interests of community and that no discrimination is done and if done, is brought to the public notice so that the people are informed about prevailing conditions of the Dalits.

In Maharashtra with immediate Ambedkar influence, the Mahars were first to follow his ideas and rejected the congress and congress sponsored and 'patronized propaganda of Harijan upliftment'. More positively, reacting to the call through various organizations and groups based activities, the Dalit asserted their identity with more sane and human Buddhist tradition and the 'Republican Party of India to spread the cause of social revolution through political mobilizations and participation with their own vision and mission. But 'politization' is value loaded term and it has got no relevance on its own. The political participation, political mobilization and interest articulation are related processes and in any political set up and it would be difficult to sustain any one in the absence of other. The Dalit politics in Maharashtra has not developed beyond the horizontal mobilization, not because the leadership could not do

so, but mainly because the leadership did not move further.

It is not that politics of alliances or compromises is uncommon in plural liberal societies but to be the perpetual appendage is certainly not a remarkable distinction for a group whose self respect had been usurped for thousand years in continuity.

As a matter of fact the 'Dalit Political Assertion' even with a rich legacy is still conditioned to operate within the framework of 'equality and dignity' in the state of Maharashtra.

The most pathetic and detrimental aspect of Dalit politics in Maharashtra is the splitting tendency and cooption of its leadership by the dominant caste elite. The differences of opinion and aligning with the ruling party may not be considered undemocratic but it has created the impression that the Dalits not only have not inculcated the long term natural allies but also have not gained enough ground to stand on their own. This helps in creating the 'dependent image' more appropriate to the 'Harijan Model' of Gandhian philosophy than to the assertive, demanding and determined, independent Ambedkar model where he saw his community as the ruling class of the country.

It would not be improper, if the last four decades are called 'the period of leadership crisis'. There are so many leaders that the credibility of everyone is at the stake. Everybody is after the leadership and therefore there has emerged a 'crisis'. This has not only compartmentalized the Dalits but has not let others get convinced of its viability and capacity of delivering goods to the society as a whole, as a true Ambedkarite.

The lack of unifying, coordinating and upto some extent commanding tendency or stream among the different segments or sections i.e. intellectuals, social scientists, political activists, religious activists, and, between leader and followers, has created a chaos where 'too many to be significant' seems doing everything. In a situation when every organisation or leader wants to work on all fronts - socio-religious and political, the repercussions prove to be very costly for the movement as a whole. If Raja Dhale wants to propagate Buddhism he cannot help alienating non-Buddhists. The conflicting and some time not-so-conflicting or friendly identities divides the rank and file and for a political movement to survive it becomes essential to keep down on various occasions.

It is not that all these kind of activities cannot be taken together or coordinated but one has to prioritize the essential requirements. The Dalit politics in Maharashtra seems to lacking this prioritization for a community which has history of exploitation and discrimination stripped of every dignity and amenity for more than three thousand years and therefore the 'suddenness of the results' is not at all unreasonable. Everyone wants to achieve everything, some for the self aggrandisement and some others for the community. The Dalit patience is at the lowest. An emotional outburst may be helpful in exposing the proposition but it would hardly have any impact on its destruction. And for that, as Dalits still are not in a position to fight all enemies at once. It seems the Dalit political experience in Maharashtra did not bother to devise strategy and the advise for cultural identity by Ambedkar has been carried out by Dalit in Maharashtra too seriously and too far. It has negative implication for the

political counter-culture to develop in society where everyone else is in a different and most of the time in the opponents' camp.

The image was one that almost challenged the history. For a country inured to almost daily reports of atrocities by police and upper caste oppression on Dalits — the front page photographs could not startle — various badly beaten legislatures with blood all around their body and clothes. It was 1993, Dec. 16 in U.P. Legislative Assembly. A lone policeman being bashed up by the Dalits armed with the sticks, stones and their own rifles. This was March 1994 in Meerut. More telling was the anger and outburst of Dalits in Lucknow again on Dec. 16, 1995, in the number of lacs when the press tried to play with the dignity of their respected one. More than thirty thousand people were court arrested. Times have passed from the period when Ambedkar had to face the wrath of ill minded for attempting entry into the temples in late 20s of this century.

Chamars as the most inflammable elements, identified well by their new organizers, make the nucleus of Dalit political polarization in Uttar Pradesh. Ambedkar dictum for becoming the ruling community of the country as 'Prabudha' enlightened citizens got its most serious takers in the Dalits of Aryavarta — whose ultimate aim is nothing less than to rule India through capture of power at any cost but with dignity as well. The magnitude of this assertion has not only changed the psychological set up and political agenda drastically, the future of democratic institutions with potential of adjusting various conflicting interest seems to be more secure and fruit bearing as never

before, at least from the point of view of those who have been indiscriminately neglected, despised and pitted by fundamentalists progressives, secularists and the revolutionaries alike.

Three decades of constitutional safeguards for the Dalits in, education, employment and politics have a mixed fallout. The government operating in a politics of scarcity feels that it is moving as fast as it can without ripping asunder the fabric of the country or system; the Dalits feel that the progress has been too slow and too limited. Conflict is bound to arise in such a politics of primordial compromises.

Kanshi Ram, a product of constitutional safeguards has shown the way to this group, of becoming political elite. The growing tension in the social relationships is more attributed to the improved condition of the Dalits and that improvement is coming by and large from the privileges other enjoyed till date. The hydra-headed monster of discrimination and casteism makes the educated Dalits feel the existence of 'untouchability' more strongly irrespective of whether she or he is being treated as untouchable or not than his illiterate brethren who have lost all hopes and accepted the divine status of 'untouchable'.

Bahujan Samaj Party or Dalit politics in Utter Pradesh is trying to appeal to this feeling of looking back to one's own community. This is bound to work when caste affinity is much more emotional issue than religious or class consciousness. Further Hinduism, and for that matter class solidarity for caste divided Indians are the abstract issues whereas caste is a concrete reality. Based on caste feelings one is being treated inferior and unequal. Therefore, slogan of

jat thodo samaj jodo (break caste, unite society) is more appealing emotional and pragmatic than the 'all Indians must be Hinduised or the poor of India unite'.

The thrust of the rhetorics is solely on breaking the caste system and uniting the society, by overthrowing the rule of Manuvadi's. The emphasis on establishing Manavtawad by destroying Manuvad is stressed in almost all the communications to the people.

The change of the system is solely described in social terms with political orientation. It is not that class or economic programmes are looked down upon. But for the reasons that class struggle would not succeed in India because of the vicious hold of caste. There has to be a caste struggle for class struggle to emerge in India society. Though people from many castes face the same economic hardships, social standing (religions and casteist) prevails over the economic situation. The dependency of the 'Bahujan' over 'Fewjans'(Alpjans) needs to be broken down, when India is independent why a majority of the people be dependent on a minscule minority? For too long Dalits have been knocking at the doors of the system, asking for justice and getting nothing. It is time to break down those doors. No sacrifice will be too great. Dalits must prove that they have decided to give up their dependence.

The strategy to annihilate the caste is by uniting the society, i.e. the Bahujan Samaj by inculcating the desire to capture political power. Although the fight is on the social front, without political power it is difficult to make people listen. The inherent thrust is on the social charge because without social democracy political democracy is incomplete and meaningless. Therefore, the

Dalits want to use politics for social transformation, for political power is the master key with which one can open any lock whether it is social, economic, educational or cultural. That way Dalit politics is a power movement.

There is very little negative aspect of B.S.P. ideology. In contrast to some other Dalit views officially there is little tendency to vitriolic attacks on 'upper castes' as 'Nazis' or with almost absence of specific attacks on 'upper caste' politicians or parties. The emphasis is clear, not to blame others but self evaluation. Brahmanwad is carried on Dalit soldiers, not by the strength or greatness of others but because of the ignorance and disunity of Bahujan. The basic thrust is rather the positive one of the Bahujans organizing themselves.

The beneficiaries of caste system unabatedly have been using it as a single edge sword to dissect the Bahujans, the Dalits assert that, unless (upper castes) put a stop to this (the Dalits) would use the same caste system as a double edged weapon against them. The organization of Dalits against the century long oppression have its own implications. Now the attempts on the part of 'upper caste' to under play 'caste issues' otherwise omnipotent, meet the violent reaction from Dalit sides. The logic is simple, they are doing openly what others are doing clandestinely. Although for different purpose, others want to maintain it and Dalits want to destroy it. The caste system is perceived like a cancer which has to be brought out into the open before it can be operated upon.

As B.S.P. in its own words is committed to convert the 'slaves' into human beings. What is necessary first is to tell the slave about his slavery. The various pamphlets and posters that were distributed through out the state in the

mid eighties told about the pathetic and appalling conditions of Dalits and their negligible presence in all sphere of life. The point of preponderance of others was equally emphasized. The most important point which needs mention was of the 'majority being neglected' by the 'minority'. The most circulated slogan doing the rounds was. "Vote Hamara, Raj Tumahara, Nahin Chalega Nahin Chalega". The slogan itself symbolizes the divide between the ruler and the ruled.

The power is never received, it has to be fought for, which requires enemy to fight with. As a preparatory step, Congress was identified as the enemy no. 1 of the Dalits. It was for two reasons. The congress has been ruling the India after independence and Dalits got nothing but some stooges aspiring for the crumbs. Ambedkar had fought against Congress throughout his life. The more important reason seems to be the psychological one. Congress was the most powerful organization and its identification as main enemy provided moral boost for 'fighting against the mightiest'. This sense of self existence with dignity is the life line of Dalits' politics. As almost all Dalits by 1980s were solidly behind the Congress, an attack on Congress became inevitable to wean away the Dalits from its gambit. By the year 1989 the process of alienation of Dalits from the Congress was completed, which paved way for other centrist formations to take over while Dalit moving towards the B.S.P.

In the beginning the emphasis was to develop a base, and there were direct appeals from the public platforms for caste affinities and loyalties. The help in person or otherwise was not wanted from 'others'. And some times they

were told as 'black-sheep in the meetings', crude it may look for others, but the B.S.P. could not have adopted a more effective technique for conveying what it wanted to convey. In an environment where every political party routinely says that it is dying for the Dalits, how was the B.S.P. to be distinguished from others? How was it to convince the Dalits that it was really their own party?

Contrary to the common belief, a man is known, not by the company he keeps but by the enemy he maintains, for every enemy is real which may not be the case with the friends. So, by openly and repeatedly identifying the enemy, the B.S.P. convinced its Dalit base of its credentials. And having won the confidence it has gradually abandoned its offensive style and is giving representation to the 'upper caste' also. Not the person of particular groups but the person with Brahmanical tendencies are to be opposed. The 'upper cast' were welcome to the party but they can not aspire to be leaders, for they are leading all other parties and have blocked the process of social changes. The leadership will remain with the Dalits. It would be good if a 'Manuwadi' comes around the Dalit point of view. But frankly nothing has been forgotten or forgiven. And before he is accepted wholeheartedly he has to prove his credentials which certainly requires time and grassroot work.

The style of propaganda for mobilization of a group devoid of all self respect must concentrate on the confidence building and therefore came the declaration that the B.S.P. or BAMCEF is backed by 2 lacs educated, independent and self-respecting government employees. That the most able ones are coming ahead to take care of the group, the commoners had a sense of

security hitherto unheard of, given the vulnerable conditions of their existence.

Another important aspect of B.S.P. mobilization has been the arrangements of huge & mammoth rallies. These big rallies are not meant just for the political bargains, but more importantly the feeling of belonging and subsequent courage that comes from such large gatherings creates confidence amongst the Dalits. The creation of 'Bahujan Volunteers Forces' which is very disciplined makes the security arrangement and serves the purpose at two levels. The message, in not accepting the state help for security for the Dalits is that they can defend themselves and no more require others sympathy or help. On the other hand, as young people are involved, the might of the community is preserved to enhance its bargaining capacity.

The symbols that are used namely, the Blue Flag and Elephant, have their own contribution in developing a greater sense of security and strength. The blue flag which is invariably hoisted in every corner of the city for any associative activity, symbolizes the 'highness of sky and depth of the sea'. That whole universe is dominated by the blue colour is again emphasized as almost all posters and wall paintings are made with the blue colour. And the Elephant symbolizes the might which the Dalits need the most. These two symbols contribute fair amount of share in building Dalit confidence and in realizing their strength.

Cycle march is another method used by the B.S.P. activists for grassroots mobilization. For it does not cost much and therefore affordable and more importantly it gives courage to the bypasses and the activists can contact the

people easily. Less than twenty kilometers campaign is done on foot while upto 200 KM. is done on the bicycle.

As a matter of policy the B.S.P. never demanded or reacted against anything in its initial years of inception. And more positively it ask Dalits to be so powerful that others ask for favours, reservations or other government benefits. Whether electoral success or failure, the B.S.P. through its committed cadres have been continuing the ideological propaganda, and that does not include only party workers but Dalit employees, students, youths, jagriti circles and other groups who take up community issues, and are generally guided by local BAMCEF or DS-4 activists. Here emphasis is on telling how the Dalits are made slaves by the usurpers and the local Dalit fighters role is brought to the notice of the people. Invariably politics is told to be the master key which, the B.S.P. or Kanshi Ram is trying to give in their hands.

Throughout the year activists remain in the field, although there is very little propaganda about it, but in the times of elections and demonstrations the activists shout with all their might and conviction for that is the best time to get peoples' attentions in the otherwise hostile situation.

On the political front B.S.P. has baffled all other parties, by striving for the 'political instability' as a weak government will make the Dalit more conscious of their political significance. For Dalits a powerful government is more dangerous. In the beginning Congress was the first victim of B.S.P. and very soon in the changed political scenario where 'upper caste' were loosing their hold, the B.S.P. emerged as 'victorious' from the image of 'damaging

others'.

From the very beginning B.S.P. used the counter-dominating community to get Dalits polarized, for they need protection and security. The Kurmis in eastern U.P. and Muslims in western U.P. were first to fight with the Dalits for common political rights. The by-elections of Bijnour and Hardwar in mid-eighties were fought virtually on Dalit-Muslim unity.

By selecting the neglected groups of Bahujans, precisely the Muslims and the most backwards, attempts were made to bring brotherhood among various groups of exploited sections. Out of 14 MLAs elected on the B.S.P. tickets in 1989 assembly election from U.P. 6 were Muslims, 3 OBCs and 5 scheduled caste. Out of two MPs one MP was OBC and another scheduled caste. Again in 1991 assembly elections out of 12 MLAs, 10 were from other backward classes and one each from SC and Muslim community. In 1993 assembly election out of 69 MLAs elected 12 were Muslims, 21 scheduled castes and 33 other backward classes. In 1996 parliamentary election 6 seats won by Bahujan Samaj Party, 3 are won by OBCs, 2 by Scheduled Castes and one by Muslim. The approach of uniting other segments of the Bahujans, with Dalit base helped the B.S.P. in widening its social base on the one hand and getting Dalit to polling booths to cast their votes on the other.

After 1993, the picture seems to have changed substantially. When B.S.P. for the first time formed government in alliance with Mulayam Singh Yadav, Dalit gained the confidence that they really have the means to stand on their own. Several clashes with intermediary castes and state administration on

various issues pertaining to land grabbing to installing Ambedkar statues further proved the point that Dalits were feeling power in their hands.

Kanshi Ram's stand that he never talks to those who want to give him something but only with those who want help from him was further boosted when not only he made it point, to make Mulayam Singh chief minister of U.P. but also when things seemed going out of hand brought down his(Mulayam Singh) government. In a village it is inconceivable that a Dalit could dominate a yadav. So when B.S.P. rebuked Mulayam Singh publicly even to his face, the Dalits witnessed the spectacle with savage satisfaction and glowing pride, and experienced a renewal of their faith and confidence in the B.S.P.

The unprecedented crowning of Mayawati, a Dalit as chief minister of U.P. by their own manipulations and calculations witnessed an overall upsurge of Dalit aspirations and expectations which became more important to the fact that an 'upper caste' party was 'used' to assert the Dalit identity. Just four months' rule was sufficient to make U.P. as many have maintained a 'Citadel of Dalit'. Throughout its term, however, the Dalit setup made one thing clear, it was going to promote the cause of Dalits, irrespective of which party did or did not support it. It gave the Dalit the confidence to do business with 'upper castes' who were supposed to be the super manipulators till then. Given the conflicting interests the B.S.P. and the B.J.P. were representing, the bringing of Periyar to the capital of 'Arya Warta', proved the mettle of the Dalits. Not only the patchup was broken but the Dalits edified themselves, as those who matter and that they were not obliged to anyone anymore.

Throughout their tactical arrangements, there have been deliberate and conscious attempts keeping the B.S.P. identity 'different and distinct' to all others and even to its allies i.e. S.P. with whom it fought 1993 assembly elections. The basic formulation of the B.S.P. made it inherent that the Dalits were not used by other social categories even within the grouping of "Bahujan". Unmindful of various splits B.S.P. has been trying to convince and construct Dalit political base. That also explains why it did not let B.J.P. to get political benefit through their identification with Dalit and went ahead for Periyar Mela.

The experience through the 18 months of the M.S. Yadav dispensation had shown that the distinct B.S.P. identity and their agenda of social transformation was being subsumed under such 'larger' slogans of 'secularism and social justice'. There was a fear of Dalit constituency being besieged by the politically advanced intermediary caste platform. Therefore, it became imperative for Dalits to stop the replicate of Bihar model, where under the leadership of dominant intermediary caste, the Yadav, the rest of the OBCs, the Dalits and the Muslim were brought together essentially as helping yadavs to ride piggy back in their march to political power.

Some of the shudra dominant castes who have got political power with socio-economic status are more inclined towards Hinduism and are turning Brahmanised and therefore their relationship with Dalit Bahujans become of antagonism at least socially. And when an OBC leader like Mulayam Singh Yadav, who does not have a clear vision of establishing casteless society and who emphasises Gandhian economy and 'Sanatana Dharma', or Laloo Prasad

Yadav appoints "Harijan Sankrachary", Dalits have reasons to suspect their credibility in destroying caste system and Brahmanism.

The states of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh represent, the most remarkable, united, and affective political participation of the Dalits in the post Independent era, though the 'Independence' remains the main agenda of Dalit politicization as they themselves see it in socio-political terms. The pragmatic political attitude that marks the success of any movement, finds its limited manifestations in varying degree in the two states. The enormous processes and method used, and the undercurrents prevailed in socio-political environment limit the options to the extent of their effectiveness in both the states. Some of the major theme for comparative discussion be identified to understand the nature and pattern of the Dalit participating intensity and their integration into the democratic political institutions, established to do away with graded inequalities and disparities.

Cultural and Political

The lack of self appreciation in any group or community makes the dominant community's task easier for maintaining and sustaining hegemony. There can not be a better example of false consciousness than the conviction that the community is 'untouchable' because of its own misdeeds in previous births. The Dalit politics in Maharashtra under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar was struggling to demistify this ideological stranglehold, and therefore, the self respect and dignity with equal human status were basic objectives of their overall political thrust. Here the cultural identity separate from Hinduism forms the

backbone of Dalits politics. The fight against the Congress was not to defeat Congress as such, but to delegitimise Congress hold over the Dalits and for assertion of the Dalits. There seems to be lack of political connotations, for politics essentially require hegemony and counter hegemony. The Maharashtra Dalit politics is confined to the agenda of equality lacking a striving and driving motivation of 'dominance'.

On the other hand the politics of the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh, at least with the emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party, has never directed itself towards equality but point blankly, the trend is to capture the ultimate power. The open declaration "our ultimate aim is to rule India", not only indicates, the highest goal but also makes others, the ruling elite, defensive. The cultural identity is not missing either. For invariably, the chamars are to the B.S.P. as the Mahars are to the RPIs, but the terms of references are different. Dalit political leadership consistently has and deliberately refused the terms like, Dalits, Scheduled Castes or any subcaste, inspite has used as a monolith political projection 'the Bahujan'. In Uttar Pradesh, Ambedkar is more appropriately used as political philosopher unlike the Maharashtra where Buddhism is seem as a religion. The Buddhist trends are available in U.P. model but nevertheless they are never emphasized openly. The question of religion as such is thoroughly unanswered.

Militancy

Militancy is the natural attribute of Dalit assertion who have suffered and sacrificed and continue to do so. The more one is exploited and discriminated,

greater the militancy in reaction. In the Ambedkar era, the political integration of Mahars was more or less crystallized. The greater vehemence of the post Ambedkar politics could not help much in the Dalit identification. And the divide between Dalit non-Mahar-Buddhist and non-Dalit-non Mahar-non-Buddhist got fresh impetus. It was obvious in the Namantar movement socially and in 1996 general elections politically, when even united Dalits stood alienated, as far as the performance goes.

Militancy, in the Uttar Pradesh Dalit political experiment has its own share of contributions but once the identification and unification of Dalits with the B.S.P. was materialized, it was toned down up to the extent that in 1996 general elections many caste Hindus including Brahmanism were making ques for getting B.S.P. nominations and they were proportionately accommodated also. There is a perceptible difference in the nature and use of militancy in both the states while in the Maharashtra the militancy is used more as a means to assert the identity of Dalit, in the state of Uttar Pradesh it was used against the 'upper castes' to alienate them not only from the Dalits but from all Bahujans and simultaneously uniting the Dalits. The militancy for the sake of militancy becomes politically irrelevant in Maharashtra whereas in U.P. the militancy was used as a means of mobilizing technique by the B.S.P.

Broadening vs Fragmentation

Success of a movement depends upon its capacity of making allies and opponents. Although starting from Phule to Prakash Rao Ambedkar the

theoretical formulations are put forward for broader base but practically even the Dalits themselves were never united in their political orientation. The last four decades in Maharashtra witness a fragmented political culture which has a definite bearing on the nature of cooption the established parties tried to, and Dalit's own initiatives for alliances with other parties. Without addressing to the social base different parties represented, before approaching the political parties, the Dalit directly tried to deal with the political elite and in the process were removed from their own roots. Their propensity to have alliances reduced their own capacity drastically. They remained the junior parties to they aligned with.

Contrary to all this, in Uttar Pradesh the BAMCEE not only involved the members from other Bahujan segments but Dalits were told from the very beginning not to go to the leaders but to the masses. The Bahujan Samaj Party refused to have any alliance with any other party for the first ten years. Throughout these years the attempts were made to include more and more oppressed sections of the Bahujans into its base. And when they had alliance with the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party was not at all the junior partner not withstanding the numerical strength. The BSP alliance with the Congress in 1996 going by the terms and conditionalities, has proved beyond doubt, that the Dalits in the state are not only not dominated but have become the dominating, as far as the politics of the state is concerned.

The split in Maharashtra, segmentised the whole political movement but the splits, if they are to be called so, never affected the BSP and after each such occasion, the party emerges ever stronger. Here one difference which merits

mention is that almost all defectors were subsumed by other parties while in Maharashtra almost every body runs one's own organization. The mobilization of Dalits in UP is Dalit in content but Bahujan in form while in Maharashtra it remained Dalit in form and content both.

The leadership

There is an oft repeated allegations that the BSP is not involved in so-called grass-root social work, takes no social issues, religious issues and so on, and is obsessed with the political power. This phenomenon can better be explained by contrasting it to the leadership of the Dalits in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra religious, cultural and political identities are mixed beyond recognition. These roles clash with each other and obviously come in the way of broadening the political base. taking clue from the Maharashtra, U.P. seems to have established a pure political elite underplaying all other loyalties and identities. Since there are not many issues, there are not many number of leaders. In Maharashtra there are so many leaders and yet there is no leader, on the contrary in UP there are not many leaders but there is no dearth of leadership. Maharashtra proves the preposition that more leaders weaken the movement, while in UP lesser the leaders stronger the movement.

Not mixing up of every problems the Dalits face but attracting them to the single cause of lack of political power provides the cohesiveness & coordinating power to the political leadership. The other issues can be taken later on or by other people. Fixing priority is to be very determined and calculated in its pursuit of political power which it considers as key to all socio-economic and

religious problems.

The youthful exuberance of Maharashtra's Dalit political leaders finds its antithesis in cold blooded calculated politician in the person of Kanshi Ram. In fact, Ambedkar's leadership in Maharashtra is more similar to the leadership of Kanshi Ram in Uttar Pradesh. But both working at the different period and in different socio-political environment Kanshi Ram obviously has gone far ahead so far as the politicization and the performance is the yardstick to measure the success.

CONCLUSION

The Dalits by no means are a homogeneous category. They belong to different occupational and cultural groups, segregated together on the basis of disabilities (untouchability), outside the Hindu four fold system. As each group and sub-group is involved in different occupation, that in consequence has given rise to a variety of diversities and development of distinct cultural and political orientations, with significant differentiation in the direction and pace of mobilization for social change. More strategic location in the social and economic set up better the chances of their attention and quest for change and progress, i.e. the Mahars of Maharashtra and the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh.

From the very beginning the Dalit politics in Maharashtra was based on the cultural assertion of the Dalits as distinct and separate identity from Hinduism. Ambedkar's embracing Buddhism was the logical culmination of independent autonomous identity. This process of rediscovering their identity after the Independence when democratic institutions became operative the cultural exclusivism by Dalit cost them heavily as far as politics is concerned. Thereafter Dalit mobilization has been horizontal, more particularly influenced by the ideas and leadership of Ambedkar. Neither the Dalit leadership could convince the other exploited and oppressed segment in Maharashtra of its viability, nor did the others see anything in common with culturally divergent Dalits. The failure of Dalit Panthers is an eye opener of this phenomena. The political insignificance of cultural exclusivism frustrated the leadership, and the dominant elite or ruling class had little difficulty in accommodating these highly assertive recalcitrants into establishment structure.

The failure, in not finding rather cultivating the allies hampered or stagnated the Dalit politics to the level of concession and compromises. It could not delegitimise the ruling caste and always at most aspire only to be at par with them never to replace them. A limited political thrust is doomed to die. The RPIs and the Dalit Panthers could never come out from the clouds of Scheduled Caste Federation impeding the political development of Dalit in post Ambedkar era upto great extent in Maharashtra.

The constitutional safeguards, while in the economic terms facilitated the overall development of the Dalits in Maharashtra. Every time new and new organization continued coming up which in turn segmentised the Dalits politically. The mixing up of religious, cultural and political aspects blocked the complete politicization of Dalit who at the same time was Buddhist and Mahar.

The Dalit politics in Uttar Pradesh has no historical background of significant nature if looked from the Maharashtra point of view. Nevertheless, it has positively contributed to the politicization of Dalits upto great extent. The Dalits in Uttar Pradesh, barring few centres have not aggressively asserted themselves as culturally distinct group, though the influence of Ambedkar on them is wide spread. And therefore the problem of alliances with other social groups was never very intricate. And more importantly Uttar Pradesh had already experienced Dalit-Muslim alliance in 1960s under the banner of Republican Party. Though it was short lived.

The BAMCEF from the very beginning was emphasizing the 'Bahujan Projection', projecting 85% population as the victim of caste system, while simultaneously and audaciously building powerful Dalit base. Two

simultaneously taken operations, ideologically created Dalit consciousness of not only their degraded position and politics as the means to solve their problems but also of aligning with other Bahujan constituents. It was strikingly in contrast to the of Dalit politics in Maharashtra where Dalits were mobilized as separate, minority and distinct from Hinduism which otherwise is claimed the majority of Indian society.

The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh first mobilized Dalits, but the emphasis was never beyond political mobilization, and as a technique not the assertion of Dalits, but the vitriolic attack on the enemy of Dalits the upper caste was used to convince and convey the message to the Dalits.

The policy of aligning with the other backward classes and Muslims helped B.S.P. to widen its social base. The B.S.P. used a very powerful mechanism to tackle the problem of cooption and splits. The party was deliberately built up around its President Kanshi Ram, and almost for first ten years there was hardly any other leader worth mentioning in the party. Since, objective was to create awareness among the masses, the leadership must have freedom to spell its policies and programme convincingly without any competition from within the party. This again was in contrast to the Dalit politics in Maharashtra where every organization was flooded by the leaders. Although many people are working with Kanshi Ram for number of years. But as a conscious and mature attempt only Mayawati is projected as second leader in Uttar Pradesh. The opposition to leadership has been dealt severely and firmly even if it means some old party activists going away from the party. In almost every election, new faces were put up so that the party and its leadership, and

not the candidates have a permanent impression on the voters. It was a virtual reality that Kanshi Ram means B.S.P. and vice versa, till the emergence of Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh. In all other states the proposition holds merit even today.

The organizational changes from Scheduled Caste Federation to the Bahujan Samaj Party indicate the shift in the strategy of Dalits from horizontal, community based (single) mobilization to differentiated-issue based mobilization. That in other words means the change of phase in Dalit assertion from equality and dignity to confrontation and dominance. While the state of Maharashtra represent the first phase, U.P. on the other is involved in confrontational and counter elite formation. In Maharashtra the Dalit politics has remained confined to the Dalits largely, the B.S.P. in Uttar Pradesh is trying to built a wider nexus of disadvantaged sections acquiring stronger economic salience and displacing some of the community characteristics.

The political participation of Dalits has become key to the success of democracy in India and to the ongoing process of democratization of Indian society, which is nothing but the empowerment of the people. And the key link in this empowerment of the Dalit Bahujans, is capturing political power through elections and peaceful legitimate means.

The Dalit consciousness aware of its rights and the role, it has to play in creating an egalitarian society, by no means is limited to any particular community, but symbolizes a much wider spectra of the oppressed social strata hitherto excluded from the power positions. It is based on attempted yet still not fully realized solidarity of the poor and discriminated classes, long held back and

frustrated, its leadership divided and bought over and coopted within the main stream establishment structure and positions.

The Dalits are not just contented with achieving 'social justice' coined by some centrist parties of India, based on the idea of making the existing state and its power holders more 'just' and accommodative of the excluded social groups, but are aspiring at grabbing the whole power structure on their own terms and conditions shaking the ideological stranglehold in which some time ago they were counted merely as vote banks. The process has facilitated the alignment of all social action groups engaged in the politics, of transformation, and by mobilizing them for a fundamental defeat of Brahmanism and ultimate victory for the people by making India enlightened.

The biggest impediment for the politicization of Dalit-Bahujans as seen in the Maharashtra, and may occur elsewhere too, is the cooption of its leaders and, overemphasis on autonomous and exclusive Dalit identity striking a discordant attitude towards the natural allies. Although the phenomenon cooption itself has provoked the Dalits against the 'unequal integration' attitude, the history of South and Western India was anti-Brahminism social movements has greatly contributed to Dalit conviction that they alone can change the system and not, not-so-confirmed anti-systemic non-Brahmins. This also explains the Dalits doubts, 'otherwise projected as personal egoistic', towards rich backward classes leadership in Uttar Pradesh which is inclined towards Hinduism and caste system.

The term Dalit itself seeks aggressively its share in shaping the destiny of the nation. The issue has not remained confined to the upliftment of the

`degraded' but has acquired the moral context of cleansing `the dirt of humanity- the caste system. As the old social and political allegiances and alliances are in turmoil, the Dalit political definition has acquired a distinguishable advantage and potential to influence the overall political direction and orientation Indian society is taking or will take in future.

However the success depends upon, how far the political power is used for generating social and economic policies emphasizing more comprehensive and defined equality and humane existence on the one hand, and its viability and capability of annihilating the caste by strengthening the agenda of `social transformation and economic emancipation' on the other. The history bears out the preposition that the caste system has accommodated its very opponents very gracefully and thus strengthens the very `ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt'. The greatness of Dalit politics lies in converting this friendly contradiction into the antagonistic one so that not the accommodation into the system but the extirpation of caste becomes the agenda of its potential allies.

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