THE CHANGING POLITICS OF DALITS IN MUMBAI:
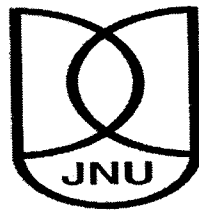
A STUDY OF REPUBLICAN PARTY OF INDIA (ATHAWALE)

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

in partial fulfillment of the requirement

for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

AGAWANE KIRAN SUDAM

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI - 110067

INDIA

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
NEW DELHI-110 067

Telephone No. : 011-26704413 Fax : 011-26741504
email :cpsjnu09@gmail.com

Date: July 28, 2014

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled **"The Changing Politics of Dalits in Mumbai: A Study of Republican Party of India (Athawale)"** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

AGAWANE KIRAN SUDAM

CERTIFICATE

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

Prof. VIDHU VERMA

(Chairperson)

Prof. GOPAL GURU

(Supervisor)

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Date: July 28, 2014.

Place: New Delhi.

AGAWANE KIRAN SUDAM

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBM	:	Bharipa (Bharatiya Republican Paksha) Bahujan Mahasangh
BDP	:	Bharatiya Dalit Panthers
BJP	:	Bharatiya Janata Party
BMC	:	Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation
BRP	:	Bharatiya Republican Paksha
BSP	:	Bahujan Samaj Party
CPI	:	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	:	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
ILP	:	Independent Labour Party
INC	:	Indian National Congress
MLA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNS	:	Maharashtra Navnirman Sena
MP	:	Member of Parliament
NCP	:	Nationalist Congress Party
NDA	:	National Democratic Alliance
OBC	:	Other Backward Classes
PRP	:	People's Republican Party
RIDALOS	:	Republican Davi Lokshahi Samiti
RLDF	:	Republican Left Democratic Front
RPI	:	Republican Party of India
RPI (A)	:	Republican Party of India (Athawale)
RPI (D)	:	Republican Party of India (Democratic)

RPI (K)	:	Republican Party of India (Khobragade)
RPI (U)	:	Republican Party of India (United)
RSS	:	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SCs	:	Scheduled Castes
SCF	:	All India Scheduled Castes Federation
SEZ	:	Special Economic Zones
STs	:	Scheduled Tribes
UP	:	Uttar Pradesh

<u>GLOSSARY</u>

Bhoomiheen Satyagraha	:	Struggle for land to the landless.
Bidi workers	:	Indian cigarette workers.
Chaonis	:	Branches of Dalit Panther.
Dhamma Diksha Suvarna Mahotsav Samiti	:	A committee constituted for celebration of fiftieth year of conversion of the Scheduled Castes to Buddhism.
Hindu Rashtra	:	Hindu Nation.
Hindutva	:	Hindu Nationalism.
Hindutvawadi	:	One who possesses Hindutva ideology.
Maha Sammelan	:	Big public meeting.
Mahayuti	:	Grand Alliance of the Shiv Sena, BJP and RPI (A).
Namantar Andolan	:	An agitation for the renaming of the Marathwada University.
Namvistar	:	Expansion of the existing name.
Republican Davi Lokshahi Samiti	:	Republican Left Democratic Front.
Samajik Abhisaran	:	Process of social engineering.
Samajik Samrasata Manch	:	Social Assimilation Platform.
Samata Sandesh March	:	A march for equality.
Sammelan	:	Literary conferences.
Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti	:	United Maharashtra Committee.

Shakha	:	Branch of the Shiv Sena or RSS.
Shiv Seniks	:	Party workers of the Shiv Sena.
Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti	:	Political alliance of the Shiv Sena and the RPI.
Vidhan Sabha	:	Legislative Assembly.

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Map of Mumbai City[1]

[1] Map of Mumbai City.
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INTRODUCTION

The Republican Party of India (RPI) is one of the significant political parties in Maharashtra. The politics of Maharashtra cannot be analyzed without looking at the RPI politics. The RPI was established in 1957 with an objective of creating a strong opposition to the one party authoritarian rule of the Congress Party, and making an alternative to the Congress Party by creating broader alliance of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, workers, and socially and economically deprived sections of the society. The nature of the RPI politics in Maharashtra has undergone through many changes since its origin. The RPI's claim of autonomy in the politics received a setback in 1967 when one of its major factions made political alliance with the Congress Party. Thereafter, the RPI politics started depending more on its bargaining capacity in the electoral politics.

The RPI politics in Maharashtra has some limitations. Firstly, the RPI has its influence in Maharashtra state only. The RPI was effective in other states during its earlier period. It also contested and won some seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly elections in various states. However, it gradually lost its significance in other states and remained limited to Maharashtra state only. Secondly, it has been largely dominated by one lower caste group i.e. Mahars who converted to Buddhism. Though the RPI was established with the objective of unity of all oppressed and weaker sections of the society, it could not obtain larger support from them. Thirdly, the Scheduled Castes population of Maharashtra is in minority. At the same time, there are many Dalit political parties which are operating in different parts of Maharashtra. It resulted into the division of the Scheduled Castes votes into many parties which led to the poor electoral performance of the RPI. Even the social base of the RPI, the neo-Buddhists, remained divided in number of factions of the RPI. Therefore, not a single RPI faction is able to perform effectively in electoral politics.

However, the RPI politics in Maharashtra has achieved a distinct feature. Though it could not effectively perform well in the electoral politics, the RPI successfully launched various movements and agitations on various issues related to the socially oppressed and deprived sections of the society in general and neo-Buddhists in

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particular. In fact, the politics of the RPI was claimed to be the 'politics of issues'[1] or the 'politics of movement'.

The RPI has a long history in the politics of Maharashtra since independence. It, therefore, has playing a distinct role in the politics of Maharashtra. Though the RPI cannot achieve political power by itself, the strength of the RPI is its ability to change political equations in the process of competition for political power. Every major political party of Maharashtra such as the Congress Party, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Shiv Sena or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) requires the RPI for projecting its secular and pro-Dalit approach in the politics. The RPI, therefore, has gained distinct peculiarity in the politics of Maharashtra.

The ideology and nature of politics of the RPI has been largely inspired by the secular and democratic thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar. The RPI politics believed in the principles entrusted by Ambedkar. These principles are equality, freedom, justice and fraternity. The RPI remained strong opponent of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), BJP, and Shiv Sena which are based on the Hindutva ideology. The RPI's opposition to the Hindutvawadi forces and their Hindutva ideology was based on the premises that these reactionary political forces believed in the revival of the Hindu culture, and the preservation of the caste system which is based on the graded inequality. The RPI, therefore, claimed that it would prefer the alliance politics with political parties having secular and democratic persuasion. As a result, anti-fascism, anti-Hindutva, and anti-communalism became the prominent determinants of the RPI's ideology. The contestation and confrontation with the Hindutvawadi fascist forces marked the politics of the RPI in Maharashtra. Therefore, the Hindutva ideology and Ambedkarite ideology has been seen as the two opposite and contradictory thoughts which could never cooperate with each other. However, these two forces came together and engaged in alliance politics under the banner of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti*[2] in 2011. This has been considered as one of the major changes in the RPI politics in Maharashtra.

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[1] Ramesh Kamble, "Dalit-Hindutva Alliance and the Dynamics of Dalit Politics," in *Hindutva and Dalits: Perspective for Understanding Communal Praxis*, ed. Anand Teltumbde (Kolkata: Samya, 2005).
[2] The political alliance of the Shiv Sena and the RPI is known as the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. The *Shiv Shakti* referred to the Shiv Sena and the *Bhim Shakti* referred to the RPI.

Today the RPI has fragmented into many factions. Though there are many factions of the RPI in Maharashtra, only few RPI factions have some influence on Maharashtra's Dalit politics. They are: Ramdas Athawale's RPI (A), Prakash Ambedkar's Bharipa (Bharatiya Republican Paksha) Bahujan Mahasangh (BBM), Jogendra Kawade's People's Republican Party (PRP), and Rajendra Gavai's Republican Party of India (RPI). Among all these factions, Athawale's faction has been more visible and influential in Dalit politics of Maharashtra. The present study has been focusing on the politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai in the post-1991 period.

The present study has been limited to Mumbai city only. Dalit politics in urban cities has not received proper attention. The Dalit politics in urban cities has some peculiarities. The nature of Dalit politics in urban cities is different from the politics of rural areas. Most of the Scheduled Castes population in urban cities is concentrated in slum areas. Among all factions of the RPI, the RPI (A) is the most visible faction in the Dalit politics of the city of Mumbai. It has its presence in most of the slum areas of the city which are largely populated by the poor Scheduled Castes population. The participation of the large number of lumpen class in the party, and the nexus between the RPI (A) leaders with the construction builders for the land of the slum areas, has brought significant changes in the Dalit politics in the city in the post-1991. With the advent of the liberalization, privatization and globalisation, the politics of cities changed significantly which is very much evident in the politics of Mumbai. The impacts of these processes on the city politics can be seen in the Dalit politics of Mumbai. At the same time, with the emergence of large number of middle class among Dalits in the city, the politics of the RPI (A) has undergone through changes from the 'politics of agitations' to the 'politics of interest'.

Mumbai as a prominent urban city has attained importance with regard to the Dalit movement and politics of Maharashtra. It was in Bombay[3] city that the Dalit movement and Dalit politics emerged and developed under the leadership of Ambedkar in the pre-independence period. The city of Bombay has historical context in which Dalit movement emerged. During the pre-independence period, the Bombay was the

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[3] A separate state for Marathi-speaking population was created on 1st May 1960 after the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. Thereafter, the Bombay State was divided into two states - Maharashtra and Gujarat. The state of Maharashtra came into existence and city of Bombay became its capital. In 1995 when the Shiv Sena-BJP combine came to power in Maharashtra, the name of city of Bombay was changed to Mumbai.

center place for the Dalit movement and politics. In fact, it was from Bombay city that the Dalit movement spread to other parts of India. In the post-Ambedkar period also, the Bombay city remained prominent place for the Dalit politics. In contemporary period, the city of Mumbai has been characterized by the political competition of the various political parties of Maharashtra. The RPI (A) is also actively engaged in the politics of the city. It has its influence in some parts of Mumbai and its suburban areas. For instance, some of areas of Mumbai such as Ghatkopar, Chembur, Bhandup, Mankhurd, Ambarnath, Santacruz, Shivadi, etc. are largely inhabited by the Scheduled Castes population, mostly residing in slum areas. The RPI (A) has its presence in these areas.

The RPI (A) has been engaged in the politics of Mumbai since 1990s. It claimed to be one of the faction of the RPI based on Ambedkarite ideology and principles. It had formed political alliance with the Congress Party from its inception to 1999. In 1999 when Sharad Pawar, one of the prominent leaders of the Congress Party in Maharashtra, established the NCP, the RPI (A) made the NCP as its political ally, and remained in alliance with the NCP till 2009. The RPI (A) made political alliance with the Congress Party and NCP on the basis of the secular and democratic ideology which claimed to be required to oppose the Hindutvawadi political parties such as the Shiv Sena and BJP. However, the RPI (A) gave up its alliance with the Congress Party and NCP after the Lok Sabha elections of 2009. In Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections of 2009, the RPI (A) formulated third front with some other political parties which were not aligned to the Congress-NCP or Shiv Sena-BJP, and opposed the Congress-NCP and Shiv Sena-BJP alliances. However, it could not help the RPI (A) to create its hold on Mumbai's politics. In 2011, the RPI (A) eventually made political alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance which still continues to exist in Mumbai. This study has been focused on this changing strategy of the RPI (A)'s politics in Mumbai.

The present study deals with the major changes in the politics of RPI (A) in Mumbai in the post-1991 period. One of the changes among them is the experiment of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* political alliance in Mumbai. The study deals with the major research question: How does the RPI (A)'s 'politics of confrontation' with the Hindutvawadi forces such as Shiv Sena and BJP shifted into the 'politics of conciliation' in the post-1991 period? At the same, while making political alliance with these parties, is there any deviation in the ideological perception of the RPI (A) from

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Ambedkarism to Hindutva? These research questions define the nature of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance in Mumbai in contemporary period.

Research Methodology:

The research has been mainly conducted on the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources which are used for this study are the election commission of India's official website for statistical reports of elections for Maharashtra Lok Saba and Legislative Assembly. At the same time some interviews were also conducted with some scholars of Dalit politics of Mumbai. The secondary resources which were used for the research are the books in English and Marathi languages, articles in both English and Marathi periodicals, etc. Some English and Marathi newspapers and Marathi periodicals have also been used as an important source for the study.

Chapterisation:

The present study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter, **"The Politics of the RPI in Bombay: A Historical Background"**, deals with the historical context of the RPI in Bombay city from the period of 1957 to 1990. In this chapter the genesis, growth, electoral politics, factionalism, and the nature of the RPI politics has been focused. The chapter deals with following important questions: firstly, what was the nature of politics and ideological perception of the RPI from its inception to 1990? Secondly, what were the effects of the process of the factionalism on the RPI politics in Bombay? Thirdly, how did the electoral alliance of the RPI with the Congress Party in 1967 affected the RPI politics in Bombay? The fourth and last question is significant as it shows the relationship between the Shiv Sena and Dalit movement in the city. What was the confrontational politics of the radical Dalit movement against the reactionary Shiv Sena? All these issues together constitute the first chapter. The first chapter dealt with the three phases of the Dalit politics in Mumbai. The first phase is related to the pre-independence period in which the communist movement and Dalit movement both were dominant in the city. The second phase focuses on the relationship between the RPI politics with the Congress Party. The third phase focuses on the conflicts between the Dalit movement and Shiv Sena from 1970s onwards.

The second chapter of the study, **"The Politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai (1991-2009): the Political Alliance with the Congress Party and NCP"**, has been

focused on the RPI (A)'s politics in Mumbai. The chapter exclusively deals with nature of politics of the RPI (A) with the Congress Party and NCP from 1991 to 2009. This chapter focuses on the following questions: firstly, what was the background of the emergence of Ramdas Athawale's leadership in Dalit politics of Mumbai? Secondly, what was the nature and scope of the RPI (A) politics in Mumbai from 1991 to 2009? Thirdly, on which grounds the RPI (A) made alliance with the Congress Party and NCP from its formation to 2009 and what were the effects of such a long term alliance with the Congress Party and NCP on the RPI (A) politics in Mumbai?

The third and last chapter of the study, **"The Political Alliance of the RPI (A) with the Shiv Sena and BJP: A Shift in the Dalit Politics of Mumbai"**, is more significant because of the dynamic changes occurred in the politics of RPI (A) in Mumbai. This chapter deals with two major questions. Firstly, why did the RPI (A) ceded its political alliance with its long term political allies such as the Congress Party and NCP, and how does the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance came into existence, and what are the consequences of this alliance on Dalit movement and politics in Mumbai? Secondly, how does the RPI (A)'s 'politics of confrontation' shifted to the 'politics of conciliation' with the Shiv Sena and BJP? This has been considered as the fourth and current phase of the Dalit politics in Mumbai.

Chapter 1:

The Politics of the Republican Party of India in Bombay:

A Historical Background

1. Introduction:

The caste has become very important factor in politics. It has always been central to modern Indian politics. The caste system has been playing a significant role in determining the content and directions of the processes of political socialization, political mobilization and institutionalization within the framework of modern democracy. Thus, caste and politics are closely interrelated. According to Rajni Kothari, "Politics is a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realisation of certain goals, and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and consolidate positions."[1] The caste, therefore, has become one of the significant tools for the mobilization of masses in the process of acquisition of political power. The caste has been used as a source for the political mobilization which has become an essential aspect for the attainment of political power.

The caste has been playing pivotal role in the political process of Maharashtra. The Scheduled Castes population of Maharashtra is mainly comprised of Mahars, Mangs, Chambhars, Dhors and other lower castes. In Dalit politics of Maharashtra, Mahars has always remained in foremost position. They had played crucial role in the Dalit movement and politics in Maharashtra. They, therefore, have achieved political significance in Maharashtra. Eleanor Zelliot, one of the scholars of Ambedkarite movement, argued that "Mahars who were operating under conditions of social degradation, perceived the potency of politics as a means of ameliorating their social condition. Among all the Scheduled Castes in India, the Mahars of Maharashtra have used political means most consistently and unitedly in their attempt to better their condition."[2] Mahars, who converted to Buddhism on a large scale in 1956, were seen as the more advanced and politically more

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[1] Rajni Kothari, "Introduction: Caste in Indian Politics," in *Castes in India*, ed. Rajni Kothari (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), 4.
[2] Eleanor Zelliot, "Learning the Use of Political Means," in *Castes in India*, ed. Rajni Kothari (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), 27.

conscious caste among the caste cluster as compared to the other major Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra i.e. Chambhars and Matangs. It was due to the fact that the Mahars did not have any traditional skilled occupations which could have offered them a source of livelihood from within the self-sufficient village economy. They were assigned the lower and degraded duties of the village. They were engaged in unskilled occupations. On the other side, the other Scheduled Castes such as Mangs and Chambhars had traditional skilled occupations, and were tied to the village economy. During the British colonial period, Mahars got opportunities to give up their degraded duties, and utilised these opportunities for their upward social mobility. Most of the Mahars were recruited in the British military services. The western education system introduced by British rule in India along with westernization, industrialization and urbanization process provided the Mahars with the avenues to be aware of the political means essential for their social mobility. As a result of this process the Mahars largely used various political means for the amelioration of their deteriorating conditions.

The Dalit movement of Maharashtra largely used politics as a means to improve the conditions of the lower castes after the emergence of the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar in Indian politics. Both R.S.Morkhandikar[3] and Jayashree Gokhale[4], scholars on Dalit movement of Maharashtra, in their work argued that at the initial stage of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra, the movement tried to find a place for Dalits in the Hindu fold on the basis of equality. The main objective of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra was the abolition of untouchability, temple entry, free access to public places, all these determining the equal status for the untouchables. However, in the later phase of the movement, particularly with the emergence of Ambedkar as a charismatic leader of Dalit movement, it tried to gain recognition for a separate identity of the untouchables, and demanded a proportionate share in the political power for them with the Hindus and Muslims. It struggled for separate electorates and adequate representation in the elected bodies. Gokhale in her work argued that "the Dalit movement was primarily based on the objective of equal status of the Dalits. The early phase of the movement had not acquired a political

[3] R.S.Morkhandikar, "Dilemmas of Dalit Movement in Maharashtra: Unity Moves and After," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 12 (1990): 586.
[4] Jayashree Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1993).

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thrust or focus; it defined the problem of the Untouchables in largely socio-cultural terms."[5] Therefore, in the early phase of the Dalit movement the emphasis was on self-reform of the Mahar castes which later transformed into employing various satyagrahas such as Mahad Satyagraha, Kalaram Temple Satyagraha, etc. In later stage of the movement, the primacy of the Dalit movement transformed from Satyagraha to the primacy of politics. For Gokhale, "the period from the 1890s to the 1920s was pre-political for Dalit movement of Maharashtra. By the end of that period, however, the Mahars had begun to move in the political direction. The primacy of politics came to be accepted, and political organisations, with political activity as their major goal, came to be established."[6] The focus of the Dalit movement of Maharashtra, thus, changed from socio-cultural aspects to the primacy to political activities. Gokhale further argued that "In contrast to the previous period, Mahar organisations now were primarily concerned with politics and only secondarily with the socio-cultural reform of the community. The notion that social and cultural progress could occur only through political means came to be established, and political activity towards this goal became the major effort of the Mahar movement."[7] However, this process of the Dalit movement which experienced change in its nature by a shift from Satyagraha to primacy of politics was mostly concentrated in Bombay region.

The city of Bombay had acquired a prominent place in the Dalit politics. The Dalit movement and Dalit politics was emerged and developed in Bombay region and then spread to other parts of the India. It was in Bombay city that Ambedkar started the Dalit movement and Dalit politics, which enabled lower castes to assert their rights and use political means for their emancipation and empowerment.

2. Dalits and Bombay City:

Lower caste politics have been a part of the political landscape of much of western India region for over a century. The city of Bombay not just provided the space for Dalit movement and Dalit politics, but also became the significant place for Dalit assertion. The city saw the most vigorous Dalit movement in India emerged under the leadership of

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[5] *Ibid.*, 76.
[6] *Ibid.*, 107.
[7] *Ibid.*, 114.

Ambedkar. As Edward Rodrigues and Mahesh Gavaskar in their article argued that "Bombay as an industrial, urban city provided not just the ground for Dalit politics, but also shaped a political practice specific to a marginalized group functioning within a political economy foregrounded on scarcity."[8] Bombay city, therefore, acquired a prominent status in the Dalit politics of India.

The origins and growth of Bombay are inextricably linked to the large-scale migration of lower castes to the city. The city is often called as the city of 'migrants' due to the large migration not only from 'within' the various districts of Maharashtra but also from the other states. The expansion of trade and lure of the wealth attracted migrant groups to the city. Bombay also attracted distress migration that occurred as a result of famines and floods. Most of the Dalits also migrated to Bombay in search of employment. Mahars were most dominant in this migration as compare to other Scheduled Castes because they found migration from rural areas to urban areas necessary for obtaining employment opportunities. Most of the Dalits were landless agricultural labourers who found it impossible to live in villages. Most of them were losing their lands and becoming farm workers, the rapid rural decay was making it difficult for them even to get jobs as landless labourers. It was no longer possible for the poor Dalits to live in villages. Therefore, most of them fled to Bombay in search of employment. The earliest migration to Bombay by Dalits was that of Mahars who went in search of employment in the textile mills in early decades of the twentieth century. Gail Omvedt, one of the scholars on Ambedkarite movement, argued that within the untouchable castes, the pattern of migration as well as occupational mobility in Bombay was not at all uniform. The Mahars, unlike other untouchable castes of Maharashtra such as the Chambhar and the Matangs, had a history of relative mobility. They were able to protect their own interests by organizing themselves into closely knit work groups in various areas of the industrial economy such as textiles, docks, the municipality, police, military, railways, the public works department and the sanitation departments of the Bombay Municipal Corporation.[9] On the other hand, the other Scheduled Castes groups like Chambhars and Matangs,

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[8] Edward Rodrigues and Mahesh Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition*, eds. Sujata Patel and Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 137.
[9] Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994), 141-142.

continued with their traditional skilled occupations in village economy. The migration of Dalits to Bombay continued due to two major reasons, firstly, owing to efforts to enter into modern jobs and occupations, and secondly, because of the droughts and worsening economic conditions in the rural areas of the state. The setting up of the cotton mills encouraged another wave of migration that of mill workers. The textile industry developed a domestic market. As compared to the two other regions (Madras and Calcutta), Bombay had given definite historical lead to the Dalit movement. This was because of the land structure and the rapid industrialization in the city. The cotton industry helped in spreading the Dalit movement in the city. Rodrigues and Gavaskar argued that "the involvement of the Dalits in the emerging industrial economy undoubtedly supported the emergence of a Dalit consciousness in Bombay."[10]

The role of Ambedkar in the Dalit movement in Bombay had given the Bombay city a major place in the Dalit movement and Dalit politics. The Bombay region became the base of operations for the most influential figure in the Dalit movement, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar.

3. The Role of Ambedkar in the Formation of Dalit Politics in Bombay:

The city of Bombay has a significant place in the Dalit politics not only in Maharashtra but also in India. The early phase in the Dalit politics in Bombay is inextricably linked to the politics of Ambedkar. Bombay was the city from where Ambedkar started his ideological, political and organizational efforts for the upliftment of the Dalits. As Rodrigues and Gavaskar argued that "the Dalit politics developed by Ambedkar in Bombay resulted in the elaboration of three sets of concerns: the conversion to Buddhism and the development of a Buddhists identity for the Dalits; the engagement with the electoral politics within a liberal-democratic framework; and a political agenda centred on the reservation policy of the Indian State. Each of these separately or together were to define the future course of Dalit politics in Bombay."[11] Therefore, the city of Bombay became the main center of activities of the Dalit movement and politics of Maharashtra under the leadership of Ambedkar.

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[10] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 138.
[11] *Ibid.*, 143.

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Ambedkar encouraged the Dalits to migrate from the tyranny of the village and settle in urban areas. It was because he was fully aware that nowhere else was colonial modernity so sharply reflected as in the urban industrial vicinity of Bombay. Ambedkar strongly believed that in comparison to the entrenched rigidity of the caste system in villages, the urban areas at least provided the political space within which Dalits would struggle to overcome caste oppression. It was with the emergence of Ambedkar on the political landscape of Bombay in the early twenties, that a radical challenge and rejection of caste was observed.

The pivotal role played by Ambedkar in the Dalit movement in Bombay was largely responsible for the increasing role of Mahar communities in using the political means most effectively. Though Ambedkar was convinced of the fact that the unity of all untouchable castes required for the effective Dalit movement, it was only the Mahars community which was mostly dominated in the Dalit movement of Bombay. Therefore, the Mahars were always in front in asserting their rights and using various political means. The Dalit politics in Bombay as well as in India has been largely inspired by the social and political thoughts of Ambedkar. He had strong conviction for democracy. For Ambedkar, democracy is a form and method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without violence.[12] He believed in the parliamentary form of democracy. A strong connection can be seen between democracy and politics in Ambedkar's conception of Dalit movement. For him, party politics has an essential role in the success of the parliamentary democracy. He emphasised the importance of the strong opposition party in successful working of the parliamentary democracy because the rule of a single party is fatal to popular government.[13] The opposition party should not only function as an opposition but it should establish itself as an alternative party to the ruling party. For Ambedkar, the survival of Indian democracy demanded the development of a strong and united opposition party. He, therefore, founded political parties at different period of time for protection and promotion of the interest of the weaker and marginalized sections of the society.

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[12] W.N.Kuber, *Ambedkar: A Critical Study* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 2009), 200.
[13] *Ibid.*, 299.

4. Dalit Politics in Bombay during Ambedkar's period and the Background of the R.P.I.:

Ambedkar established many social, political and educational organisations in Bombay for providing impetus to the Dalit movement and Dalit politics. For instance, he established the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (a social organisation) and Independent Labour Party (a political party) in Bombay. In Bombay Provincial Assembly elections, the ILP contested 17 seats and won 14 seats. He also established educational organisation, the People's Education Society in Bombay. The Siddharth College was also established in Bombay. He also started some periodicals from Bombay such as Muknayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, Janata, and Prabuddha Bharat.

Ambedkar established three political parties - the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the All India Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) and the Republican Party of India (RPI). Ambedkar's three political parties were all attempts to join Untouchables to larger groups or in a solid mass to seek political power.[14] Ambedkar principal objective of establishing these political parties was to create avenues for Dalit and weaker communities to gain representation in legislatures, and through this representation protecting and promoting their rights.

The ILP was the first political party established by Ambedkar in 1936. As the 1937 elections for the provincial legislatures under the new constitution approached, Ambedkar gave the political movement a specific focus by establishing the ILP.[15] The formation of the ILP showed Ambedkar's conviction that the Untouchables in order to acquire a political power had to acquire a political party which would represent their interests, in opposition to the dominant Congress party.[16] R.K.Kshirsagar, one of the scholars on Dalit movement and politics in Maharashtra, in his work also argued that Ambedkar felt a need to establish a political party which would create a strong opposition to the Congress Party's single-party authoritarian rule.[17] He further argued that "Ambedkar kept his party

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[14] Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 70.

[15] *Ibid.,* 106.

[16] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation,* 132.

[17] R.K.Kshirsagar, *Bharatiya Republican Paksha* (Aurangabad: Kailash Publications, 2006), 32.

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away from the politics of caste and religion. The establishment of the secular party like the ILP had a profound meaning because the political organisations of majority Hindus and the minority Muslims had limited objectives. Ambedkar's ILP was not limited to particular community or religion."[18] The ILP was a political organisation which was based on the common interests of all the poor and oppressed of Indian society regardless of class and caste. For Gokhale, the formation of the ILP was based on the "class" model. It was premised on the notion that Untouchability was primarily a socio-economic disability and as such, Untouchables had common interests with other members of the lower classes. Untouchables had to unite with poor peasants, landless labourers, and workers because emancipation of the Untouchables could occur only through a revolution which would drastically alter the distribution of power in Indian society.[19] Raosaheb Kasabe, noted scholar on Ambedkarite and Marxist thoughts in Maharashtra, in his work argued the similar point that "Ambedkar felt the need of a broader politics in order to achieve political power. The caste politics has many limitations. The caste organisations cannot create a pressure group in the politics. Therefore, the attainment of the political power was necessary for Ambedkar because he believed that social issues of Dalits cannot be solved without politics. These issues could not be solved without giving political power to Dalits. Ambedkar, therefore, founded the ILP. It was the first attempt of Ambedkar to shift the Indian politics from caste politics to class politics."[20] Therefore, the formation of the ILP was based on the 'class' model. However, according to Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "the ILP that Ambedkar organized in 1936 was basically an attempt to highlight an alternative sensitivity to the caste-class nexus as opposed to the class politics of the communists. It is because Ambedkar criticized class politics of Indian communists on the account that despite their modernist and socialist appeal, Indian communists and the labour unions they controlled in Bombay were yet to divest themselves from caste."[21] Despite these different views of scholars on the objective of Ambedkar behind the formation of ILP, the ILP was mainly formulated with an objective of protecting and promoting the interest of all weaker sections of the society including Dalits also.

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[18] *Ibid.*, 34.

[19] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation*, 115.

[20] Raosaheb Kasabe, *Ambedkar Ani Marx* (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1985), 129.

[21] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 141.

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The first election manifesto of ILP demonstrated its working class orientation. The program of the ILP was mainly to advance the welfare of the laboring classes. The party had socialist orientation which accepted the principle of State management and State ownership of industry whenever it become necessary in the interest of the people.[22] In accordance with the Government of India Act 1935, the Bombay provincial elections were held in 1937. In this election, the ILP contested 17 seats, and secured 15 seats. It won 11 out of the 15 reserved seats for Untouchables in Bombay.[23] The ILP emerged as the second largest opposition party after Muslim League in the Bombay Provincial Assembly of 1937. The ILP brought many significant issues in the Bombay Provincial Legislature such as aid to agriculturists through land mortgage banks, cooperatives and marketing societies; technical education and the promotion of new industries; reform of the *khot, talukadari* and *watan* tenant systems; free and compulsory primary education; and attempt to bring about a fair mixture of castes in the administration, etc.[24]

Ambedkar had to dissolve the ILP after six year of its establishment due to the political situation prevailing at that time. Ambedkar felt it necessary to form an organisation which would exclusively work for the Scheduled Castes population of India. As a result, the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF) was formed in July 1942, at a conference of the Depressed Classes held at Nagpur. Gokhale regarded the formation of the SCF as a political action and organisation based on "caste" model. She argued in her work that "the problems of Untouchables were unique and could only be solved through the unity of all Untouchables, regardless of region and language. This unity of all Untouchables was to be achieved through a political organisation which would operate at the national level."[25] She further argued that "the abandonment of the ILP as class model, and establishment of the SCF as caste model was primarily due to the premise that Untouchables could not rely on non-Untouchables for support and solidarity in their political movement. There was a feeling of necessity among Untouchables to develop an independent organisation, which would be concerned almost exclusively with issues

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[22] Zelliot, "Learning the Use of Political Means," 46-47.
[23] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation*, 135.
[24] Zelliot, "Learning the Use of Political Means," 47.
[25] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation*, 115.

peculiar to them."[26] Though it is true that there was a remarkable shift from class model to caste model of political organisation established by Ambedkar, it was primarily due to two reasons. Firstly, there was a growing necessity to develop an independent organisation for Untouchables in order to deal exclusively with issues peculiar to them. Secondly, the political situation of that time in which other communities had presented specific demands, and had organisations which represented their special points. Ambedkar, therefore, established the SCF which was exclusively lower caste in composition and which represented primarily their interests. However, this 'caste' model of political organisation of Ambedkar could not achieve its objective of unity of all Untouchable castes. Gokhale argued that "the SCF, however, did not develop an extensive or deep-rooted organisation in the years following its formation. It was due to the failure of the SCF in bringing together all the Untouchable communities across India. The earlier political formations of the Untouchable movement such as the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (1924) and the ILP (1936) had been limited to one region (Bombay) and one community (Mahar)."[27] The Indian Provincial elections were held in 1946 to elect members of the legislative councils of British Indian provinces. The outcome of the 1946 elections was a great blow to the SCF. Its electoral performance was not satisfactory in the 1946 elections. It won no seats in the Bombay Provincial Assembly, and was able to win only one seat each in the Bengal and the Central Provinces legislatures.[28]

Gokhale evaluated the role played the ILP and SCF in the Dalit movement and politics in Bombay. According to Gokhale,

"The formations and objectives of the ILP and SCF were principally motivated by electoral considerations. These bodies were political parties in the true sense of the term, and they represented Ambedkar's attempt to put the Mahar movement on a regular, organized, and political footing. While neither the ILP nor the SCF were long-lived and both had limited success at best, the legacy they left behind, both as models of political organisation and as vehicles for the mobilization of political consciousness among the Mahars, had a pervasive impact on the later course of the movement."[29]

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[26] *Ibid.*, 142.

[27] *Ibid.*, 143.

[28] A.M.Rajasekhariah, *B. R. Ambedkar: The Politics of Emancipation* (Bombay: Sindhu Publications, 1971), 208.

[29] Gokhale, *From Concessions to Confrontations*, 131.

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The ILP and SCF, thus, played pivotal role in the Dalit movement and politics in the early phase of the Dalit politics of Bombay city. In the post-Ambedkar period, the RPI emerged as the importance political party in the Dalit politics of the city.

5. The Establishment of the RPI and Dalit Politics in Bombay in the Post-Ambedkar Phase:

The failure of the SCF in the Indian Provincial Elections of 1946 and Lok Sabha general elections of 1951 made Ambedkar to rethink about the social base of Dalit parties. Ambedkar decided to form a new political party irrespective of caste because he realized the fact that the Dalits are minority in number. It is difficult for Dalits to gain political power. Dalit political parties, therefore, had to rely on the support of the other sections of the society irrespective of caste. Kshirsagar in his work argued that "there was a difference in the political situation between pre-independence and post-independence of India. All political parties changed their policies after the independence. Ambedkar also thought that in order to properly implement the constitution of independent India which is based on the democratic principles, it was essential for politics and social services to be based on these principles irrespective of caste. Ambedkar, therefore, decided to establish the RPI irrespective of caste and religion."[30]

According to Gokhale, "the formation of the RPI was the revival of the class model, pointed not towards the radical restructuring of a social order based on class struggle, but on coalition politics within the context of liberal parliamentary democracy."[31] This coalition politics was based on the unity of the all weaker and oppressed sections of the society irrespective of caste and religion. Ambedkar made announcement in 1956 that the new political party would come into existence before the 1957 general elections. Its principles would be liberty, equality, and fraternity; it would be open to all; and it would have nothing to do with the present SCF.[32] In an Open Letter to his followers, Ambedkar elaborated the concept of democracy, and envisioned that the RPI would establish a society free from oppression and exploitation of one class by another, freedom to each individual

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[30] Kshirsagar, *Bharatiya Republican Paksha*, 59.

[31] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation*, 217.

[32] Eleanor Zelliot, *Ambedkar's World: The Making of Babasaheb and the Dalit Movement* (New Delhi: Navayana Publishing, 2013), 199.

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from fear and want, and equality of opportunity. According to Morkhandikar, "the whole letter was imbued with a faith in liberal democracy, freedom of the individual as the goal and the state as a means to the end."[33] Though conceived by Ambedkar, the RPI was established in 1957 after his death. It was decided that the newly established party would not be bound to any particular dogma or ideology, such as communism or socialism, Gandhism or any other 'ism'. In the election manifesto of the RPI, it declared that the party stood for 'parliamentary system of government as being the best form of government both in the interest of the public and in the interest of the individual.' With the growth of political bodies like the SCF and the RPI, the Dalits had carved out a political space for themselves in the Bombay city.

6. Ideology and Social Base of the R.P.I. in Bombay:

The ideology and philosophy of the RPI was primarily based on Ambedkar thoughts. According to Kshirsagar, "the ideological foundation of the RPI has been the political thoughts of Ambedkar. Ambedkar's social, religious, political, economic, educational thoughts which were expressed through his various writings and speeches became inspiration for the RPI politics."[34] The ideology of the RPI was mainly secular in its nature. It was not committed to principles which lead to narrow and limited politics. It opposed to the cooperation and alliance with casteist and communalist parties. It emphasised on the broader unity of all socially and economically exploited sections of the society. It was declared that the main principles of the RPI would be similar as enshrined in the preamble of the constitution of India i.e. Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The RPI would work for the protection and promotion of welfare of the Dalits, oppressed, and weaker sections of the society. The RPI would ensure to work for welfare of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and other backward class people. There would be internal democracy within the party. All the posts within the RPI would be filled through process of election, and all the decisions would be taken by majority. The emphasis would not be given to a particular individual but to a political party. The RPI's philosophy would be based on the principle of State Socialism as elaborated by Ambedkar. Socialism would

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[33] Morkhandikar, "Dilemmas of Dalit Movement in Maharashtra," 586.
[34] Kshirsagar, *Bharatiya Republican Paksha*, 9.

be an objective of the RPI but to achieve this end the party would believe in the Parliamentary Democratic means. It meant that the party would not believe in violent means to achieve an end.[35]

For Ambedkar, the RPI was to be broad-based party representing the downtrodden and disadvantaged class of Indian society, without regard to caste or region, having a broader social base which would not limit to a particular community, and based on the principles of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity'. It was meant to be a political party articulating the aspirations of all those segments of Indian society subjected to social discrimination and economic deprivation. In the early years of the RPI, it attempted to broaden its social base and accommodate all marginalized class in its agitations. For instance, *Bhoomiheen Satyagraha* launched by RPI Gaikwad group attempted to unite all maginalised sections of the society in order to achieve their common interest. However, the RPI failed to get support of other Scheduled Castes communities except neo-Buddhists. It is primarily due to the lack of trust among other Scheduled Castes such as Mangs and Chambhars on the RPI politics. Gokhale in her work also argued that "there was a serious contradiction in the politics of the RPI. Though the RPI was meant to be broad-based enough to articulate the aspirations of all those segments of Indian society subjected to social discrimination and economic deprivation; it largely dominated by Mahars only. The RPI, despite its "caste-neutral" name, was persistently identified as a party of the neo-Buddhists among whom it secured wide and sustained allegiance."[36] It pointed out the shrinking of the social base of the RPI.

Many scholars elaborated the reasons for the diminishing social base of the RPI. It was argued by some scholars like Zelliot that Ambedkar envisioned the support of the RPI were the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the Backward Classes which together constitute the larger part of the India's population. But the RPI could not emerge as strong unity among these sections of the society. Zelliot argued that "the RPI failed to get support of other weaker sections of the society primarily due to the fact that while efforts to evoke political awareness had been successfully made in regard to the Scheduled Castes, there

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[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Gokhale, *From Concessions to Confrontations*, 212.

was no parallel political awakening among the Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes."[37] While some other scholars[38] argued that Ambedkar even did not receive full support of all sub-castes of the Scheduled Castes. Though Ambedkar worked for the empowerment of all Scheduled Castes, he was considered as leader of Mahar community only. Other Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra such as Chambhars and Mangs did not give their support to Ambedkar. As a result, the RPI, established by Ambedkar, remained largely dominated by neo-Buddhists only.

7. Nature and Scope of the R.P.I. politics in Bombay:

The RPI launched many struggles and agitations for various issues of Dalits. During the initial years of the RPI politics, Dalit politics was regarded as the 'politics of movement' or 'politics of issues' as it can be seen in the various struggles organized by the RPI for various issues related to the Scheduled Castes population, particularly neo-Buddhists in Bombay. These agitations indicated the nature and scope of the RPI politics in the city. The RPI politics and various movements launched by RPI were ideologically committed and based on Ambedkarite principles. The RPI politics was the politics in consonance of Ambedkarite thoughts.

The participation of the RPI in Samyukta Maharashtra Movement and its role in the movement was a significant aspect of the RPI politics in the city. The movement was a struggle in the late 1950s for the demand of the creation of a separate Marathi-speaking state out of the then-bilingual State of Bombay, with the city of Bombay as its capital. A front known as the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* was formed which brought together various opposition parties, including the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Socialist Parties, the Peasants and Workers Party and some dissident Congressmen. The primary objective of the *Samiti* was to oppose and pressurize the Congress Party, and to put forward the demand for creation of a separate state for Marathi-speaking people. The second objective of the *Samiti* was to create a broad opposition front against the ruling Congress Party. Ambedkar's decision to enter into alliance with the *Samiti* in November

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[37] Zelliot, *Ambedkar's World*, 199.

[38] Neera Burra, "Was Ambedkar Just a Leader of Mahars?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 21, no. 10/11 (1986).

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1956 was related to his recognition of the political realities, and his realization that the *Samiti* offered the best chance of developing a strong opposition party against the Congress Party in the general elections of 1957. The agitation received popular support. As a result of the movement, a separate state was created for Marathi speaking people with Bombay as its capital. The active participation of the RPI and the role it played in the movement was one of the factors for the success of the movement. On the other hand, the SCF also benefited from its alliance with the *Samiti*. The SCF performed well in the electoral politics in the 1957 general elections for Lok Sabha and Bombay Legislative Assembly. The RPI established itself as a prominent opposition party.

Another popular agitation launched by one of the prominent leader of the RPI, Dadasaheb Gaikwad. The *Bhoomiheen Satyagraha* was one of the significant developments of the post-Ambedkarite Dalit movement. The agitation was the reflection of the RPI's objective of forming broader alliance of exploited and oppressed sections of the society in order to fulfill their demands. The agitation was an attempt to create 'a mass movement from below'. The agitation was also an attempt of the RPI in its early phase to put its ideas into practice. It attempted to construct a broad alliance of working and peasant classes, the Scheduled Castes and neo-Buddhists.

The RPI also launched an agitation for the extension of constitutional concessions to the Scheduled Castes who converted to Buddhism. On 14th October 1956 Ambedkar converted to Buddhism with large number of his followers, mainly from Mahar community. On 2nd October 1956 a constitutional amendment was made in the article 341 of the constitution. The amendment stated that "Notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph no. 2, no person who professes a religion different from Hindu or Sikh religion shall be deem to be a member of Scheduled Caste."[39] It meant that the neo-Buddhists were denied from constitutional concessions, and were declared that they are not eligible for special benefits reserved for SCs because they are no more part of Hindu religion. However, they could continue to receive preferences available to Backward Classes which were not as extensive. The RPI launched agitations for the demand to extend the

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[39] J.V.Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkaree Chalval - Vol. 1 (1956-1959)* (Mumbai: Asmita Communications, 2012), 113.

constitutional concessions to neo-Buddhists. This was important for the RPI because large number of followers of the RPI were Mahars who converted from Hindu religion to Buddhist religion. The denial of constitutional concessions to neo-Buddhists had deep impact on their economic conditions. The RPI, therefore, agitated on this issue from its formulation.

The RPI actively engaged in other agitations also such as participation in the organisation of textile workers in Bombay, attempts to organize the *bidi* workers, issues of slum dwellers, etc. The RPI's elected representatives brought various atrocity cases on Dalits into Parliamentary as well as State legislature debates. The RPI also vehemently criticized the bill on the Panchayat as they considered that the politics in rural areas were largely dominated by the caste factor, and the Panchayat bill would help to create and maintain upper caste dominance in rural areas. The RPI also attempted to empower Dalit women. The RPI organized the All India Women Parishad which was held at Nagpur on 2nd October 1957. The RPI also took important step in the establishment of Dalit Sahitya Sangh. The first session of the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangh was organized on 2nd March 1958 at Bombay. The RPI also established the All India Republican Student Federation.[40]

Though RPI was actively involved in various agitations in Bombay launched for various issues pertaining to Dalits, it was not free from internal contestations among the senior leaders of the RPI. Like other political parties in India, the RPI also became victim of factionalism which led to its deterioration in Bombay.

8. Group Factionalism and Attempts for Unity in the R.P.I.:

Group factionalism is one of the vital factors responsible for the decline of the RPI not only in Bombay but in other states also where the RPI had its presence. Leadership is a vital factor for any movement as well as for any political party. It is one of the significant factors which determine the success of the movement. The scope and direction of the movement is dependent upon the leadership. Ambedkar provided vigorous leadership to the Dalit movement in Bombay. However, after his demise in 1956, a question was raised

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[40] R.K.Kshirsagar, *Bharatiya Republican Paksha* (Aurangabad: Kailash Publications, 2006); J.V.Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkaree Chalval - Vol. 1 to 3* (Mumbai: Asmita Communications, 2012).

on the leadership of the movement. Factional in-fighting substituted for Ambedkar's inspiring and charismatic leadership. In the post-Ambedkar period, frequent clashes and internal strife among leaders became the characteristic of newly established RPI. Each senior leader of the party wanted to establish his authority over the RPI. Almost all leaders who worked under the leadership of Ambedkar such as Dadasaheb Gaikwad, B.C.Kamble, Rajabhau Khobragade, Shantabai Dani, etc. established their own factions. At the same time, newly emerged leadership also established their factions.

There are many factors responsible for the frequent split in the RPI. Different scholars on Dalit politics in Maharashtra had elaborated various causes for the factionalism in the RPI. P.G.Jogdand argued that "the RPI played a very significant role to generate awareness and register protests whenever time demanded. But the tempo and revolutionary zeal of the party ceased as every leader started posing as a 'junior Ambedkar'. The RPI was subject to series of splits based on personality clashes and personal political ambitions. The RPI leadership indulged in factionalism, and power became the centre of attraction."[41] Vilas Wagh, one of the Ambedkarite activists in Maharashtra, argued that "the RPI leaders were reluctant to accept secondary position. They, therefore, did not have concern for the movement. In certain situations, they even did not hesitant to take help from conservative and reactionary forces. They gave up principle-based politics. They depicted themselves as true Ambedkarite leaders but in actual practice they did not follow Ambedkarite principles."[42] To sum up, lack of trust on leadership, personality clashes, personal political ambitions of leaders were some of the significant reasons for factionalism in RPI. The confrontations took place between leaders culminating in factionalism and internal strife in the RPI.

The outcome of the factionalism in the RPI was that the RPI divided itself into many competing groups which engaged in defeating other group instead of unitedly competing with mainstream political parties in order to achieve political power. As a result, the RPI degenerated into a many small groups having limited objectives. Kasabe elaborated that "whenever there is factionalism in a political party then one group of that

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[41] P.G.Jogdand, "RPI-Congress Alliance: Softer Option," *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 19 (1998): 1071.
[42] Vilas Wagh, introduction to *Republican Khasdarankadun Dalit Janatechya Apeksha*, by Vilas Wagh (ed.) (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1999).

political party considers other group as first enemy than other parties. Therefore, the entire strength of these groups spent in competing among each other rather than competing to external forces. The RPI was not an exception to this process."[43] Thus the RPI remained engaged in competing with its various factions. Thus, Sudha Pai, scholar on the Dalit movement and politics, in her work argued that "In Maharashtra, Dalit-based parties have not been able to bring Dalits onto single political platform. In Maharashtra, despite many attempts at revival, the RPI remains divided - between the neo-Buddhists and Hindu Dalit on one hand - and the Mahars and other sub-castes on the other, accompanied by intense factionalism among the leadership."[44]

As a result of factionalism in the RPI, three kinds of tendencies were emerged in the RPI in post-1965 period, particularly after RPI Gaikwad faction's electoral alliance with the Congress Party. Firstly, some of the RPI leaders like R.D.Bhandare, D.T.Rupwate, N.M.Kamble, etc. straightforwardly joined the Congress Party. These leaders claimed that the RPI, or any other political organisation of the Dalits, could not gain from electoral alliances, nor could it afford to oppose the Congress Party. Rather, it had to recognize the fact that the Congress Party is the pre-eminent party in India, and that a small helpless minority, such as the Dalits and the neo-Buddhists, had to come to terms with it. They had to operate within the limits set by Congress Party and hence had to depend on it for whatever concessions that they could seize from it. Therefore, the wisest political course for the Dalits, according to R.D.Bhandare, was to act as a pressure group within a Congress Party, and try to influence its policies as members of the Congress Party. Second tendency was the attraction of RPI leaders towards the Congress Party. These leaders were in RPI but had an overlapping political interest with the Congress Party. Dadasaheb Gaikwad initiated the process of political alliance with the Congress Party in 1967. This process was continued by R.S.Gavai, Ramdas Athawale, Jogendra Kawade and other RPI leaders. The third kind of tendency was that some RPI leaders continued the RPI politics independently. These factions made alliances with other parties for elections purpose only.

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[43] Kasabe, *Ambedkar Ani Marx*, 9-10.
[44] Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 108.

The entire history of splits, reunions and renewed splits in RPI had not on ideological basis, but they were due to clash of personalities and personal political ambitions of the leaders. As a result of frequent factionalism in the RPI, the social base of the RPI started shrinking, and various supporters of the RPI lost hope in the RPI politics. They preferred to participate in various political activities of the Congress party or other political parties.

The various attempts for the unity among the RPI factions and its frequent failure are another hallmark of the RPI politics in Bombay. The history of the RPI is characterized by the frequent unity and split in its factions. Some scholars[45] argued that the various factions of the RPI ritually unite at the time of elections and then drift apart in search of power and perf. The unity of these factions gives hopes to Dalit masses and their break-ups spread the mood of utter dejection among them. The demand for the unity of the RPI factions was a result of frequent factionalism in the RPI and its declining performance in the electoral politics of Bombay. Therefore, many attempts were made for unity among the RPI factions with no success. Not a single attempt for the unity among RPI factions last long. Such opportunistic unities usually declared during election times which were temporary in nature. These unities, therefore, had limited meanings, and proved futile. Various attempts for the unity held from time to time such as in 1959, 1963, 1974, 1984 and 1989.

As a result of frequent factionalism, failure of attempts for unity, inefficiency of RPI factions, poor electoral performance and other factors, a new radical militant form of Dalit political organisation came into existence in city of Bombay which was different from the RPI in its strategies and programs.

9. The Emergence of Dalit Panther Movement in Bombay and Its Relationship with the RPI:

The emergence of Dalit Panther movement has been one of the important phases of the Dalit Politics in Bombay. Pai in her work argued that "the Maharashtrian experience

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[45] Prakash Bal, "Driven to the Wall: Dalits under Shiv Sena-BJP Rule," *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 31 (1997): 1950.

with Dalit political parties is unique in comparison with other states. Rather than forming a narrow communitarian party based on lower caste identity to obtain the support of Dalits, Maharashtra has experienced with two kinds of broad-based parties of the underprivileged: a Liberal Republican Party that was meant to appeal to the entire working class and poor, and a Radical alternative, which sought to combine both caste and class through a Marxist-cum-Ambedkarite ideology."[46] This 'Radical Alternative' was the Dalit Panther Movement in Bombay. The Dalit movement in Bombay took radical and militant form with the emergence of the Dalit Panthers. For scholars like Gokhale, the emergence of the Dalit Panthers claimed the revival of the class model of political organisation which was more radical, apparently extra-parliamentary group which strongly refused the RPI and its electoral politics.[47] Though the RPI was formulated on 'class' model, it subsequently transformed into 'caste' model because its social base largely remained limited to neo-Buddhists only. However, with the emergence of the Dalit Panther movement the emphasis was again given to the 'class' model. In the Dalit Panthers manifesto, the definition of a term 'Dalit' was expanded which included all weaker sections of the society.[48] However, again this 'class' model failed, and the leadership and following of the Dalit Panthers remained dominated by the neo-Buddhists.

Some works[49] has been written in Marathi on the Dalit Panther movement in the city by some scholars on Dalit movement and politics, and Dalit leaders and writers, poets who were active in the movement. Namdeo Dhasal, one of the founders of the Dalit Panthers, argued that "the leaders of the RPI and Dalit Panthers purposefully attempted to limit these organisations to the neo-Buddhists only because of the personal gains of these leaders."[50] Dhasal criticized Raja Dhale, another leader of Dalit Panthers, for confining the Dalit movement to the Buddhist ideology and rejecting leftist ideology. He argued that "Due to Dhale's firm belief that only neo-Buddhists can become Panthers affected the all-

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[46] Pai, *Dalit Assertion*, 73-74.
[47] Gokhale, *From Concessions to Confrontations*, 264.
[48] Barbara R. Joshi, *Untouchable! Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement* (New Delhi: Selectbook, 1986), 141.
[49] J.V.Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkari Chalval - Vol. 4 (1972-1977)* (Mumbai: Asmita Communication, 2010); Namdeo Dhasal, *Dalit Panther: Ek Sangharsh* (Mumbai: Bhashya Prakashan, 2014); Sharankumar Limbale, *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)* (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1989); Lata Murugkar, *Dalit Panther Chalval* (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1995).
[50] Namdeo Dhasal, *Dalit Panther: Ek Sangharsh* (Mumbai: Bhashya Prakashan, 2014), 17.

inclusiveness nature of the Dalit Panthers, and hence, the Dalit Panthers remained limited to neo-Buddhists only."[51]

Though the Dalit Panthers condemned the RPI politics for its politics of compromise with dominant governing class, and appeared as a radical alternative to the ineffectiveness of the RPI politics in the city, it also affected by the politics of interest. Ramesh Kamble, one of the scholars on Dalit politics in Maharashtra, argued that,

"The emergence of Dalit Panthers led to resurgence of Dalit consciousness. Dalit youth, inspired by the Dalit Panthers, criticized 'accommodated' Dalit leadership that was ineffective in addressing the atrocities the Dalit suffered. Dalit Panthers attempted to provide a broad content to the category 'Dalit' by articulating the concerns of Dalits, landless agricultural labourers, marginalised peasantry, working masses and women, and attempted to provide a broader conception of the Dalit struggle. Despite this, the Dalit Panthers too were soon trapped in the politics of accommodation. Thus, though the Dalit Panthers presented ideologically conscious rebel Dalits, who challenged the existing Dalit leadership for being ineffective in arresting growing atrocities on Dalits and also succumbing to politics of accommodation, they themselves were soon to be accommodated and contained in the gamut of politics of interest."[52]

This marked the change in the Dalit agenda: from social movement of the marginalized to political formation to achieve political power for the elites among Dalits.

The rise of the Dalit Panthers as a movement began under certain basic socio-economic and political conditions. The rise of the Dalit Panther movement was important stage in the Dalit movement of Bombay. It became popular in its early phase and also received larger support from the Dalit masses. Suhas Palshikar, one of the scholars on Maharashtra politics, argued that "the Panthers had a good equation with the socialist and communist political parties and movements, and it seemed as if Dalit politics was finally headed towards a broader based and radical social agenda."[53]

There were several factors responsible for emergence of the Dalit Panther movement in Bombay. Rodrigues and Gavaskar in their article argued that "For the Dalits in Bombay, the turbulence of the late sixties and early seventies served as the backdrop for

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[51] *Ibid.*, 25.

[52] Ramesh Kamble, "Dalit-Hindutva Alliance and the Dynamics of Dalit Politics," in *Hindutva and Dalits*. Anand Teltumbde (ed.) (Kolkata: Samya, 2005), 176.

[53] Suhas Palshikar, "Maharashtra: Dalit Politics in the Hindutva Trap," in *Hindutva and Dalits*, ed. Anand Teltumbde (Kolkata: Samya, 2005), 209.

the emergence of the Dalit Panthers. The continued influx of rural Dalits into Mumbai, especially after the drought of 1972; the proliferation of predominantly Dalit slums in central Mumbai and in the eastern suburbans; the growing unemployment and economic insecurity among Dalit youths; the increasing number of atrocities being committed on Dalits in both rural and urban areas; all provided the material conditions for the radicalization of Dalit consciousness."[54] Lata Murugkar in her work on Dalit Panthers argued that "there were many factors which brought about the Dalit Panther movement. They were: the socio-economic conditions prior to the emergence of Dalit Panthers; spread of education and awakening of Dalit youth; impact of other militant social movements such as E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker's anti-Aryan movement in Tamil Nadu, Bhim Sena movement in Karnataka, etc., and the emergence of the Dalit literature."[55] Along with these causes, two factors were primarily responsible for the emergence of the Dalit Panthers in Bombay. Firstly, the increasing atrocities on Dalits, and the repression and terror under which the oppressed Scheduled Castes continued to live in the rural areas. The rising cases of atrocities on the Dalits, the indifferent outlook of the police and the administration towards Dalits, the ineffectiveness of the government's welfare measures and land reform schemes were responsible for generating a sense of dissatisfaction among the Dalits. Secondly, the failure of the RPI and the increasing feeling of resentment among Dalit youths against the RPI leaders was another factor in emergence of Dalit Panther movement. The factionalism and inefficiency of the RPI and its alliances with the Congress Party for obtaining political power were main reasons for resentment among Dalit youths. These Dalit youths condemned the RPI leadership for being self-centered. They lost faith in RPI politics, and believed in radical militant organisation required to fight against the atrocities on Dalits. It accepted the radical and militant means to achieve their ends instead of the politics of compromise on which the RPI politics relied. The disunity and ineffectiveness of the RPI was all the more striking in the wake of the increased atrocities being directed against the Dalits in the rural areas.

Apart from these factors, the emergence and popularity of Dalit Literary movement from the late 1950s contributed immensely to the development of new consciousness

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[54] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 147.
[55] Lata Murugkar, *Dalit Panther Chalval* (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1995), 41.

among Dalit youths and emergence of the Dalit Panther movement in Bombay. In fact, most of the leaders of the Dalit Panthers were young Dalit poets and writers. These writers attempted to create a new consciousness among the Dalits through their works. During the Dalit Panther movement these writers actively engaged in the movement.

There were both internal and external factors responsible for the emergence of the Dalit Panther movement. Rodrigues and Gavaskar argued that,

"The principal sources for the radicalization of the Dalit Panther Movement lay primarily in Dalit literature which was beginning to make a distinct and visible presence in the city. Besides this literary impulse in Dalit political consciousness, the Dalit Panther Movement was also inspired by the larger political struggles of the time. The events of the students movements of 1968 in Europe, the anti-Vietnam war movement, the Black civil rights movement, and nearer home the Naxalbari uprising of 1967, were turbulent and violent events that were indicative of a deep-seated resentment and disillusionment among the youth with the modern state and its incapacity for social and economic transformation. These winds of change struck a deep chord among educated Dalit youth."[56]

Due to all these factors the Dalit Panther movement emerged in Bombay, and also took radical militant shape in the Dalit movement and Dalit politics.

The Dalit Panthers emerged as a militant response to the vacuum that surrounded neo-Buddhists, RPI politics at the end of the 1960s. It emerged with a radical socio-political programme and spiritedly occupied the imaginations and hopes of young, newly educated Dalits. The Dalit Panther movement, therefore, contributed immensely to the Dalit movement.

Sudhir Bedekar[57], a Marxist thinker and editor of Marathi monthlies such as 'Magowa' and 'Tatparya', attempted to look at the emergence of the Dalit Panther Movement in Bombay from the Marxist approach. Bedekar criticized the capitalist State system. According to him, there are three aspects of the capitalist system. Firstly, the economic system is dominated by few selfish individuals which led to the increasing poverty, unemployment, inflation, etc. which affected mostly rural poor and urban workers. Secondly, this system raised a crucial issue that whether the foundation of Indian

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[56] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 148.
[57] Sudhir Bedekar, in *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)*, ed. Sharankumar Limbale (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1989), 219-222.

culture would be based on traditional feudalist Hindu dominated or it would be based on equality and scientific approach. Third was the distribution of political power. Bedekar gave certain reasons for the emergence of the Dalit Panther movement. First, there was no other revolutionary organisation which could systematically organize the anger of the people. There was no other political party in Bombay which could organize and efficiently work for the struggles of workers, economic issues of farmers. Second, there was the inefficiency of the left parties in solving social problems. The RPI was engaged in the politics of elections, votes and alliances based on lack of ideological premise. The educated middle class neo-Buddhists were influenced by narrow ambitions. At the same time, the RPI remained away from poor Dalits who were residing in rural areas and urban slums. Therefore, there were differences in the RPI and the Dalit Panthers. The Dalit Panthers was more radical, militant and revolutionary which was looking for alternative means for solving problems of Dalits. Bedekar emphasised on the economic issues of the Dalits such as issues of slum dwellers in urban areas, unemployment issues, agricultural workers' problems in rural areas, etc.

There was antagonist relationship between the RPI and Dalit Panthers. Both Dalit political organisations of Bombay were opponent to each other. The leaders of the Dalit Panthers declared that the Dalit Panthers emerged in 1972 against the RPI leadership which claimed to be opportunistic and corrupt, with a radical socio-political programme. Dhasal even declared in the manifesto of Dalit Panthers that it does not have any relations with the RPI.[58]

The poor electoral performance of the RPI affected the Dalit politics in Bombay.

10. Electoral Politics of the RPI in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections of Maharashtra from 1952-1990:

The RPI was actively engaged in the electoral politics of Bombay city. The RPI was not formally organized until October 1957. The first Lok Sabha and Bombay Legislative Assembly elections were contested by the SCF. The 1957 elections were contested by the SCF under its old name and with its old personnel. It was after the 1957

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[58] Dhasal, *Dalit Panther: Ek Sangharsh*, 17.

elections that the SCF was dissolved and the RPI came into existence. The following table depicts the electoral performance of the SCF in the Lok Sabha as well as Bombay Legislative Assembly elections.

Table 1.1

Seats won by the SCF in the General Elections, 1951 and 1957 to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly of Bombay

Political Party	Lok Sabha Election			Legislative Assembly of Bombay Election	
All-India Scheduled Caste Federation	Year	1951	1957	1951	1957
	Seats Won	01	05	01	13

(Source: Election Commission of India's official website: www.eci.nic.in)

The above mentioned Table 1.1 depicts the electoral performance of the SCF in Lok Sabha and Bombay Legislative Assembly elections of 1951 and 1957. The SCF contested 35 seats in ten States and Union Territories for the first Lok Sabha election in 1951. This election saw the widespread defeat of SCF candidates. The SCF had contested the elections in alliance with the Socialist Party as well as the Shetkari Kamgar Paksha, but this alliance was not sufficient to bring electoral success to the SCF. Only two candidates of the SCF were elected. They were P.N.Rajbhoj from Sholapur constituency of Bombay state and M.R.Krishnan from Karimnagar constituency of Hyderabad state. Ambedkar himself was also defeated in this election in the Bombay North constituency. The SCF contested for 37 seats but won only one seat in Bombay Legislative Assembly 1951 election. With the exception of B.C.Kamble, standing from the Chinchpokli Lower Parel Love Grove constituency in Bombay, all candidates of SCF were lost in the election.[59]

In the first Lok Sabha election and Bombay Legislative Assembly election, the SCF could not performed well. However, in the second Lok Sabha and Bombay Legislative Assembly election, the SCF gained considerable success. In fact, the result of the Lok

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[59] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/

Sabha and Bombay Legislative Assembly elections was favorable for the SCF. Though the political alliance of the RPI with the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* was crucial factor in success of the RPI in 1957 elections, the *Samiti* also benefited from the active participation of the RPI in the alliance. In the second Lok Sabha general election of 1957 the SCF contested for 21 seats in seven States and Union Territories, and won 6 seats - five seats from Bombay state and one seat from Mysore state. The elected candidates from Bombay state were G.K.Manay (Bombay City Central), B.D.Salunke (Khed), S.K.Dighe (Kolhapur), B.K.Gaikwad (Nasik), and H.R.Sonule (Nanded). D.A.Katti (Chikodi) elected from Mysore state. In the Bombay Legislative Assembly election, 1957 the SCF contested for 48 seats and won 13 seats. The elected candidates were P.H.Boricha [Byculla (SC)], J.G.Bhatankar [Matunga (SC)], R.D.Bhandare (Worli), P.M.Choure [Haveli (SC)], S.B.Londhe [Baramati (SC)], J.S.Patne (Khed), G.B.Kamble [Chiplun (SC)], D.M.Shirke [Hatkanangale (SC)], P.T.Madhale [Vita (SC)], S.M.Bandisode [Phaltan (SC)], S.L.Kamble [Nasik (SC)], T.R.Kakal [Mehkar (SC)], and P.H.Shambharkar [Nagpur (SC)]. The *Samiti* contested for 97 seats and won 72 seats in Bombay Legislative Assembly elections of 1957. In the elections for municipal offices in Bombay the SCF scored impressive victories. P.T.Borale was elected as mayor of the city and 12 candidates of SCF were elected as municipal councilors.[60]

Table 1.2

Seats won by various factions of the RPI in the General Elections, 1962-1989 to the Lok Sabha of Maharashtra

Year	Political Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	% of Votes Polled
1962	Republican Party of India (REP)	20	0	11.66
1967	RPI	17	0	12.71
1971	RPI (Khobragade)	14	0	02.87
	RPI	01	1	01.11

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[60] *Ibid.*

1977	RPI (Khobragade)	05	1	04.33
	RPI	01	0	00.83
1980	RPI (Khobragade)	07	0	01.52
	RPI	23	0	01.74
1984	RPI (Khobragade)	02	0	00.76
	RPI	02	0	00.10
1989	Bharatiya Republican Paksha (BRP)	11	0	02.08
	RPI	03	0	00.14
	RPI (Khobragade)	08	0	00.75

(Source: Election Commission of India's official website: www.eci.nic.in)

Table 1.3

Seats won by various factions of the RPI in the General Elections, 1962-1990 to the Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra

Year	Political Party	Contested Seats	Seats Won	% of Votes Polled
1962	Republican Party of India (REP)	66	03	5.38
1967	RPI	79	05	6.66
1972	RPI (Khobragade)	56	00	1.34
	RPI	118	02	3.77
1978	RPI (Khobragade)	23	02	1.41
	RPI	25	02	1.06
1980	RPI (Khobragade)	42	01	1.36
	RPI	36	00	0.76
1985	RPI (Khobragade)	16	00	0.52
	RPI	54	00	1.00

1990	Bharatiya Republican Paksha (BRP)	43	00	1.14
	RPI (Khobragade)	18	01	0.50
	RPI	21	00	0.70
	RPI (Balakrishnan)	01	00	0.00

(Source: Election Commission of India's official website: www.eci.nic.in)

The Table no. 1.2 and 1.3 clearly depict the declining electoral performance of the RPI in the Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections. In fact, the RPI started losing its hold on the elections from 1962 elections. In the third Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative elections of 1962, the RPI's electoral performance was poor. In the Lok Sabha election, the RPI contested 68 seats in ten States and Union Territories but won only 3 seats. These three seats were belonged to Uttar Pradesh. In Maharashtra the RPI contested for 20 seats but not a single seat won. In the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election also, the RPI contested 66 seats and won only 3 seats. The primary reason for poor electoral success of the RPI in both Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election was the division of RPI into two factions. 'One candidate against the Congress' formula of the RPI failed in this election. In most of constituencies, there were two candidates of the RPI against the Congress Party. Therefore, the votes divided among these two factions. The further division of the RPI into number of factions contributed more to division of the Scheduled Castes votes among RPI. The Congress Party benefited most from the division within the RPI. The fragmentation of the opposition vote made it possible for the Congress Party to gain victories. The factional conflict in the RPI played a major role in the defeat of its candidates of both factions. Gokhale argued that "the RPI attributed its defeat in the 1962 elections to the divided opposition, to the larger number of opposition parties which entered the race, and the division within the party itself."[61] The election campaign was marked with bitter hatred and criticism by one faction of the RPI against the other, which contributed to the defeats suffered by the party in Maharashtra.

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[61] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation*, 230.

In the Lok Sabha elections from 1962 to 1989, the RPI managed to win only 7 seats from all over India. These seats were won by different factions of the RPI. In 1967 Lok Sabha election the RPI won one seat from Uttar Pradesh. In the 1971 Lok Sabha general election the RPI (Gavai) faction won one seat. N.S.Kamble elected from Pandharpur (SC) constituency. In 1977 Lok Sabha election the RPI (Khobragade) faction won two seats. The elected candidates were K.H.Jain from Madhya Pradesh (Balaghat) and D.G.Gawai from Maharashtra [Buldhana (SC)]. Not a single RPI faction won any seat in the Lok Sabha elections of 1980, 1984 and 1989. However, the situation of the RPI in Maharashtra was very weak. The various factions of the RPI won only 2 seats in the Lok Sabha election of Maharashtra from 1962 to 1989.[62]

In the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections from 1962 to 1990 the electoral performance of the RPI factions was not noteworthy. The RPI contested 66 seats and won only 3 seats in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election of 1962. The elected candidates were J.D.Patil (Daryapur), D.P.Meshram [Nagpur III (SC)] and A.D.Gosawi [Adyar (SC)]. The RPI contested 79 seats and won 5 seats in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election of 1967. The elected candidates were D.Samant (Ghatkopar), S.S.Bhoye [Surgana (SC)], C.U.Raghuwanshi (Mangrulpir), K.B.Shrungare (Badnera) and M.N.Waldewar (Adyar). In 1972 election the RPI (Gavai) won only two seats. The elected candidates were Vithalrao Khadiwale [Udgir (SC)] and V.A.Deshmukh (Paranda). In 1978 the RPI won two seats and elected candidates were N.S.Kamble [Mangal Vedhe (SC)] and B.D.Kamble [Karjat (SC)]. The RPI (Khobragade) faction also won two seats. The elected candidates were S.Balakrishnan (Trombay) and S.J.Dongare [Nagpur North (SC)]. In 1980 the RPI (Khobragade) faction won one seat. S.J.Dongre elected from Nagpur North (SC) reserved constituency. In 1985 none of the factions of the RPI managed to win any seats. In 1990 the RPI (Khobragade) faction won one seat. U.M.Shende was elected from Nagpur North (SC) reserved constituency.[63]

The electoral politics of the RPI was largely affected by factionalism. The votes of the RPI divided among different factions which resulted into the poor performance of the

[62] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/
[63] Ibid.

RPI factions in the electoral politics. Another reason for unsatisfactory electoral performance of the RPI was that it largely limited to neo-Buddhists. The numerical minority of these sections of the population also contributed greatly to the defeat of the RPI in electoral politics. The RPI factions could not receive support from the other Scheduled Castes and other backward castes. The socio-economic conditions of the Dalits were also responsible for the poor electoral performance of the RPI.

11. Alliance Politics of the RPI: The Political Alliance with the Congress Party in 1967:

The political alliance of one of the influential faction of RPI, i.e. Gaikwad faction with the Congress Party brought significant changes in the Dalit politics of Bombay. The RPI from its inception had always remained strong political opponent of the Congress Party. The political history of the RPI till 1967 was characterized by anti-Congress politics. In fact one of the objectives of the formation of the RPI was to create strong alternative to the dominance of the Congress Party. Though the RPI was divided into two factions in 1959, none of the faction made political coalition with the Congress Party. The RPI was not interested in making political coalition with the ruling Congress Party. The RPI had believed in its independent politics; it was not dependent upon any other political party. The primary reason for the anti-Congress approach of the RPI was the feeling of aversion among RPI leaders and party workers towards the Congress Party.

After 1967 the Dalit politics in Bombay changed remarkably. The anti-Congress approach of the RPI leaders and its party workers started reducing which led to the desire of some RPI leaders to join the Congress Party. In 1967 the process of political coalition with the Congress Party was initiated by the RPI Gaikwad faction. It was after the popular agitation for land to the landless that Dadasaheb Gaikwad initiated a 'dialogue' with the Congress Party for the alliance. Yashwantrao Chavan, who was then Minister of Home Affairs and former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, played a crucial role in the making of political alliance between the Congress Party and Dadasaheb Gaikwad's RPI.

Different scholars made varied arguments on this alliance between the Congress Party and the RPI. After the independence of India, significant changes were seen in the

political situation of the country. With the departure of the British, only one overwhelming power became renowned in the Indian political scene, that of the Congress Party. Gokhale, therefore, argued that "the Untouchables had to come to terms with the Congress Party, and could no longer invoke the aid of an outsider as arbiter such as the British."[64] She further argued that "the political realities of independent India called for coalition and alliance politics. The minority status of the Untouchables could only be overcome through alliance with other similarly placed groups; in the ensuing coalition, issues common to all would predominate, and the particularities of caste and region would be transcended."[65] However, as mentioned earlier, the RPI followed the anti-Congress politics from 1957. It meant that though the Congress Party was dominant ruling power in the Indian political scenario, the RPI kept itself away from the Congress Party till 1967 due to its differences. However, due to the internal conflicts in the RPI and its poor electoral performance, it ultimately made an alliance with the Congress Party. Some scholars emphasised on the crucial role played by Chavan in the making of this alliance which led to the decline of the RPI in the politics of Bombay. According to Morkhandikar, "Chavan's policy of attracting Dalit leaders to the Congress Party was a part of his 'Politics of Aggregation'. This policy was successful in not only weaning away the RPI from the opposition to form an alliance with the Congress but also in persuading important Dalit leaders to enter the Congress directly."[66] For Jogdand, "Chavan had recognized the assertive Dalit consciousness and subsequently started the era of 'patronage and sponsorship' kind of politics. Dalits started reducing their militancy due to the politics of the Congress Party under the leadership of Chavan. The Congress Party started the sponsored politics which helped them to co-opt Dalits, and issues that suited their convenience. This also fit in with the 'patron-client' kind of relation that the Congress Party in Maharashtra has built over the years."[67] J.V.Pawar, one of the founders of the Dalit Panthers, argued that "the RPI leaders gave favourable response to the concept of *Samajik Abhisaran* initiated by Chavan for the sake of decentralization of power. However, as a result of this process Ambedkarite leaders lost

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[64] Gokhale, *From Concession to Confrontation*, 217.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Morkhandikar, "Dilemmas of Dalit Movement in Maharashtra," 586.
[67] Jogdand, "RPI-Congress Alliance: Softer Option," 1071-1072.

their effectiveness in politics of Bombay, and joined the Congress Party."[68] The role played by the leadership of Chavan in the Congress-RPI alliance was noteworthy, but the political situation of that time is also important to take into consideration while looking at RPI politics in the city. Till 1965 the RPI was not a single united political party; it was divided into many groups. As a result, the influence of RPI on the politics of Bombay started declining which also affected its electoral performance. Therefore, in order to remain visible and share political power in politics, RPI Gaikwad group made alliance with the Congress Party. Rodrigues and Gavaskar argued that "the fact that the RPI proved incapable of forging Dalit unity, either on its own or with other political forces, made its entry into the Congress somewhat inevitable. It was only the Congress as the largest political force in the state and the centre that could guarantee the interest of the Mahar neo-Buddhists. In effect, as the factionalism deepened in the RPI, it increasingly came to operate as a pressure group within the larger arena of Congress politics."[69] Some scholars like Ramesh Kamble focused on the implications of this alliance on the Dalit movement and Dalit politics in Bombay. Kamble argued that,

"Despite the early concerns with the politics of the issues of the broader marginalised constituency, the post-Ambedkar Dalit movement, with an exception of Dadasaheb Gaikwad who led a satyagraha of landless agricultural labourers, came to be entrapped in the politics of accommodation. Absorbed in the Congress politics of accommodation, the Dalit movement lost its edge as a possible vehicle of the politics of the marginalised. Thus the RPI, with a tie up with the Congress, resulted in both accommodation and marginalization of Dalit politics away from its larger focus."[70]

Therefore, 'the politics of aggregation', 'the politics of accommodation', 'patronage and sponsorship' politics of the Congress Party, political situation of the RPI, the charismatic leadership of Chavan, and the process of *Samajik Abhisaran* were some of the responsible factors for the decline of the RPI politics in Bombay.

However, it is important to note that the alliance with the Congress party was not the first alliance of RPI with other political party. It was during Samyukta Maharashtra movement that the RPI made alliance with the other opposition parties of Bombay on the

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[68] Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkaree Chalval - Vol. 1 (1956-1959)*, 8.

[69] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 145-146.

[70] Kamble, "Dalit-Hindutva Alliance and the Dynamics of Dalit Politics," 176.

basis of anti-Congress position. But alliance with the Congress party in 1967 was noteworthy because it was an alliance which changed nature of RPI politics in Bombay.

This political alliance had a deep impact on the Dalit movement of Bombay as well. Though some neo-Buddhist leaders like R.D.Bhandare, Dadasaheb Rupwate, and N.M.Kamble went into the Congress fold, Gaikwad's approval to the RPI-Congress alliance in 1967 eventually deposed the RPI from being an oppositional force representing Dalit interests in the state. The alliance of the RPI with the Congress Party was also condemned by some cultural activists of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra as well because this alliance also affected the Dalit cultural movement of Maharashtra. They interpreted and understood this alliance as amounting to the subordination of Dalits to upper caste Congress politics.[71] This alliance was criticized as the political subordination of Dalit politics to the Congress Party in Maharashtra along with the subordination of Dalit cultural movement. Thus, popular Dalit cultural activists who once offered severe criticism of the State and the Congress politics, were later on became instruments in the hands of the State and the Congress Party for promotion of their policies.

The RPI-Congress alliance depicts the interest of the governing class in keeping the identity politics intact. In the post independence period, the Congress Party attempted to capture Dalit leaders by providing reservations on one side and by accommodating Dalit leaders on the other side.

12. Conclusion:

This chapter primarily centred on the historical context of the politics of the RPI in Bombay from the period of 1956 to 1990. The nature of politics and ideological perceptions of the RPI from its formation has been elaborated in this chapter. The RPI was formulated in 1957 for two primary reasons: first, to create a broad alliance of all socially and economically oppressed and exploited sections of the society, and through this alliance protect and promote their interests; secondly, to form a solid opposition to the dominance of the Congress Party's single party authoritarian rule. Though the RPI formulated with an

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[71] Gopal Guru, *Dalit Cultural Movement and Dialectics of Dalit Politics in Maharashtra* (Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1997), 17.

objective of larger unity of all lower castes groups, it failed to receive a larger support of the other Scheduled Castes population. It remained dominated largely by the neo-Buddhists. The RPI, therefore, was limited to a particular caste, religion and region only. At the same time, it could not create an alternative to the Congress Party in the electoral politics. In fact, some of factions of the RPI came under the grasp of the Congress Party. This was the serious threat to the autonomy of the RPI in the politics of the Bombay.

The electoral politics of the RPI in Bombay showed gradual decline in its performance. Among all the Parliamentary and State Legislature elections from 1951 to 1990, the elections of 1957 were important for the RPI. The RPI won fair number of seats in 1957 elections, and recognized as one of the significant political parties, not only in Bombay but also in some other states. But eventually the RPI lost its prominence in electoral performance due to the internal strife and factionalism in the RPI. At the same time, the alliance politics of the RPI with the Congress Party and the lost of autonomy of the RPI in electoral politics were also determinant factors for the decline of influence of the RPI on the politics of Bombay.

The political alliance of the RPI with the Congress Party in 1967 is considered as the significant epoch of the RPI politics in Bombay. 'The politics of accommodation'[72] initiated by Yashwantrao Chavan played vital role in the making of this alliance. The Congress Party's accommodation politics was intended to accommodate Dalits into the political space which is constructed by dominant political elites. The dominant political elites of the Congress Party articulated for 'the collaborative politics' between the Congress Party and the RPI. They successfully created confidence among the RPI leaders for such kind of 'collaborative politics'. However, such 'accommodation politics' or 'collaborative politics' is considered as an essential part of the strategy of dominant elite to secure and maintain their supremacy over political power. The Congress Party maintained its political power in Bombay through its collaborative politics with the RPI which subsequently led to the decline of the autonomy of the RPI in politics of Bombay. Though Chavan initiated the concept of *Samajik Abhisaran* in order to reduce the tension between Dalits and non-Dalits, this was also motivated with objective of bringing the RPI leaders

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[72] Interview with Ramesh Kamble on September 2, 2013 at Mumbai.

under the influence of the Congress Party. This process also helped the RPI leaders to seize political power at district levels. However, in the later period, the Congress Party started using the RPI for its electoral purpose only. Therefore, the objective of *Samajik Abhisaran* between Dalits and non-Dalits was neglected in the electoral politics. Dhasal argued that "the RPI leaders formed alliance with the ruling Congress Party in 1967 for the process of *Samajik Abhisaran*. However, the ruling parties used the RPI for their political gains."[73]

It must be noted that since the beginning of the RPI, its politics was primarily based on Ambedkar's thoughts. The RPI's politics was mainly Ambedkar-centric politics which was relied on the politics in consonance of Ambedkar's thoughts. It was based on the 'politics of movement' or 'politics of issues' because various movements, agitations and struggles were launched to deal with various issues related to the Scheduled Castes population, particularly neo-Buddhists of Bombay. With an alliance of the Congress Party and Dadasaheb Gaikwad's RPI, a significant shift was evident in the politics of the RPI from anti-Congress politics to the alliance politics with the ruling party in order to get accommodated in the political power. It revealed a new strategy in the RPI politics which took a turn from the independent politics to the alliance politics with the secular ruling party.

In the second chapter, the alliance politics of the RPI with the Congress Party and NCP has been focused. These parties are considered as the secular progressive political parties. One of the factions of the RPI, the RPI (A)'s alliance politics was based on this premise of cooperation with the secular and democratic political parties, and confrontation with the Hindutvawadi political parties.

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[73] Dhasal, *Dalit Panther: Ek Sangharsh*, 18.

Chapter 2:

The Politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai (1991-2009):
The Political Alliance with the Congress Party and NCP

1. Introduction:

As mentioned in the first chapter, the RPI was divided into number of factions from its formation in 1957. This process of factionalism which started in 1958 continued to exist till today. There were many attempts for the unity of different factions into one united RPI, but all these attempts were limited only during the election times, and never achieved success. Therefore, these attempts always failed, and the factionalism in the RPI continued to increase.

Today, there are few factions of the RPI which are significant in the Dalit politics of Maharashtra. They are Ramdas Athawale's Republican Party of India (A), Prakash Ambedkar's Bharipa (Bharatiya Republican Paksha) Bahujan Mahasangh (BBM), Jogendra Kawade's People's Republican Party, and Rajendra Gavai's Republican Party of India. Among all these factions the RPI (A) has its considerable following in some parts of Maharashtra. There are other small factions of the RPI operating in particular region in Maharashtra such as Nagpur, Aurangabad, Akola, etc. but they do not have their visibility outside that region. In Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai, Athawale's faction of the RPI is more visible and it has its presence in different parts of Mumbai and its suburban areas. The RPI (A) has a considerable following among the Dalits in Mumbai, Thane and Ulhasnagar, etc. As one of the important Dalit political parties in Mumbai, the RPI (A) has significance in Mumbai politics. This chapter is centred on the politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai from the period of 1991 to 2009. This period has marked by the alliance politics of the RPI (A) with the 'secular' political parties such as the Congress Party and the NCP in order to keep the 'casteist', 'communal', and 'Hindutvawadi' political parties like the Shiv Sena and BJP away from the power structure. This was the continuation of the RPI's strategy of cooperation with the secular forces and confrontation with the Hindutvawadi forces.

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the Dalit movement and Dalit politics emerged and developed in the city of Bombay. The name of the city of Bombay changed to Mumbai city when the Shiv Sena-BJP combine came to political power of Maharashtra in 1995. This chapter has been primarily focusing on the role played the RPI (A) in the politics of Mumbai in the post-1991 period. When India adopted new economic policy in 1991, the phase of neo-liberalism, globalization and privatization initiated in the Indian political scenario. The urban politics was no more exception to these processes. These processes had deeply influenced the urban politics. The Dalit politics in the city of Mumbai has also seen dynamic changes in the post-1991 period. This chapter attempted to depict the nature of RPI (A) politics in the city of Mumbai in the post-1991 period.

Ramdas Athawale is the main leader of the RPI (A) faction. His leadership emerged from the Dalit Panther movement in the city of Bombay. Like Athawale, the other leaders of the RPI (A) such as Avinash Mahatekar, Arjun Dangle, etc. were belonged to the Dalit Panther movement. Like the RPI, the Dalit Panther movement was also factionalized into many groups. Athawale led one of the factions of the Dalit Panther movement in the city, called the Bharatiya Dalit Panthers (BDP). In the later period, Athawale established his own faction of the RPI, i.e. RPI (Athawale). It is, therefore, important to look into the emergence of Dalit Panther movement and its confrontation with the Shiv Sena for analyzing the politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai.

2. Dalit Panther Movement and Its Impact on Dalit Politics of Mumbai:

The city of Mumbai has remained a prominent place for the Dalit movement and Dalit politics in the pre-independence and post-independence period. As mentioned previously, during 1970s a radical Dalit movement emerged in Mumbai, called the Dalit Panther movement. It was first emerged in Mumbai and later spread to other parts of Maharashtra and other states. As far as formal organisation is concerned, the Dalit Panthers did initially start with an organisation in Mumbai. Like Shiv Sena's various 'shakhas', the Dalit Panther also set up 'chaonis' in the chawls of Mumbai. There was a channel of communication between the various chaonis, with regard to programmes of action. However, the Dalit Panther was confined to Mumbai; there was no move to set up formal organisations in rural parts of Maharashtra or even in other parts of India. Though there

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were some branches set up in other parts, they did not have much influence as they had in Mumbai. Sridhar Balan in his work argued that "the initial membership and strength of the Dalit Panther was confined to the 'lumpen-proletariat' in Bombay, in spite of the fact that later the movement established a mass base among members of the Dalit peasantry in rural parts of Maharashtra, no serious effort was made to address itself to the problems of rural Dalits."[1] However, the Dalit Panther was established with an aim to revolt against the rising atrocities on Dalits in rural areas of Maharashtra. Though the Dalit Panther as an organisation remained more visible in Bombay city, it took the issue of prevention of atrocities on Dalits in rural areas as its primary task. However, due to its organizational limitations the Dalit Panther remained confined to Mumbai city than other parts of Maharashtra. Many leaders of the Dalit Panthers were active in Mumbai city; therefore, other parts of Maharashtra were ignored. The organisation could not build up in these parts. The Dalit Panthers formally decided to become an all-India body in the middle of 1974, and a number of unit offices were opened in some of the states in India, namely, Delhi, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Bihar, etc., no move was initiated to work together concretely at an all-India level.[2] There was no effective link between Mumbai and the field offices in various parts of Maharashtra. Therefore, the Dalit Panther movement emerged, developed and also started declining after its factionalism in the city.

Like the RPI, the Dalit Panthers also split into factions on the basis of the leadership. The Dalit Panthers tried to make a departure from the periodically splits but they too become factionalized. The leadership of the Dalit Panthers had their differences over the issue of interpretation of Ambedkar's thought and strategy. Dhale group believed that Ambedkarism was opposed to Marxism and, therefore, it was wrong to be influenced by Marxist formulations and it was also reprehensible to cooperate with the Marxist parties and groups. On the other hand, the Dhasal group attempted to broaden the base of the Dalit movement by including the 'class' issues as well along with the 'caste' issue. Dhasal criticized Dhale group for limiting the social base of the organisation to the neo-Buddhists

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[1] Sridhar Balan, "The Dalit Panthers Movement in Maharashtra: Problems and Prospects" (M.Phil. diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1976), 47.

[2] Balan, "The Dalit Panthers Movement in Maharashtra: Problems and Prospects," 48.

only. As result of this strategy, the other social groups left the organisation.[3] This conflict between the two groups led to the division of the Dalit Panther movement in Mumbai.

The Dalit Panther movement had some distinct characteristics such as relying on militant means instead of parliamentary means to solve problems, in some cases propagation of armed means, militant speeches, young leadership, strong attacks on Hindu tradition and culture, criticizing RPI for its inefficiency.

The Dalit Panther movement also provided radical militant confrontation against the Hindutvawadi forces. It publicly burnt many Hindu scriptures. Most of the speeches of the Dalit Panther leaders like Raja Dhale, Namdeo Dhasal, etc. were full of hatred towards the Hindu deities. Therefore, the Hindutvawadi forces and Dalit Panthers often engaged in conflicts with each other which sometimes led to the riots in Mumbai. During the early phase of the Dalit Panthers, it has preserved its identity as a radical militant body of Dalits having deep connection to Ambedkarite thoughts and ideology. It had followed the strategy of confrontation with the upper castes and Hindutvawadi forces who were responsible for the atrocities on the Dalits.

With the emergence of the Dalit Panther Movement, the city of Mumbai also witnessed the rise of the Shiv Sena. The communist movement was also present in the city. It fact, it was the earliest movement which was influential in the city before the independence of India. In the 1970s the city, therefore, witnessed the presence of three forces, the Dalit Panther movement, the Shiv Sena, and the communist movement. These forces had distinct characteristic features which made them different from each other. These forces had different relationships with each other. For instance, the Dalit Panthers and Shiv Sena had antagonistic relationship with each other. From the emergence of the Dalit Panthers, the Shiv Sena and Dalit Panthers contradicted on various issues. Similarly, the Shiv Sena had antagonistic relations with the communist movement in the city. It was because of the fact that before the emergence of the Shiv Sena the communist ideology was dominant in the city. Therefore, in order to create hold on the politics of Mumbai, the Shiv Sena wanted to reduce the influence of communist movement.

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[3] Dhasal, *Dalit Panther: Ek Sangharsh*, 15.

The period of 1970s was marked by the contestations between the Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panthers as well as the Shiv Sena and communist ideology. It is important to investigate these confrontations for the study of nature of the Dalit Panther movement in Mumbai.

3. Rise of the Shiv Sena and Its Contestations with the Dalit Panthers in Mumbai:

The Shiv Sena was formally launched on 19th June 1966 in Mumbai. The factors responsible for the emergence of the Shiv Sena were: Nativism and regionalism in Maharashtrian culture and politics; the origin and development of the city of Bombay; demographic and migrational structure of Greater Bombay; occupational and literacy structure of Bombay; and economic structure of Bombay.[4] The Shiv Sena emerged with the 'sons of the soil' issue. The primary causes of the rise of the Shiv Sena were increasing unemployment and a sense of economic deprivation among the lower and middle classes in Bombay. However, the early phase of the Shiv Sena was the period of its rise, mainly on the basis of regional chauvinism, anti-communism and anti-Dalit. The Shiv Sena's bias against Muslims and Dalits was very much evident ever since its inception.

For some scholars[5] the Samyukta Maharashtra movement was the determinant factor for the emergence of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai. The Shiv Sena derived its inspiration from the Samyukta Maharashtra movement that had wanted Bombay to form part of Maharashtra state. Later, the Shiv Sena articulated that it was established with the purpose of fighting for the rights of the Marathi-speaking population of the city who were discriminated against in terms of jobs and access to opportunities. The Shiv Sena appealed to the regional and linguistic sentiments of Maharashtrians much as the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* had done earlier. Dr. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, one of the scholars on the industrial working class movement in Mumbai, argued that "the Shiv Sena was the legacy of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, whose aims had appeared to some of its protagonists at the time to be progressive. The Shiv Sena drew upon the programme of

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[4] Dipankar Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: Shiv Sena in Bombay* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982), 40.

[5] Dipankar Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: Shiv Sena in Bombay* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982); Sujata Patel, "Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism," in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition*, eds. Sujata Patel and Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Samyukta and developed it to its furthest extreme. First, it built upon the Samyukta Maharashtra movement's emphasis on the exploitation of the 'sons of the soil' and its quest to secure their rights. Indeed, from the outset, the Sena treated the communists, together with Muslims and South Indians, as their principal antagonist."[6] It meant that though Shiv Sena was inspired by the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, it had a limited objective. In order to establish itself in Mumbai it took the issue of 'sons of the soil'. At the same time, the Shiv Sena built anti-communist approach to diminish dominance of communist ideology in working class movement in Mumbai. During the emergence of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai, the city was dominated by the various trade union movement largely led by communists. Chandavarkar argued that "the Shiv Sena, characterized by its explicitly communal agenda, actively contributed to and was at times even instrumental in undermining workers' resistance and in breaking the communist trade unions."[7] The Shiv Sena launched attacks on the communist movement in Mumbai because it wanted to create its hold on the city. Therefore, it made the Communists its foremost political target. Like communist movement, the Shiv Sena also had antagonist relations with Dalit movement in Mumbai. It was evident in the frequent incidences of conflicts between the Dalit Panthers and Shiv Sena.

The growth of the RPI as a political party of the Dalits was marked by the splits and factions. On contrary to this, the growth of the Shiv Sena followed a very different trajectory. Both these political formations made claims to subaltern representation, in one case of the Dalits or in the other the 'sons of the soil'. However, it is within their separate and distinctive histories, that the critical difference between the two has to be located.

Since 1970, city politics has been dominated by the Congress Party and the Shiv Sena. The Congress Party was very much successful in combining the aspirations of the Marathi-speaking population with the material interests of the non-Marathi traders and industrialists. Though the strong communist movement existed in the city, it could not challenge the authority of the Congress Party. With the rise of the Shiv Sena, the Congress

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[6] Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, "From Neighbourhood to Nation: Girangaon in the Twentieth Century," in *One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices*, eds. Neera Adarkar and Meena Menon (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2004), 51.
[7] *Ibid.,* 9.

Party received a strong competitor in the city. They were at the centre of the city politics. The other forces such as Socialists, Communalists, and Dalits have played a peripheral role in city politics. However, the Dalit Panthers and Communist movement contested with the Congress Party and Shiv Sena. The Congress Party was condemned for its capitalist attitude in the city, and constraining the potential of the Dalit movement by accommodating its leaders in the Congress Party. On the other hand, the Shiv Sena was denounced initially for anti-communist and anti-Dalit approach in the city. However, when the Shiv Sena turned to aggressive Hindutva ideology in the eighties, it was again criticized.

The Shiv Sena entered into the working class movement in the city with its outfit, the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena, the trade union wing of the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena created religious, lingual and caste division among working class. Similarly, it took advantage of internal contradiction and conflicts between the Scheduled Castes, and thus, created conflicts between Hindu Dalits and Buddhists Dalits. The Shiv Sena, therefore, attempted to divide the communist movement and Dalit movement in the city.

Before the emergence of the Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panther movement in Mumbai, the city was marked by the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. The primary objective of movement was to form a separate state for the Marathi speaking people with Mumbai its capital city. The movement achieved success on 1st May 1960 and a separate state of Maharashtra was carved out. Sujata Patel, a sociologist, in her work on Mumbai city, has argued that,

"Immediately after the formation of the separate state, three separate movements came to structure the city's emotional space. The first was represented by the growth of the Shiv Sena, established in 1966, which further attempted to realize the goals of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, and adopted the slogan Maharashtra for the Marathi-speaking population. The second was the growth of the Dalit literature movement together with its political manifestation, the Dalit Panther Movement. Lastly, the consequences of the anti-communist interventions by the Shiv Sena led a section of working class to reorganize themselves in the late seventies under the aegis of a militant economistic trade union movement by Datta Samant."[8]

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[8] Sujata Patel, "Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism," in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition*, eds. Sujata Patel and Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 14.

The Dalit Panthers and communist movement in Mumbai were primarily against the oppressive capitalist system whereas the Shiv Sena had a narrow objective based on the sons of the soil issue. Though some scholars[9] considered the Shiv Sena as a movement, it had narrow politically oriented objective of strengthening its base in the city. Patel further argued that,

"While the first reframed localized interests within the political language of the region, and primarily represented these interests as a regional and nativist one, the last two articulated the issues concerning groups in the city within the political language developed in the city. The former represented the anger by questioning discrimination against Marathi-speaking groups by the non-Marathi speakers who controlled the economy and thus the opportunities of employment. The Dalit's anger was directed against the control of the city and the state by the privileged upper caste. The organized working class, in engineering units and later those from the textile mills, was angry about the declining real wages and their lack of freedom to choose their unions."[10]

Therefore, these three different forces were operative in Mumbai in 1970s with their distinct objectives. The Shiv Sena had hostile relations with the Dalit Panther movement and Communist movement in the city. The Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panthers were opposed to each other on various issues. They had several street battles on the street of Mumbai, including Worli riots in which one member of Dalit Panthers, Bhagwat Jadhav was killed.[11] The influence of the Dalit Panthers increased in 1974, when the organisation asked Dalits not to support the then RPI leader who were backing the Congress candidate Ramrao Adik for a by-election for Bombay South Central Lok Sabha seat. Adik was also supported by the Shiv Sena. In the bypoll, Adik was defeated by CPI's Roza Deshpande. The defeat of the Congress-RPI-Shiv Sena alliance's candidate in this election made relationship between the Shiv Sena and Dalit Panthers further deteriorating. The defeat of the Congress Party's candidate backed by the Shiv Sena and the RPI led to the riots among the Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panthers in the city. In Worli riots most of the Dalits were attacked by the *Shiv Seniks*. Ashok Dhawale argued that "the Panthers began by taking up

[9] Dipankar Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: Shiv Sena in Bombay* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982); Sujata Patel, "Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism," in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition*, eds. Sujata Patel and Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[10] Patel, "Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism," 15.
[11] J.V.Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkaree Chalval - Vol. 4 (1972-1977)* (Mumbai: Asmita Communications, 2012), 176.

both caste and class issues and also launched a campaign to expose the regressive aspects of some Hindu religious tenets. Capitalizing on certain speeches made by Panthers leaders about Hindu deities, the Shiv Sena unleashed riots against Dalits in the Worli BDD chawls in Mumbai."[12] The Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panthers strongly opposed to each other on various issues which further deteriorated their relations in the city. At the same time, the anti-communist ideology of the Shiv Sena also made its relations with the working class movement in the city further deteriorated.

The Shiv Sena opposed encroachment by Dalits on fallow lands; even they destroyed their crops and attacked their hutments. When Mandal Commission controversy erupted, the Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray publicly declared his total and uncompromising opposition to all caste-based reservations, not only for the OBCs but also for the SCs and STs. The casteist aspect of the Shiv Sena came to be prominent public attention in 1987, when the state government had begun the project of publishing the complete works of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. The Shiv Sena opposed the publication of Ambedkar's unpublished work 'Riddles in Hinduism', and branded it as an intolerable insult to Hindu religion and Hindu deities and demanded a ban on its publications. The city experienced the huge demonstrations and disturbances, abusing Ambedkar and widening caste-communal divisions. The Shiv Sena also publically opposed the *Namantar* Movement for renaming the Marathwada University into Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar University. It was the only political party to do so consistently for the 16 years. When the Shiv Sena-BJP combine came to political power in 1995, the vicious attitude of the Shiv Sena towards the Dalits was thoroughly exposed in the massacre at the Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar in Mumbai. The Shiv Sena-BJP government also had withdrawn over 1100 cases of atrocities on Dalits in Marathwada, exposing its upper caste bias.[13] All the above mentioned instances were clear indicators of the reactionary and casteist nature of the Shiv Sena.

The Shiv Sena shifted its strategy from the appeal of nativism to the Hindutva ideology in order to enter into the national level politics. According to Rodrigues and

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[12] Ashok Dhawale, *The Shiv Sena: Semi-Fascism in Action.* Accessed on 15 June, 2014. http://www.cpim.org/marxist/200002_marxist_sena_dhawle.htm
[13] *Ibid.*

Gavaskar, "For the Shiv Sena, embracing the Hindutva ideology led to an even greater communalization of politics both in Bombay and Maharashtra. Muslims, and neo-Buddhists among the Dalits, became the new targets of the Sena's exclusionist politics."[14]

In fact, the primary basis of the confrontation between the Shiv Sena and Dalit Panthers was their ideological perceptions. The Dalit Panthers strongly opposed the various practices of Hindu religion, superstitions, Hindu scriptures, Hindu deities, and Hindutva ideology of Sangh Parivar. On the other hand, the Shiv Sena projected itself as protector of Hindu religion. The secular ideology of Dalit Panthers and Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena, therefore, were contradictory and confrontational with each other. The Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena had always been a subject to the Dalit Panther's criticism. Bhalchandra Phadke argued that the when Dalit Panthers emerged in Mumbai it stood against the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena condemned Dalit Panthers for creating tensions on the basis of caste, and thus affecting the integration among people of Maharashtra. On the other hand, the Dalit Panthers criticized the Shiv Sena for being an upper caste Hindu organisation and having no concern for Dalit problems.[15] These differences among the Shiv Sena and Dalit Panthers led to the pitched battles between their activists in the early 1970s in Mumbai. Similarly, the Shiv Sena and the Communists movement in Mumbai frequently engaged in conflicts.

Like the RPI, the Dalit Panther movement was also factionalized into many groups led by Dalit Panther leaders. Though the ideological differentiation between the two dominant leaders of the Dalit Panthers was the reason for the factionalism in the movement, it was the personality clashes and ambitions for leadership which affected the movement. Raja Dhale and Namdeo Dhasal established their faction of the Dalit Panthers. Many other prominent leaders of the Dalit Panthers also established their factions. Though the Dalit Panther movement factionalized and then declined in subsequent period, the achievements of the movement are more important. The radical potential of Ambedkar's legacy was popularized by the Dalit Panthers. It also inspired and prepared many Dalit activists to contest with the forces of Hindu orthodoxy.

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[14] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 152.
[15] Bhalchandra Phadke, in *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)*, ed. Sharankumar Limbale (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1989), 239.

The Bharatiya Dalit Panthers (BDP) was the part of the Dalit Panther movement which emerged after the dissolution of the Dalit Panthers.

4. Rise of the Bharatiya Dalit Panther and Ramdas Athawale's leadership:

After the division of Dalit Panthers, it was dissolved by Raja Dhale, thereafter the Dalit Panthers factionalized into many groups. One group was led by Raja Dhale and J.V.Pawar. They established 'Mass Movement' party. Namdeo Dhasal led another Dalit Panther group and named it 'Dalit Panther'. Bhai Sangare and Avinash Mahatekar attempted to establish the Dalit Panthers independently. Many young Dalit Panthers opposed to the dissolution and continued the Dalit Panthers. They wanted to unite all factions of the Dalit Panthers. Sharankumar Limbale, a Dalit writer, argued that "Though the Dalit Panthers emerged and also dissolved in Mumbai, the numerous *chaonis* of the Dalit Panthers outside the Mumbai never allowed the Dalit Panthers to dissolve because for them the Dalit Panthers was more than merely an organisation, it was the expression of revolt."[16] They, therefore, named the Dalit Panthers organisation as the BDP because the *chaonis* of the Dalit Panthers were also established in other parts of Maharashtra, even in some other states. The leaders of the BDP decided to operate Dalit Panther movement at national level.

Bhai Sangare, one of the leaders of the Dalit Panthers, had argued that "the Dalit Panthers broke into groups only because of competition among Dalit Panthers for leadership. After the factionalism in the Dalit Panthers, the movement lacked leadership. In such a condition new leadership emerged, and they established the BDP. The Dalit masses accepted new leaders like Ramdas Athawale as an alternative to the old Dalit Panthers leadership."[17] Therefore, it has been evident that the BDP was established by young Dalit Panther leaders such as Ramdas Athawale, Prof. Arun Kamble, Gangadhar Gade, T.M.Kamble, Dayanand Mhaske, Pritamkumar Shegaonkar, etc. who accepted the concept of collective leadership. Arun Kamble became the first president of the BDP followed by Gangadhar Gade. These youths attempted hard to make the basis of the organisation

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[16] Sharankumar Limbale, "Samyak Kranti: Amcha Sankalp," in *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)*, ed. Sharankumar Limbale (Pune, Sugava Prakashan, 1989), 3.

[17] Bhai Sangare, in *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)*, ed. Sharankumar Limbale (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1989), 201.

strong. The first session of the BDP was conducted in 1980. In their manifesto they declared that "all political parties are the supporters of the capitalist classes in contemporary situation. The BDP is the real left organisation which believed in Ambedkar's five principles such as equality, freedom, fraternity, justice and parliamentary democracy. The BDP would work for the reconstruction of the society on these five principles. The nature of BDP would be socio-political."[18]

The leadership of Athawale emerged from the emergence of the BDP. He also became the president of the BDP. In the various sessions of the BDP, resolutions were passed on the issue that it would not support at any level to casteist and conservative forces like the Shiv Sena and BJP. They believed that the strength of these forces was increasing which created a threat to the national integration. Therefore, the main objective of the BDP was to avoid BJP and Shiv Sena to capture the political power of neither centre nor state government. The BDP decided to make broad alliance of Dalits, backwards, nomadic, Adivasis, and provide support to those organisations which have similar objectives.

In 1979 the BDP provided its support to the opposition parties. In 1980 it supported to Indira Gandhi's Congress Party in order to defeat the Jan Sangh which was a part of Janata Dal. Jan Sangh was regarded as the casteist and communal political party by the BDP. It argued that the BDP should support to the Congress Party even if it belonged to capitalist class because it was important to prevent the strength of the RSS and Jan Sangh from capturing political power.

In 1989 the BDP engaged in a political dilemma. The united RPI had to take a decision on the question of political alliance with either Congress Party or Shiv Sena-BJP. The unity of factions of RPI and BDP occurred after the Chembur riots. The Chembur riot was occurred on 10th October 1989 which resulted into the feeling of insecurity among Dalits about increasing strength of the Shiv Sena and BJP in Mumbai. Therefore, the need for unity of the all factions of the RPI emerged. On 5th December 1989, nine Dalit youths observed hunger strike for the RPI unity. As a result, thirteen factions of the RPI united. The BDP under the leadership of Athawale was also one of the influential constituent of

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[18] T.M.Kamble, in *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)*, ed. Sharankumar Limbale (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1989), 210.

this RPI unity. However, this unity could not last long as conflicts started rising on the issue of making alliance with either Congress Party or Shiv Sena-BJP. At that time, Athawale took a stand of condemning the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, and supported the Congress Party. It was argued that the Ambedkarite movement should stand against the unjust social system. The principles enshrined in the Constitution of India such as secularism and socialist democracy should be followed and protected. The Shiv Sena and BJP were regarded as casteist and communal political parties who totally rejected the principles enshrined in the constitution. The Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena and BJP has threatened the national integration process. On this background, the united RPI decided that it would not help the Shiv Sena-BJP to capture political power. Prakash Ambedkar, one of leader of the united RPI, decided to oppose the Congress Party because the Congress Party utilised Dalit electorate for their benefits which deeply affected Dalit movement in Mumbai. On the other hand, Athawale traced that the united RPI should not help Shiv Sena-BJP alliance to win in the election. Therefore, the alliance with the Congress Party was essential for the defeat of Shiv Sena-BJP. Eventually the unity could not last long.

The BDP agitated on many issues such as land for the landless issue, concessions for neo-Buddhists, increase in scholarships of backward students, etc. However, the *Namantar Andolan* was the primary issue upon which the BDP agitated for many years. The BDP strengthened and popularized by the *Namantar Andolan*. It was a Dalit movement to change the name of Marathwada University in Aurangabad to Dr. B.R.Ambedkar University. It achieved a measure of success in 1994 when the compromise name of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University was accepted. It was the expansion of the existing name (*Namvistar*) rather than complete change (*Namantar*). The movement was notable for the violence against Dalits. It was a 16 year old long Dalit struggle to rename the Marathwada University in recognition of Ambedkar. *Namantar Andolan* was one of the significant issues for the BDP. This agitation led to the riots in Marathwada between Dalits and non-Dalits in which large number of Dalits was killed and their properties were destroyed. Amrita Abraham in her article argued that "the Suvarnas saw the issue of renaming of Marathwada University as a question of their 'identity' whereas the Dalits saw it as the rejection of the name Ambedkar as a rejection of nothing

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less than the principle of social equality."[19] The BDP under the leadership of Athawale and other leaders carried forward the *Namantar Andolan* for many years. Athawale was recognized as the prominent Dalit Panther leaders during this period, and also received large number of support from the Dalit masses. However, BDP was criticized on the issue that it remained emotionally involved to only one issue, i.e. *Namantar Andolan* for many years. Therefore, the other issues of Dalits were ignored or did not receive proper attention. Some Dalit scholars[20] regarded the *Namantar Andolan* as the biggest movement in the post-Ambedkar period because this movement emotionally united most of the Dalits. However, the leaders of the movement did not unitedly agitate for *Namantar Andolan*. For instance, Jogendra Kawade independently agitated on the *Namantar Andolan* whereas the BDP put forth the issue of *Namantar* with the alliance of left and progressive movement. Arun Kamble declared that all Dalit population would collectively give away the citizenship of India if the demands for renaming Marathwada University do not complete. Athawale appealed for conversion to Buddhism with thousands of Dalits.

The involvement of the Shiv Sena in the Marathwada riots was criticized by many scholars. J.V.Pawar in his work argued that during the *Namantar Andolan* the Shiv Sena was strongly opposed to the movement for renaming the Marathwada University. The Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray, launched strong attacks on the *Namantar Andolan* and made controversial statements.[21] Sangare, therefore, condemned any attempts of alliance of the Shiv Sena with the Dalit Panthers because the Dalit Panthers came into existence to fight against casteist and communal organization like the Shiv Sena. Therefore, the Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panthers cannot come together.[22]

The BDP struggled for the *Namantar Andolan* and implementation of Mandal Commission's recommendations. The BDP's agitation on the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations was crucial. Dalit movement in Maharashtra supported the Mandal Commission's recommendations. It was an attempt to fight for the

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[19] Amrita Abraham, "Importance of Renaming Marathwada University," *Economic and Political Weekly* 14, no. 29 (1979): 1190.

[20] Sharankumar Limbale (ed.), *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)* (Pune, Sugava Prakashan, 1989).

[21] J.V.Pawar, *Namantar Te Namantar* (Mumbai: Asmita Communication, 2011).

[22] Sangare, in *Dalit Panther (Dalit Panther Chalvalicha Mulyankan)*, 202.

rights of the Other Backward Classes in Maharashtra. The BDP did numerous morchas at various levels and attempted to put forth the demands of the Dalits to the government.

However, the BDP gradually lost its prominence, and different leaders established their factions. Athawale also dissolved his Dalit Panther faction in 1989 and established his own faction of the RPI, and named it the Republican Party of India (Athawale).

5. The Establishment and Nature and Scope of the RPI (A):

The Republican Party of India (Athawale) was established by Athawale. He is the national president of the RPI (A). Though Athawale claimed that the RPI (A) has its presence at the national level, and he is the national president of the RPI (A), the RPI (A) is more visible in Maharashtra state only. Though initially the RPI (A) contested elections in some other states also, it could not maintain its hold in those states. In fact, the RPI (A) has its presence in the some parts of Maharashtra state. The RPI (A) has its visibility in some Vidhan Sabha constituencies such as Ambarnath, Bhandup, Chembur, Ghatkopar, Goregaon, Kalyan, Mankhurd, Naigaon, Santacruz, Shivadi, Thane, Trombay, Ulhasnagar, etc. These are the areas where the Scheduled Castes population is much higher. In these constituencies the RPI has power to defeat other opponent candidates by supporting its political allies. In other constituencies in Mumbai and Thane, the RPI has less strength or no power. Athawale's faction is more influential in those constituencies where the RPI has more strength.

Many leaders of the Dalit Panthers movement joined the Athawale's faction of the RPI. For instance, Arjun Dangle dissolved his Bharatiya Republican Party and joined Athawale's RPI (A) because he believed that if it is not possible to unite various factions of the RPI, at least it is possible to minimize the number of factions of the RPI.[23]

From its origin the RPI (A) claimed that it was established with an objective of protecting and promoting the interests and welfare of the Dalits. For this purpose, the RPI (A) engaged in various agitations. It also organised various programmes. For instance, the RPI (A) under the leadership of Athawale organized a *Maha Sammelan* in Nagpur for the

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[23] Arjun Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha* (Mumbai: Bhashya Prakashan, 2014), 84.

fiftieth anniversary of the RPI.[24] Athawale was also the president of 'Dhamma Diksha Suvarna Mahotsav Samiti'. It was a committee constituted for conducting programme for celebrating fiftieth anniversary of conversion of Ambedkar to Buddhism with his large number of followers. The programme was held at Race course ground in Mumbai.[25] The Samata Sandesh March was organized under the leadership of Athawale of the RPI (A) in Maharashtra and Goa from 5th January to 17th February 2008. The march started from Nashik, visited places like North Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Marathwada, West Maharashtra, Konkan and Goa. A public meeting was organized at Shivaji Park, Mumbai on 17th February 2008. Arjun Dangle, one of the activists and scholars of Ambedkarite movement in Maharashtra, argued that this march was conducted to strengthen and organize the RPI in Maharashtra. The RPI (A) accepted the 60-40 pattern in which it was assured that 60 percent non-Dalits would be accommodating in the party. The remaining 40 percent was reserved for Dalits.[26]

The RPI (A) has also taken a stand on the issue of reservation for Maratha caste. According to Athawale, the reservation should be given to the economically backward Marathas but it should not affect existing reservation to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe communities.[27]

The RPI (A) had taken the issue of slum dwellers in Mumbai. Most of the Scheduled Castes population resides in urban parts of Mumbai and suburban Mumbai. The RPI (A) dominates most of the slum areas of Mumbai city and its suburban areas where large number of the Scheduled Castes population resides. In fact, these areas are strengths of the RPI (A)'s politics in Mumbai. Therefore, the RPI (A) largely concentrated on issues of slum areas in order to continue its hold on slum dwellers. The party demanded providing legal security to the slum dwellers.[28]

The RPI (A) supported the demand for separate Vidarbha state out of Maharashtra state. The party believed that the development of Vidarbha region can only be possible

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[24] Ibid., 77.

[25] Ibid., 89.

[26] Ibid., 96-97.

[27] Lok Satta, November 1, 2013, http://www.loksatta.com/vruthanta-news/back-of-representative-to-reservation-march-240934/ (accessed December 14, 2013).

[28] Lok Satta, February 13, 2013, http://www.loksatta.com/vruthanta-news/give-security-for-slum-from-2009-othervise-we-ban-on-election-ramdas-aathavle-60461/ (accessed December 14, 2013).

when it will become a separate state.[29] The RPI (A) also supported the demand for implementation of the Sachar Committee Report. The RPI (A) also put forth its views on Special Economic Zones (SEZ) projects. Athawale said that the SEZ projects should not be larger. It should not be raised on cultivating land. Land should not be taken from farmers who do not want to give their lands for SEZ projects. The proper rehabilitation of affected people should be done.[30]

The above mentioned demands and programmes of the RPI (A) suggest the nature of the RPI (A) in the city politics. The RPI (A) made political coalition with the Congress Party after its establishment in order to avoid the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance from capturing political power neither of central government nor state government. However, the Shiv Sena-BJP combine won the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections in 1995 and formed its government in Maharashtra. In fact, it was the first non-Congress government, in a real sense, which came to political power in Maharashtra since independence.

6. The Shiv Sena - Bharatiya Janata Party Government in Maharashtra in 1995:

In 1995 the attempt for unity of the RPI factions was occurred with no success. This unity was again called on similar objective which it had pointed out in 1989 i.e. to prevent the casteist and communal forces like the Shiv Sena and BJP from gaining political power in Maharashtra. However, this attempt also could not achieve any success and the Shiv Sena-BJP combine came to power in 1995. However, the RPI unity of 1995 was the longest surviving unity.

In the 1995 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections, the Shiv Sena-BJP combine won 138 seats. Out of 288 seats the Shiv Sena won 73 seats whereas the BJP won 65 seats.[31] Many factors contributed to the victory of the Shiv Sena-BJP combine. Dhawale argued in her work that "the unprecedented communal polarization throughout the state of Maharashtra was the single most important reason for the revival of Shiv Sena-BJP

[29] *Lok Satta*, January 4, 2013, http://www.loksatta.com/maharashtra-news/if-sharad-pawar-not-stands-in-election-than-i-will-stands-from-Mada-for-election/ (accessed December 14, 2013).
[30] Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha*, 107.
[31] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/

fortunes and for their eventual victory in the assembly elections of 1995."[32] On the other hand, Gopal Guru, one of the scholars on the Dalit politics in Maharashtra, in his article argued that "the Shiv Sena-BJP victory was brought about by a small increase in the proportion of votes polled. It showed that there was a complex realignment of forces across the regions. More than the ideological agenda of the Shiv Sena-BJP combine, it relied on electoral calculations and manipulations with a sole ambition of becoming a winning coalition."[33] However, both of these factors were equally responsible for the coming of the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra in 1995. Out of 18 reserved seats for SCs, the Shiv Sena-BJP combine won 12 seats. The Shiv Sena won 4 seats whereas the BJP won 8 seats. Almost all of the victorious Shiv Sena and BJP candidates belonged to Chambhar and Matang castes. It proved that the other Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra, who traditionally were the voters for the Congress Party, turned to the Shiv Sena and BJP. The Shiv Sena successfully accommodated other Scheduled Castes into its party which resulted into the isolation of the Dalit movement led by neo-Buddhists. It also led to the division of the Dalit movement in Mumbai, and also made unity of all Scheduled Castes difficult.

Rodrigues and Gavaskar argued that,

"The coming of the Shiv Sena-BJP government to power in Maharashtra in 1995 started a new chapter in Dalit politics, while at the same time marking a complete collapse of the Dalit agenda hitherto restricted to the Mahar neo-Buddhists. Furthering their strategy of divide and rule the Shiv Sena-BJP government withdrew 1,100 cases filed under the Prevention of Atrocities against the Dalits Act, a move that was largely meant to single out neo-Buddhists for victimization. On the other hand, it set about cultivating and winning over other Dalit groups like the Chambhars, the Dhors and the Matangs."[34]

The Shiv Sena-BJP combine government was criticized on many accounts for its anti-Dalit approach. The Shiv Sena-BJP government withdrew 1,100 cases filed under the Prevention of Atrocities against the Dalits Act. At the same time, Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar Killings was occurred in 1997 in the Ghatkopar area of Mumbai which is mostly populated by the Scheduled Castes population. Not only the Shiv Sena-BJP government

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[32] Ashok Dhawale, *The Shiv Sena: Semi-Fascism in Action.* Accessed on 15 June, 2014. http://www.cpim.org/marxist/200002_marxist_sena_dhawle.htm

[33] Gopal Guru, "Assembly Elections of Maharashtra: Realignment of Forces," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 14 (1995): 733.

[34] Rodrigues and Gavaskar, "Emancipation and Dalit Politics," 152.

was criticized after this riot, but also many Dalit leaders suffered strong condemnation from the Dalit masses. So ineffective was the Dalit leadership in dealing with the Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar killings, that it not only exposed the increasing uselessness of its political agenda but also highlighted the inevitable consequences of pursuing such identity politics with an ideology that is essentially insensitive to the wider concerns of economic and political marginalization taking place in Mumbai.

7. Electoral Alliance of the RPI (A) with the Congress Party and the N.C.P.:

The unity of the RPI became unsuccessful in 1989 on the issue of electoral alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP or the Congress Party. The RPI (A) made political alliance with the Congress Party after the disintegration of the RPI unity in 1989, which continued till 1999. The Congress Party factionalised in 1999. Sharad Pawar gave up the Congress Party and established the NCP in 1999. At that time, some of the RPI leader such as Kawade and Gavai remained with the Congress Party whereas Athawale's faction of the RPI made alliance with the NCP which continued till 2009. In the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election of 1990, Athawale had alliance with the Congress Party. As a result of this alliance, Athawale became minister in the Maharashtra government. In 1995 Maharashtra Assembly elections also, Athawale was with the Congress Party. In 1998 Ambedkar, Athawale, Kawade and Gavai made alliance with the Congress Party and all were elected. However, the RPI lost its prominence primarily due to two reasons: first, periodic factionalism, second, defection to other political parties, mainly to the Congress Party.

The RPI was seen as the culmination of the political struggle of the Dalits. As the Congress Party was the dominant political party in the state, Dalit votes traditionally got divided between the RPI and the Congress Party. As different RPI factions continued to align with the Congress Party, the latter became the main beneficiary of Dalit votes. The politics in Maharashtra evolved in a framework of Congress Party domination, and except in 1957, when all the non-Congress parties allied against the Congress Party on the issue of formation of the state of Marathi-speaking people, no political party was in a position to challenge the Congress Party in the electoral arena. As the electoral politics in the state became intensely competitive since the late 1970s, the strategic importance of Dalit votes increased and the competition for Dalit votes intensified. The alliance politics became

necessary to obtain political power as no party managed to get majority in the electoral politics. Dangle argued that "the Congress Party, NCP, BJP, Shiv Sena, RPI and third front are main political parties in electoral politics of Maharashtra. It is evident that not a single political party can come to power in Maharashtra politics by contesting election independently. Therefore, the alliance politics is necessary for gaining political power."[35]

The attempts for RPI unity in 1989 and 1995 are significant because both of these unities were culminated in order to protect the secularism from the casteist and communalist political parties to capture power. But both of these unities could not last long. It was claimed that the RPI (A) group made alliance with the Congress Party because it is a 'secular' political party than other parties and it is important to prevent the increasing power of 'casteist' and 'communal' forces. The RPI (A) group was with the Congress Party and then with NCP for about twenty years. However, in 2009 Maharashtra Assembly elections Athawale gave up his alliance with the Congress-NCP on the account that the Congress-NCP did not fulfilled their promises which they made for the welfare of the Dalits, and the RPI (A) received humiliating experiences from this alliance.

In the 1998 Parliamentary election the united RPI formed a political alliance with the Congress Party and won 4 seats. It was an alliance to forestall the Shiv Sena-BJP combine. The Congress-RPI alliance won 37 seats in Maharashtra. The Congress Party won 33 seats and the RPI won 4 seats. Samajwadi Party was also the part of the Congress-RPI alliance but it could not win single seat. The Shiv Sena-BJP combine won only 10 seats (BJP 4 and Shiv Sena 6) as compared to 33 seats in 1996 elections.[36] It was attributed to the successful mobilization by the Congress Party seeking to benefit from dissatisfaction with the record of the Shiv Sena-BJP combine in the governance of the state. The neo-Buddhists considered the Shiv Sena-BJP government hostile because this government had withdrawn 1,100 cases filed during renaming agitation in the Marathwada region. The killing of 11 Dalits in police firing in July 1997 in Ramabai Nagar, Ghatkopar had added another strong reason for large-scale Dalit mobilization against the BJP-Shiv Sena government. The victory of RPI candidates from the unreserved constituencies indicated

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[35] Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha*, 91.
[36] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/

that the Congress Party's supporters voted all together for the RPI. Earlier in the 1957 elections the RPI won 5 Lok Sabha seats and 13 Vidhan Sabha seats in Maharashtra because of its alliance with the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti*. It meant that after the 1957 general elections, the RPI performed well in the Lok Sabha election in 1998. However, it is important to note that the RPI's electoral performance is subject to its alliance with the other political parties. In 1957 the RPI had electoral alliance with the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti*. Similarly, the united RPI had alliance with the Congress Party in 1998. Therefore, the RPI managed to perform well in the electoral politics.

It was argued by some scholars[37] that instead of making alliances with either Shiv Sena-BJP combine or Congress-NCP alliance, the RPI should maintain its independent identity, and it should seek an independent course of collective action and thereby avoid political dependency. However, there is a difficulty in creating independent politics of the RPI. The RPI has many limitations. For instance, it has limited to particular region and caste. Therefore, the RPI do not managed to perform well in the electoral politics. Though the RPI took various issues related to Dalits, it has not reflected in the electoral performance of the RPI. As a result of this process, the RPI has to depend on the alliance politics. The independent politics of the RPI is possible only if it get larger support from the other Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward castes, workers, and farmers. In the contemporary politics of Maharashtra, every caste has its political organisation or it aligned to other political organisation which protects their interests. In such a situation, there is a division in various castes in Maharashtra. They attempted to maintain their separate identity in the socio-political sphere in Maharashtra. Therefore, the fundamental objective of the RPI i.e. to form a strong alliance of all weaker and oppressed sections of the society has lost, which made the RPI politics dependent on the alliance politics.

Some scholars like Vilas Wagh[38] criticized the alliance politics of Athawale. Athawale became the Member of Parliament and minister, but the Dalits could not get benefits from it. Though Athawale individually benefited from the electoral politics, the

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[37] Dhanraj Dahat, *Teesari Shakti: Ambedkarvadi* (Nagpur: Sanket Prakashan, 2006); Abhay Kanta et. al., *Republicananchi Harakiri* (Pune: Parivartanacha Vatsaru, 2011).
[38] Interview with Vilas Wagh on September 6, 2013 at Pune.

Dalit masses continued to remain deprived. While Athawale became popular leader and progressed vertically, the question emerged on whether he solved various issues and problems of Dalit masses or not. Athawale was also criticized for his failure in following his objective of keeping casteist and communal forces away from the political power.

8. **Electoral Performance of the RPI (A) in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly Elections of Maharashtra from 1991 to 2009:**

The RPI (A) contested the Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections from 1989 to 2009 with the political alliance of the Congress Party till 1999 and with the NCP till 2009.

The Electoral Performance of the RPI (A) in Lok Sabha:

In the 1996 Lok Sabha general election the united RPI contested for 56 seats from 9 States and Union Territories and could not win single seat. The RPI contested from Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and National Capital Territory of Delhi. Athawale contested from Mumbai North East constituency from the united RPI. He was defeated in this election. He secured 2, 22,519 seats and 24.32 percent votes.[39]

In the 1998 Lok Sabha general election the united RPI contested for 20 seats from 7 States and Union Territories and won 4 seats. The RPI contested from Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Athawale won from Mumbai North Central constituency. He got 2, 82,373 votes and 50.18 percent votes. The other three winning candidates of the united RPI were Prakash Ambedkar (Akola), R.S.Gavai (Amravati) and Jogendra Kawade (Chimur). All these constituencies were unreserved constituencies. The RPI was the third largest political party in the Maharashtra Lok Sabha general election of 1998 along with the BJP. Other 16 candidates' deposit forfeited.[40] Prakash Ambedkar argued that "the victory of four candidates of the RPI in the Lok Sabha election of 1998 was not because of the support of the Congress Party to the RPI. The Congress Party was in a poor position at that time. The

[39] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/
[40] *Ibid.*

Congress managed to win some seats due to the alliance of it with the RPI."[41] However, it was apparent that the victory of four well-known leaders of the united RPI was due to its alliance with the Congress Party.

In the 1999 Lok Sabha election Athawale was elected from Pandharpur reserved constituency as an independent candidate. He got 4, 13,115 votes and secured 52.91 percent votes.[42] Athawale had made alliance with the Sharad Pawar's NCP, and continued this alliance till 2009.

In 2004 elections, Athawale again contested from Pandharpur reserved constituency and elected. He got 3, 47,215 votes. The RPI (A) contested from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and National Capital Territory of Delhi. The other 6 candidates forfeited their deposits. In the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha election of 2004, three factions of the RPI aligned with Congress-NCP. They were Athawale's RPI (A), RPI (Gavai), and Dangle's Bharatiya Republican Paksha. The other factions of the RPI contested against the Congress-NCP alliance. They were Prakash Ambedkar's BBM, Jogendra Kawade's PRP, Upendra Shende's RPI (K), and T.M.Kamble's RPI (D). Though most of the RPI factions contested against the Congress-NCP alliance in the election, the alliance came to power.

The RPI (A) contested 54 seats in 2009 Lok Sabha general elections. It could not win any seat. Total 53 candidates' deposit forfeited. Athawale contested from Shirdi reserved constituency. He lost in this election. The Shiv Sena's candidate B.R.Wakchaure won from this constituency. Athawale got 2, 27,170 votes and secured 34.22 percent votes over total votes polled in constituency.[43]

Table 2.1

Seats won by various factions of the RPI in the General Election, 1995-2009 to the Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra

[41] Prakash Ambedkar, *Bahujan Chalval Vicharsarani Ani Paksha Sanghatana* (Aurangabad: Kaushalya Prakashan, 2011), 78.
[42] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/
[43] *Ibid.*

Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Election	Party Name	Seats			Votes Polled		Votes % in Seats Contested
		Contested	Won	FD in Seats	Votes Secured by Party	%	
1995	Republican Party of India	61	0	61	56106	0.15	00.66
1999	Republican Party of India	10	01	04	226481	0.69	19.82
2004	Republican Party of India (A)	20	01	16	206175	0.49	06.84
2009	Republican Party of India (A)	79	0	77	387186	0.85	03.20

(Source: Election Commission of India's official website: www.eci.nic.in)

The above mentioned Table 2.1 depicts the electoral performance of the RPI (A) in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Election from 1995 to 2009. In the 1995 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election the united RPI contested for 61 seats and could not win single seat. All candidates' deposits were forfeited. In the 1999 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election the united RPI contested for 10 seats and won only one seat. The winning candidate was S.N.Kumbhare from Kamptee constituency. Four candidates' deposits were forfeited. In the 2004 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election, the RPI (A) contested for 20 seats but won only one seat. 16 candidates' deposits were forfeited. The only winning candidate was Suresh (Pappu) Budharmal Kalani from Ulhasnagar constituency. In the 2009 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections the RPI (A)

contested for 79 seats but could not win single seat. 77 candidates' deposits were forfeited.[44]

The RPI (A) had alliance with the Congress Party since 1989. Prakash Ambedkar criticized the RPI (A)'s alliance with the Congress Party and argued that this alliance was not based on the popular support of the Dalit masses. The foundation of this alliance was not strong. It was also beneficial for the Congress Party to keep the RPI divided into many factions through such alliances.[45] However, Prakash Ambedkar made electoral alliance with the Congress Party in 1999 and also elected to the Lok Sabha. Therefore, there are some contradictions in the politics of other factions of the RPI.

Some scholars including Dangle argued that the RPI cannot be evaluated merely on its overall performance in electoral politics while looking at Republican Movement[46] and its factionalism. It is because of the fact that the Republican movement is not only a political but also a social movement. The movement did not only contest elections but it launched various successful struggles on various issues such as *Bhoomiheen Satyagraha*, *Namantar Andolan*, Riddles issue, struggle for Mandal Commission, concessions for neo-Buddhists, agitations against injustices and atrocities on Dalits, struggles for slum dwellers, etc.[47] The RPI successfully launched these agitations, and pressurized the government to take action on these issues.

In Maharashtra Lok Sabha elections of 2009, Athawale contested from Shirdi reserved constituency. He had alliance with the NCP. But he was defeated by the Shiv Sena candidate, B.R.Wakchaure. Athawale got 2, 27,170 votes and secured second highest votes in this constituency. Athawale secured 34.22 percent votes over total votes polled in constituency. After his defeat in this election, Athawale gave up his alliance with the NCP, and decided to contest Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections of 2009 with the experiment of third front, called RIDALOS. Athawale and Dangle criticized the Congress

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[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Ambedkar, *Bahujan Chalval Vicharsarani Ani Paksha Sanghatana*, 78.

[46] The RPI politics in Maharashtra has known as the Republican Movement by some scholars of the Ambedkarite movement.

[47] Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha*, 84.

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Party-NCP for Athawale's defeat in the Shirdi constituency. The internal conflicts between the Congress-NCP led to the defeat of Athawale.[48]

9. Unity and Split in the RPI in 2009 - Formation of Republican Left Democratic Front (RLDF):

After the Lok Sabha elections in 2009, Athawale announced the establishment of the third front for the Maharashtra Assembly Election in 2009. In this election, many factions of the RPI united to form a single party - RPI (United). Later Rajendra Gavai's faction split from the united party. The RPI (U) was comprised of the RPI (A) of Ramdas Athawale, PRP of Jogendra Kawade, RPI (D) of T.M.Kamble, RPI (Mogha) of Shivram Mogha, RPI (Talwatkar) of Ghanshyam Talwatkar, RPI (Sivaraj), RPI (Raja Dhale), Indian Republican Party (Dalit Panthers) of Namdeo Dhasal, and Bahujan Mahasangh of Makhram Pawar, etc. The RPI (U) was a part of Republican Left Democratic Front (RLDF) in Maharashtra. The RLDF was a coalition of political parties before the Maharashtra State Assembly Elections of 2009. The alliance was formed between 14 political parties and many other NGOs and non political groups as well as student organisations in Maharashtra. It was popularly known as RIDALOS (*Republican Davi Lokshahi Samiti*) as an alternative to the existing coalitions in the state at that time. In the weeks leading up to the 2009 Maharashtra election, the RPI (A) leader Athawale announced the formation of the RLDF composing of RPI (U), CPI (M), Peasants and Workers Party, Janata Dal (Secular), Samajwadi Party, Swabhimani Paksha, Chhatra Bharati and others.

The RLDF contested all 288 Assembly seats against both the Congress-NCP and BJP-Shiv Sena combines. Athawale announced the RIDALOS would be based on the secular ideology, and would champion the cause of the poor and backward sections of the population. The main focus of RIDALOS was on the development of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Muslims and farmers. Athawale emphasised that he would not later support Congress Party or NCP despite his history of allying with them. Athawale also requested Prakash Ambedkar to join the RLDF. However, Prakash Ambedkar did not

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[48] *Ibid.*, 117.

join this third front. Rather he formed Fourth Front composed of BBM, All India United Democratic Front, Peace Party of India, and few other small organisations.

The RLDF identified several issues confronting to Maharashtra such as socio-economic inequality, farmer's suicides, prices of farmers' crops, farmers' loans, SEZ, water supply for agriculture, unemployment, closures of industries, cut in salaries, decreasing number of workers, electricity, inflation, education, health services, loans on Maharashtra state, problems arising out of Globalisation, Liberalization and Privatization, issues of socially excluded and oppressed sections of the society, issues of women, terrorism, etc. The RLDF's manifesto[49] criticized all four major political parties of Maharashtra such as the Congress Party, NCP, BJP and Shiv Sena. It projected itself as only principled left democratic secular alternative to all these inefficient political parties. The RLDF declared that it has been based on four principals or values. First, Opposition to imperialist globalization, and support to the public-oriented policies. Secondly, opposition to terrorism, opposition to superstitions, and providing support to the national unity. Thirdly, Opposition to the casteist and anti-feminist forces, and support to social justice in every field. Lastly, for the balanced growth of Maharashtra, the unity of farmers, agricultural workers, industrial workers, middle class, Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs, Nomadic Tribes, Minorities, and Bahujan masses.

The RLDF could not receive much success as expected but became the third largest coalition after Congress-NCP and Shiv Sena-BJP, while Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) became the fourth largest coalition with winning 13 Assembly seats. While Forth Front led by Prakash Ambedkar won only 2 seats.

The main reason for the failure of the RLDF was the lost of trust of Dalit population on the leadership of the RPI factions. The united RPI was the main political party of RLDF. The people lost faith in the sincerity of the leadership of united RPI. It was also due to the frequent attempts for unity of RPI factions and their failures.[50]

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[49] Republican Democratic Left Samiti's Manifesto of 2009.
[50] Vijay Jadhav, "Republican Aikya: Kunachya Hitache?" *Parivartanacha Vatsaru* 9, no. 10 (2009): 4.

10. Conclusion:

This chapter attempted to focus on the politics of Athawale's faction of the RPI in Mumbai during the period of 1991 to 2009. Though the RPI (A) has its presence in some other parts of Maharashtra, it is more visible in Mumbai as compare to other RPI factions. The chapter started with the historical background of the emergence of the leadership of Athawale in Dalit politics of Mumbai. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Athawale engaged in the Dalit movement and Dalit politics of Mumbai through his participation in the Dalit Panther movement. *Namantar Movement* had made Athawale popular among Dalit masses. Athawale was one of the leaders of the Bharatiya Dalit Panthers. When all factions of the RPI united in 1989, Athawale supported an alliance with the Congress Party in the electoral politics in order to defeat the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance. He then established his own faction of the RPI, and continued alliance politics with the Congress Party. In 1999 he became political ally of the NCP.

Athawale's RPI (A) electoral alliance politics with the Congress Party and NCP was continued till 2009. In the Lok Sabha election of 2009, Athawale was defeated from Shirdi reserved constituency. He then left his alliance with the NCP and formed the third front, RLDF in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections of 2009. However, RLDF could not perform remarkably in the elections. For about 20 years Athawale was engaged in the alliance politics with the Congress Party and NCP on the basis of alliance with the 'secular' forces to defeat the Hindutvawadi forces such as the BJP and Shiv Sena. It was convenient for the RPI (A) to make political alliance with the Congress Party and NCP because through this alliance the RPI (A) projected itself as committed to the secular democratic ideology, and wanted to keep Dalits away from the non-secular political outfits i.e. the Shiv Sena and BJP. Athawale consistently stated that the secular political parties such as the Congress Party and NCP need the Dalit political party for proving their secular approach in politics. They cannot win elections in Mumbai unless they get considerable support of Dalits.

The opportunistic alliances of the RPI (A) with the Congress Party and NCP in order to remain visible in the power structure had affected the politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai. For some scholars, this made them a 'stooge' of the ruling elites and thus a

negligible force in Maharashtra's politics.[51] The RPI came under the control of the Congress Party and NCP. As a result, the RPI started depending on these parties for its victory in electoral politics. Though the Congress Party and NCP were ruling political parties of Maharashtra from 1999, it did not help the RPI (A) to create its strongholds in various areas of Mumbai. Athawale became the Member of Parliament for several times due to his alliance with the Congress Party and NCP. However, it could not help the RPI (A) to increase its strength in Mumbai. On the other hand, the Congress Party and NCP benefited largely from their alliance with the RPI (A) because it helped them to project themselves as 'secular' forces for opposing the Hindutvawadi forces.

Dangle in his various works[52] criticized the Shiv Sena, BJP and Sangh Parivar for being a casteist and communalist in their attitudes and ideology. He argued that the main objective of these Hindutvawadi organisations is to make India 'a Hindu Nation'. This has created a challenge to the Indian constitution, democracy and secular principles of Indian constitution. The anti-Dalit stand of the Shiv Sena was evident in the various decisions of the Shiv Sena towards Dalit issues. For instance, the Shiv Sena's opposition to the reservation policy, its contestation with the Dalit Panthers, Worli Riots, Opposition to *Namantar* movement, its opposition to the publication of the 'Riddles in Hinduism', its decision to withdraw 1,100 cases filed during Marathwada riots caused due to *Namantar* movement, Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar Killings, etc. Dangle, therefore, had supported the RPI (A)'s alliance with the Congress Party and NCP.

The politics of the RPI (A) from 1991 to 2009 was the alliance politics with the secular political parties. The RPI (A) wanted to remain in power structure through its alliance with the ruling political parties. The Congress Party and the NCP were the ruling political parties in Maharashtra. Ideologically also, it was convenient for the RPI (A) to remain with the Congress Party and NCP as these parties projected themselves as secular political parties. Therefore, it was politically and ideologically convenient for the RPI (A) to attack the Shiv Sena and BJP as the casteist and communal political parties with anti-

[51] Harish Wankhede, "The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 6 (2008): 52.
[52] Arjun Dangle, *Nile Adhorekhit* (Mumbai: Sahit Prakashan, 2005), *Dalit Vidroh* (Mumbai: Lokvangmaya Griha, 2011) and *Ambedkari Chalvaliche Antarang* (Mumbai: Lokvangmaya Griha, 2011).

Dalit attitude. The hatred of the neo-Buddhists towards the Shiv Sena and BJP was utilised by the RPI (A) for the fulfillment of its political ambitions. But with defeat of Athawale in Shirdi reserved constituency and failure of his experiment of the RDLF in Maharashtra in 2009, the political strategy of the RPI (A) was changed remarkably. Athawale attacked the Congress Party and NCP for his defeat in the Shirdi reserved constituency which resulted into the end of his alliance with these parties. An attempt to bring all RPI factions, and other political parties which were not aligned to either the Congress Party and NCP or Shiv Sena and BJP, was also failed. The third front could not bring success in the 2009 election. During this election, Athawale attacked both alliances, the Congress-NCP alliance and Shiv Sena-BJP alliance. The RPI (A) condemned the Shiv Sena-BJP due to their anti-Dalit attitudes whereas the Congress-NCP was criticized because they failed to fulfill the aspirations of the Dalits. At the same time, Athawale condemned the Congress-NCP for not fulfilling the various promises which they made for the welfare of the Dalits. Therefore, after 2009 Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections, the RPI (A) suffered from a political dilemma.

Finally, this chapter has argued that the RPI (A) has suffered from a political dilemma after the Maharashtra Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly election in 2009. Athawale had given up alliance with the Congress-NCP. His attempt to form third front had also failed. In such a political situation the RPI (A) had to take firm decision in order to remain in power structure. In the third chapter, the changing strategy of alliance politics of the RPI (A) has been focused. The RPI (A), eventually, decided to form alliance with its long-lasting opponents in politics, the Shiv Sena and BJP.

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Chapter 3:

The Political Alliance of the RPI (A) with the Shiv Sena and BJP:
A Shift in the Dalit Politics of Mumbai

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1. Introduction:

After Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections of 2009 the RPI (A) had undergone through a political dilemma. It had given up its alliance with the Congress Party and NCP. At the same time, an attempt of forming third front also failed. In such a political situation, the RPI (A) decided to make a political coalition with the BJP-Shiv Sena in 2011. This has been considered as the remarkable shift in the RPI (A)'s Dalit politics in Mumbai. This chapter attempt to show the change in the political strategy of the RPI (A) in the city.

The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance is considered as one of the attempts of the established dominant power structure to abolish the existing Dalit movement in Mumbai. Palshikar argued that "the reconstruction of the Indian society was the main objective of Ambedkar. But there have been constant attempts to de-radicalize Ambedkar's legacy, and appropriate Ambedkar to legitimize existing power structures and to lure Dalit activists to the more mundane attractions of formal power."[1] The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance is the strategy of existing dominant power structure to create its control on the Dalit movement in the city and legitimize the ideology of Hindutva in Maharashtra as well as India. The political alliance with one of the important factions of RPI was useful for projecting a secular look to Hindutvawadi parties such as the Shiv Sena and BJP. On the other hand, the RPI (A)'s stand on the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance is based on the objective of becoming a part of the ruling class. This objective has achieved a major preference instead of dealing with Dalit issues and problems. Therefore, the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance has created a complex situation in front of Dalit movement in Mumbai.

This chapter, therefore, focused on the shift of the Dalit politics in Mumbai. This is a remarkable shift from the politics of alliance with the secular political parties to the

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[1] Palshikar, "Maharashtra: Dalit Politics in the Hindutva Trap," 208.

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political alliance with the political parties based on the Hindutva ideology. The confrontational politics of the RPI (A) with the Shiv Sena and BJP on the basis of aggressive Hindutva ideology shifted to the politics of conciliation. At the same time, this alliance also showed a remarkable shift in the RPI (A)'s 'politics of issues' to the 'politics of interest'. The Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance raised an important question on the secular democratic ideology of the RPI in Mumbai. The Dalit politics in the city is characterized by the Dalit movement based on Ambedkarite thoughts. It has been always argued that Ambedkarite ideology and Hindutva ideology cannot go together because these two different ideologies are totally opposed to each other. They are not compatible to each other. The Hindutva ideology is characterized by the casteist and communal ideas which derives its inspiration from Sangh Parivar. On the other hand, Ambedkarite ideology is characterized by Ambedkarite thoughts which are essentially based on the secular ideology and three principles affirmed by Ambedkar such as Equality, Freedom and Fraternity. Ambedkarite ideology constantly opposed to the Hindutva forces for its approach of reviving ancient Hindu culture and spreading Hindutva culture which believed in caste system and hatred towards other communities such as Muslim. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on the ideological deviation of the RPI (A).

The RPI (A) followed the confrontational politics with the Shiv Sena and BJP while making alliance politics with the Congress-NCP. It followed the politics of compromise with the ruling secular political parties for the political gains of the party. However, the RPI (A) formed political alliance with the Shiv Sena and BJP in 2011. The confrontational politics of the RPI (A) with the Hindutvawadi forces received a serious setback when the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* came into existence. The RPI (A) criticized the Shiv Sena and BJP for many years because of their Hindutva ideology and anti-Dalit attitude. The various attempts to unite RPI were done in 1989, 1995 and 2009. In all these attempts for unity of RPI, Athawale criticized the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, and appealed the Dalit masses to vote to secular forces in elections. The political alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP in 2011, therefore, had deep impact on the Dalit politics in Mumbai. However, it was not the first time that the RPI faction made alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP. Various prominent Dalit leaders like Namdeo Dhasal made political alliance with the Shiv Sena before. However, the political alliance of the RPI (A) with Shiv Sena-BJP has significance

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because the RPI (A) is the most visible Dalit political party in Mumbai in contemporary period.

Though the need for the alliance of *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* was affirmed in 2003, the RPI (A) ultimately made alliance with the Shiv Sena in 2011. The emergence and growth of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai has been marked by its anti-Dalit, anti-communist, anti-Muslim and opposition to the migrants of the other states. The Shiv Sena has been criticized by the RPI for conducting various anti-Dalit activities in Mumbai. During his involvement in the Bharatiya Dalit Panther and alliance politics with the Congress-NCP, Athawale launched strong attacks on the Shiv Sena for its Hindutva ideology and anti-Dalit approach. In such a political situation, the alliance of the Shiv Sena and RPI (A) in 2011 has created confusion in the Dalit movement and Dalit politics of Mumbai.

The Shiv Sena and Dalit movement in Mumbai were seen as the two different ideologies which were always remained opposite to each other. In order to understand the nature of Shiv Sena from its inception, it is necessary to analysis briefly the ideological perceptions of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai.

2. Hindutva Ideology of the Shiv Sena and Bharatiya Janata Party - "Hindutva is Nationalism":

As mentioned in the first chapter, the Shiv Sena took up the issue of 'sons of the soil' during its early period. However, in the later period, it turned to Hindutva ideology in order to enter into national politics. Various scholars argued diversely on the Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena and BJP. Patel argued that "In the early eighties, when the textile workers were on strike, the city was slowly opening itself up to the new global economy. Also, simultaneously, politics in the country was shifting rightwards, with the ascendancy of the rightist parties under an ideology of religious chauvinism styling itself Hindutva. At this juncture, the Shiv Sena resurrected itself in a new grab, as a party of Hindutva, and mobilized both the elite and populace in the city in a variety of ways."[2] However, the city experienced a significant change in the post-1991 period. With the acceptance of the New Economic Policy, the process of globalization, liberalization and

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[2] Patel, "Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism," 17.

privatization flourished in the city. It severely affected the Dalit politics in the city. On the one hand, the Hindutvawadi forces deeply strengthen in the city. On the other hand, with the advent of the neo-liberalism and emergence of Dalit middle class, the Dalit politics in the city shifted its focus from agitations for various issues of Dalits to political ambitions of the leaders of the Dalit parties.

For K.N.Panikkar, the social consciousness based on religion has been used for political purposes. He classified the political parties of the pre-independence and post-independence periods into two categories, in relation to their linkages with communalism. First, parties organize around communal ideologies like the Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League during the pre-independence period and the BJP, the Akali Dal and the Muslim League in contemporary India. The second type is the parties which use communalism for political support and mobilization without necessarily adopting communalism as their political ideology.[3] It is, therefore, evident that the communal political parties and secular political parties use the social consciousness based on religion for their political purpose. Panikkar further argued that the RSS and BJP stood for a *Hindu Rashtra*. They organized around communal ideologies and arrange their programmes around communal goals. They had explicit religious and communal goals. On the basis of these religiously defined goals they mobilized their supporters. The BJP's main plank is Hindu Nationalism, Hindutva. The Shiv Sena also entered the same arena. They explicitly make their political programme around a communal goal that is Hindu Nationalism and Hindutva. All their political programmes are geared to the creation of a Hindu identity and Hindu consolidation. They attempt to create a Hindu identity and defined a goal which is based on religion. Their endeavour is also aimed at the creation of a religion-based, emotionally charged, sense of nationalism somewhat on the lines of what the Nazis in Germany and the Fascists in Italy did in their quest for power. The BJP's belief is clear: the creation of Hindu consciousness would open up the road to power.[4]

The BJP and Shiv Sena derived their Hindutva ideology from the Sangh Parivar. It, therefore, also became a subject to criticisms by some scholars and intellectuals. Bhai

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[3] K.N.Panikkar, *Communalism in India: A Perspective for Intervention* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1994), 4-5.
[4] *Ibid.*, 5.

Vaidya in his work criticized the nature of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the social and political spheres. He argued that "the RSS openly expressed its objective of forming India into a Hindu Nation. In their definition of a Hindu Nation, the minorities have a secondary citizenship. Even the Shiv Sena also motivated with the eagerness to provide secondary citizenship to the Muslims of India. This is the concept of Hindu Nation for the RSS, BJP and Shiv Sena."[5] The RSS have antagonistic relationship with the Muslims and Dalits, especially neo-Buddhists who converted from Hindu religion to Buddhism. The RSS believed in the hierarchical caste system of Hindu society. It also opposed the *Namantar Andolan* for Marathwada University, and stood against the Dalit community. Vaidya argued that "the RSS also opposed to the conversion of Ambedkar to the Buddhist religion. They considered the conversion from Hindu religion to other religion as conversion from one nation to another."[6] This is the conception of a Hindu Nation of the RSS. The RSS also opposed to the three principles articulated by Ambedkar such as Equality, Freedom and Fraternity. The RSS believe in the ancient Hindu culture and its scriptures. It also opposed to the constitution of India. Vaidya argued that the RSS wanted to build India on the constitution which is based on the concept of Hindu nation.[7] The RSS also opposed to the reservation policy. This reveals the ideology of the RSS. The BJP and Shiv Sena are influenced by the ideology of the RSS. Therefore, the RSS, BJP and Shiv Sena are the supporter of the Hindutva which is based on the premise that Hindutva is Nationalism. According to them, the religion should be equated with nationalism that is Indian Nationalism is Hindu Nationalism.

Panikkar also argued that the second category of parties using communalism is a party which employs communalism for political mobilization. For instance, the Congress Party has been resorting to different ways to appeal to the religious sentiments of the people in order to refurbish its shrinking electoral support during the last two decades. Faced with a possible electoral debacle the Congress Party sought to overcome the crisis by manipulating Hindu religious sentiments to its advantage.[8] Therefore, there are questions raised on the ideology of the Congress Party and similar political parties which

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[5] Bhai Vaidya, *Sanghacha Asali Chehara* (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 2003), 4.
[6] *Ibid.*, 7.
[7] *Ibid.*, 21.
[8] Panikkar, *Communalism in India: A Perspective for Intervention*, 5-6.

claimed to be secular. The RPI (A)'s long term political alliance with the Congress Party and NCP also raised questions on the true secular ideology of these parties. However, it has been evident that Dalit political parties always seen Shiv Sena and BJP as aggressive and militant Hindutva political parties which is greatest threat to Ambedkarite ideology. Therefore, soft Hindutva strategy of the Congress Party and NCP did not receive much attention from the Dalit leaders. However, after RPI (A)'s alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP, the RPI (A) started criticizing the Congress Party and NCP and defended Shiv Sena-BJP.

Today communalism has become primarily an instrument for acquiring power. The BJP and Shiv Sena's Hindutva ideology is considered as aggressive Hindutva whereas the Congress Party and NCP's strategy of using Hindutva for its political gains is regarded as soft Hindutva. The Congress Party and other capitalist parties use soft Hindutva for the sake of political power. The Hindutva ideology, either aggressive or soft, has always remained in opposition to Ambedkarite ideology and Dalit movement. Both Ambedkarite ideology and Hindutva ideology are adversaries to each other.

Tarachandra Khandekar, one of the Ambedkarite scholars, argued that "the Hindutva ideology is not only religious but it has political connotations also. Therefore, it is anti-Dalit."[9] This has been evident in the RSS's effective intervention in the political process. The RSS, which has its dominance on BJP's politics, argued that it is a social organisation having an objective of unity of all Hindus and promoting Hindutva, and it has no connections with the political processes. However, RSS's intervention in the BJP's politics is very much evident.

The Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena is comprised of several aspects. For instance, the Shiv Sena always invokes the glorious days of Shivaji Maharaj, Maratha empire and the Hindu *pad padshahi*. The idolization of Shivaji Maharaj, however, serves as major points of reference in the world view of the Shiv Sena. Patriotism is another aspect of the ideology of the Shiv Sena. In the view of the Shiv Sena, 'to be a good Hindu is to be a good patriot'. Pro-Hinduism is equated with patriotism. Dipankar Gupta, in his work on Shiv Sena, argued that "the primary category of the practical ideology of the Shiv

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[9] Tarachandra Khandekar, *Ambedkari Rajkaranacha Anvayarth* (Nagpur: Sanket Prakashan, 2007), 24.

Sena is the position of Maharashtrians in Bombay. Besides, this core category, i.e. deprivation faced by Maharashtrians in Bombay, there are a few other important categories such as anti-South Indian and other non-Maharashtrians, against other political parties including the Congress, anti-communist, anti-Russia and anti-China, pro-Hindu and anti-other religions, pro-dictatorial and autocratic."[10]

Though the Shiv Sena and BJP are based on the Hindutva ideology, there are differences in their perception of Hindutva ideology. The Shiv Sena's Hindutva ideology is regarded as more political than religious. It is more politically oriented and uses Hindutva for its politics. On the other hand, BJP's Hindutva is more religious. Though it also uses Hindutva for its political gains, its interpretation of the Hindutva ideology is more religious. Gupta argued that "the Shiv Sena has attempted to maintain its ideological autonomy in spite of being ideologically close to several parties to the right, such as the Jan Sangh, Swatantra and Congress. To that extent it has formulated a distinctive ideology, which in its totality significantly departs from the ideological and programmatic standpoints of other right wing parties. It is ideological autonomy that accounts for the distinctiveness of the Shiv Sena's appeal."[11] Dangle also differentiated the Shiv Sena's Hindutva and BJP's Hindutva. He argued that "the Shiv Sena has used the 'Hindutva' not as an ideology but as a 'Strategy'. Therefore, the Shiv Sena's Hindutva is more political that religious."[12] However, some scholars found similarities in the ideology of the Shiv Sena and BJP on many grounds. For instance, Dhawale argued that "Although their interpretations may somewhat differ, the Shiv Sena and BJP share a common allegiance to the communal and fascistic concept of cultural nationalism and to the aim of achieving a 'Hindu Rashtra'."[13] It meant that though there may be difference in the interpretation of Hindutva ideology of Shiv Sena and BJP, both have same objective, i.e. Hindu Nationalism.

The Shiv Sena did not emerge in Mumbai with the Hindutva issue. In fact, it emerged and became popular on the basis of 'sons of the soil' issue. It also spread to other

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[10] Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: The Shiv Sena in Bombay*, 122-123.
[11] *Ibid.*, 148.
[12] Arjun Dangle, *Nile Adhorekhit* (Mumbai: Sahit Prakashan, 2005), 45.
[13] Ashok Dhawale, *The Shiv Sena: Semi-Fascism in Action*. Accessed on 15 June, 2014. http://www.cpim.org/marxist/200002_marxist_sena_dhawle.htm

cities such as Thane and also rural Maharashtra. However, in order to spread in other cities and other parts of Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena used Hindutva ideology and entered in small cities of Maharashtra. With the emergence of the Shiv Sena, non-Marathas i.e. OBCs realized that they could capture political power by supporting the Shiv Sena. Therefore, Shiv Sena's 'saffronisation' spread in rural parts of Maharashtra. The OBCs accepted and supported the Shiv Sena as their organisation. Dalits, who were exploited by the Hindu Social system, became attracted towards Hindutvawadi Shiv Sena. It is due to the fact that these groups got a political platform where their ambitions can be fulfilled. The Shiv Sena attempted to bring these social groups under its hold by focusing on their identity as Hindus. Dangle argued that "the Shiv Sena which got support of Bahujans has defined the 'Bahujan' as Hindus. They built their Hindutva ideology on premises that all Bahujans are Hindus."[14] It demonstrates the Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena and BJP.

3. Hindutva Intervention in Dalit politics:

The Hindutva ideology of the BJP and Shiv Sena has attempting to involve the lower caste community in its ambit. Many scholars like Gopal Guru argued that "there have been constant attempts on the part of the Hindu communal forces to 'Hinduise' Ambedkar for the subsequent assimilation of Dalits into Hindu fold."[15] The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance is also regarded as one of the attempts of BJP-Shiv Sena to attract neo-Buddhists into its hold. The other Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra like Matangs and Chambhars were already supported the Shiv Sena and BJP, which also benefited them to gain some political posts during BJP-Shiv Sena combine government in Maharashtra in 1995. The neo-Buddhist population of Mumbai remained away from the Shiv Sena and BJP, though some Dalit leaders like Dhasal made alliance with the Shiv Sena earlier. Panikkar argued that "Hindu communalism is not an upper caste phenomenon any more. Concerted efforts are being made to incorporate the lower castes as well. In other words, in today's communalism various social, political and economic interests are converging which accounts for its recent resurgence."[16]

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[14] Dangle, *Nile Adhorekhit*, 45.

[15] Gopal Guru, "Hinduisation of Ambedkar in Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 7 (1991): 339.

[16] Panikkar, *Communalism in India: A Perspective for Intervention*, 18.

There are many factors responsible for the division within the Dalit community as a whole, which not only impedes its unified political action, but also provides spaces for Hindutva to intervene in Dalit politics. For instance, the continued uneasiness among the various Dalit communities in the post independence period was one reason for the lack of unity among the Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra. The RPI had never been successful in attracting the other Scheduled Castes, and its leadership has also been remained dominated by single caste. The conversion of many Mahar communities to Buddhism was another factor for lack of unity among the Scheduled Castes communities of Maharashtra. Most of Chambhars and Matangs communities have not opted for conversion on a large scale. The Shiv Sena and BJP utilised this situation, which helped them to intervene their Hindutva ideology into the Dalit politics.

In the changing circumstances, the neo-Hinduism and appropriation of Ambedkar has been used as a tool for attracting Dalits into Hindutva fold. The Neo-Hinduism requires not only the numerical strength of the Dalits but also legitimation, and situating Ambedkar among the category of Hindutva serves this purpose commendably.

Though there are some differences in the Hindutva ideology of Shiv Sena and BJP, both appears to be complementary to each other in many aspects. Therefore, the alliance of Shiv Sena-BJP has competing with the Congress-NCP as its political opponent in Mumbai politics.

4. The Shiv Sena-BJP Alliance Politics in Mumbai:

The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance in Mumbai was purely political. It was primarily based on two issues: first, unity of opposition parties on anti-Congress agenda and second, aggressive Hindutva politics. The Shiv Sena-BJP alliance came into existence in 1989. Dhawale argued that "amongst all the regional parties that are opportunistically supporting the BJP-led regime at the Centre, it is only the Shiv Sena that has a clear ideologically affinity with the RSS-controlled Sangh Parivar. That is precisely why the Shiv Sena has

been the BJP's earliest and oldest political ally in the country. Since 1989, the two have had an unbroken alliance at the national and state levels."[17]

After the 1980, the BJP also initiated efforts to win a base in Mumbai city, but the BJP does not have wide support in Mumbai. However, the alliance between the Shiv Sena and BJP, which was formed in 1989, has succeeded in replacing the Congress Party in terms of popular support and has dominated the electoral scene since then. The Shiv Sena-BJP combine came to political power in Maharashtra in 1995. Though the Shiv Sena and BJP have some differences with other, their alliance still continues in the politics of Mumbai.

5. Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) Political Alliance:

When the Shiv Sena and the BJP arrived on the political scene of Mumbai, they did not benefit from the intensified competition for Dalit votes. These forces were seen as anti-Dalit and anti-Ambedkar as evident in Dalit Panthers-Shiv Sena clashes, Riddles controversy, Marathwada Riots, etc. They were also seen as opposed to social transformation, which was the hallmark of the Dalit movement. Traditionally, Dalits in Mumbai remained voters of the Congress Party. The Shiv Sena and BJP, therefore, were in search of the support of Dalit voters. At the same time, the traditional voters of the Shiv Sena also got divided into the Shiv Sena and MNS with factionalism in the Shiv Sena. Large number of youths and lumpen class of the Shiv Sena went to the MNS which affected the social base of the Shiv Sena. On the other hand, BJP's support base was also limited. Therefore, the Shiv Sena and BJP were in search of filling this gap and increase their social base.

The Shiv Sena leader, Uddhav Thackeray, appealed to the neo-Buddhists at a small function in University of Mumbai in February 2003 to think positively about the alliance between *Shiv Shakti* and *Bhim Shakti*. The Shiv Sena's strategy has upset the political equations in the state because since the 1999 elections, major RPI factions are in alliance with either the Congress Party or the NCP. An alliance with the Shiv Sena would mean

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[17] Ashok Dhawale, *The Shiv Sena: Semi-Fascism in Action.* Accessed on 15 June, 2014. http://www.cpim.org/marxist/200002_marxist_sena_dhawle.htm

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that the Congress Party and the NCP could not return to power if the Dalits isolated them. However, it also has larger implications of the realignment of social forces in the state and redefinition of the stand of the Dalits regarding Hinduism, Hindutva and social transformation.

Palshikar argued that,

"The Athawale faction has considerable following in Mumbai and parts of western Maharashtra. In the Lok Sabha elections, Athawale, supported by the Congress, was elected from a prestigious Mumbai constituency seen as the bastion of the Shiv Sena. Western Maharashtra is the region where the Shiv Sena and the BJP are trying hard to weaken the Congress Party electorally. Given the fact that Athawale has been consistently arguing for an alliance with the Congress Party and NCP against 'communal' forces, an erosion of the base of his faction would help the Shiv Sena and the BJP. However, it is not that the Shiv Sena seeks the support of Dalits, but that a large number of the RPI activists are in fact sympathetic to the idea of joining hands with the Shiv Sena. It is being argued not only by activists but also by some intellectuals that the Congress Party does not give Dalits an adequate share of power and therefore some understanding with the Shiv Sena may be advantageous for the Dalits."[18]

It was the political ambitions of the activists and leaders of the RPI that gave rise to the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. At the same time, some of the intellectuals also appreciated the political experiment of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance for its attempts for social engineering. Palshikar argued that some of the Dalit intellectuals like Raosaheb Kasabe who has been associated with progressive movements, had come out with an elaborate defence of this trend. Palshikar argued that,

"For Kasabe, firstly, the Shiv Sena workers are somewhat removed from the discourse of Hindutva and, therefore, an alliance with it need not be seen as a compromise with Hindutva forces. Secondly, now there is a phase of non-ideological politics, so it does not matter what your political ally's ideology is. Thirdly, Congress Party and the NCP are averse to sharing power honestly while the Shiv Sena is usually known for keeping its promises. Fourthly, the Congress and the NCP are associated with the Maratha caste while the Shiv Sena is associated with the OBCs. Therefore, an alliance with the Shiv Sena indicates the alliance with the OBCs, which may be socially more progressive. Lastly, he argues that the fact of Muslim fundamentalism in places like Mumbai is often ignored by the progressive forces and as such they cannot stand up to Muslim communalism. Only the Shiv Sena can fight the communalism of the Muslims."[19]

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[18] Palshikar, "Maharashtra: Dalit Politics in the Hindutva Trap," 217-218.
[19] *Ibid.*, 218.

Kasabe's stand on the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* was that the Shiv Sena's Hindutva ideology is different from the Sangh-BJP's Hindutva ideology. Therefore, the alliance of the RPI with the Shiv Sena does not mean accepting or supporting Hindutva ideology or revolting against the Ambedkarism.[20] However, the RPI (A) has formed alliance not only with the Shiv Sena but also with the BJP. Therefore, it has been obvious that this alliance is based on the politics of compromise. Though Ambedkarism and Hindutva are stiff ideological adversaries, they have accepted the politics of compromise in changing social, economic and political situations of contemporary period. It was also argued that due to the decline of the ideology-based politics in contemporary politics that it is considered as political diplomacy to do politics without considering ideology of other party. Palshikar criticized Kasabe's stand on the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. He argued that "Kasabe seems to endorse the 'non-ideological' manner in which politics are allegedly conducted contemporarily. Kasabe is probably arguing that in the game of power, it is important to gain power and considerations of ideology need not come in the way of the pursuit of power."[21] Kasabe was also criticized for endorsing the prevalent trend of sharing power on the basis of caste or community. The absence of ideology in contemporary politics has also been traced by some scholars.[22] According to them, the contemporary changing social, economic and political situations are also responsible for the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. For instance, there has changes occurred in the nature of the politics. The politics has been dominated by the idea of 'politics for the sake of power' only. Therefore, the political interest rather than ideological perceptions became more important in the politics.

It has been argued by some scholars[23] that many progressive intellectuals and leaders supported the reactionary forces like the Shiv Sena. By supporting the Shiv Sena, they also accepted their Hindutva ideology. However, they ignored the Ambedkarite ideology which strongly opposed the Hindutvawadi organisations and political parties and their Hindutva ideology. For instance, some Dalit intellectuals and leaders such as Prof. Arun Kamble, Prof. Gangadhar Pantawane, Dr. Raosaheb Kasabe, Namdeo Dhasal,

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[20] *Parivartanacha Vatsaru* 1 to 30 April 2003.
[21] Palshikar, "Maharashtra: Dalit Politics in the Hindutva Trap," 219.
[22] Abhay Kanta et. al., *Republicananchi Harakiri* (Pune: Parivartanacha Vatsaru, 2011), 12.
[23] Supriya Gaikwad and Dilip Chavan, "Bhajapa-Sena-Ripai Yuti: Kahi Nirikashane," in *Bhim Shakti-Shiv Shakti Ani Maharashtratil Dalit Rajkaranachi Disha*, ed. Kishor Jadhav (Pune: The Taichi Prakashan, 2011).

Jogendra Kawade, R.S.Gavai, Prakash Ambedkar, etc. supported the Shiv Sena at different times. Athawale and Uddhav Thackeray came together in one of the programmes of Mumbai University in 2003 due to the efforts of Prof. Arun Kamble. Prof. Gangadhar Pantawane supported the *Samajik Samrasata Manch* and its concept of *Samajik Samarasata*. Dr. Raosaheb Kasabe also provided ideological foundations for the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. Dhasal made alliance with the Shiv Sena in 1995-96. Kawade also supported the BJP candidate Kirit Somaiya in Ramabai Ambedkar Colony in 2009. R.S.Gavai had alliance with the Shiv Sena in 1973 for the BMC elections. He also attended some programmes of the RSS in Nagpur. Prakash Ambedkar's BBM had alliance with the Shiv Sena in Aurangabad Municipal Corporation. It meant that one group of Dalit movement attracted towards the Shiv Sena from some years. This was considered as the first step of acceptance of the Shiv Sena by Dalit leaders and intellectuals.

The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance has been criticized as an opportunistic alliance formed for political benefits. However, the alliance was beneficial for all alliance partners. On the one side, the Shiv Sena and BJP attempted to depict their parties as all inclusive and pro-Dalit by aligning with the one of the important RPI faction of Mumbai. On the other side, the RPI (A) attempt to secure maximum benefits from this alliance in the form of some ministerial posts and others.

6. Implications of the Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance:

The alliance of the Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A), which is also known as *Mahayuti* has deep impact on the Dalit movement and politics in Mumbai. The democratic transformation visualized by Ambedkar has lost its objective due to the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. On the other hand, the party workers of the RPI (A) have not been trained adequately about ideological issues. This has exposed them to a politics of power for the sake of power. The instrumentalist tendency is aggravated by the compromises made by leadership for personally sharing power. While the leaders of the party engaged in politics for self-interest, the ordinary Dalit activists in Mumbai remained on the margins of power. The feeling was developed among party workers that the leaders of their party would become ministers and MLAs as a result of their 'fight against communalism' while at the local level party workers have had to continue to play the role of a powerless opposition. In

Zilla Parishads and other local centers of power, the Dalit activists could not find a place for themselves. This gap had frustrated the ordinary Dalit workers. When such party workers looked at the BSP leader Mayawati's experiment of Uttar Pradesh, they turned to the politics of interest. Instead of taking the long route to power, the party workers were tempted to keep ideological issue away from politics, and depended on the politics of power for the sake of power. Palshikar emphasised 'the logic of power' behind the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance, and argued that,

"When the Shiv Sena made the appeal to Dalits to join hands with Shiv Shakti the logic of power produced an almost collective amnesia among activists and intellectuals about the fact that the same Shiv Sena was in the forefront of opposition to changing the name of Marathwada University after Dr. Ambedkar. It was also forgotten that the Shiv Sena has been opposed to reservations on caste basis and that it opposed the decision of the state government to publish Ambedkar's writings critical of Ram and Krishna (Riddles of Hinduism). Over the last two decades, the Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray has stated a number of times that the Shiv Sena was opposed to the domination of three 'M's: Marathas, Muslims and Mahars. This was also forgotten. Nor did any one mention that the Shiv Sena stands for the equation that Hindutva is nationalism. These details suggest that the alliance of the Shiv Shakti and Bhim Shakti is supposed to take place as if in a vacuum and the only point of reference is the logic of power."[24]

However, it is necessary to understand the consequences of such political formations [BSP-BJP and Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A)] on the broader Dalit struggle aimed at emancipation of the oppressed and deprived. Kamble has argued that this is not a sudden development, but the culmination of a process after Ambedkar. He has identified four phases of Dalit politics: 'Politics of Identity', 'Politics of Issues', 'Politics of Accommodation' and 'Politics of Interest'. The imbalance between these four components essentially created the space for the Hindutva overtures.[25] He problematizes the relationship between Hindutva and Dalits represented by alliances like BSP and the BJP or *Bhim Shakti-Shiv Shakti* and seeks to understand it in terms of the evolutionary dynamics of the Dalit movement. Barring a few expressions of radical assertion for dignity and concerns for emancipatory issues, the educated leaders of the Dalit movement pursued the dream of political power as panacea for addressing the Dalit question. He lastly suggested

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[24] Palshikar, "Maharashtra: Dalit Politics in the Hindutva Trap," 220-221.
[25] Kamble, "Dalit-Hindutva Alliance and the Dynamics of Dalit Politics," 173.

that the long-term viability of Dalit politics lies in its alliance with the forces articulating concerns of the marginalized such as peasants, workers and women.[26]

One of the implications of this alliance is that the 'Hindutva' face of Shiv Sena and BJP received support from the Dalit political party. Both Shiv Sena and BJP publicly manifested their objective of making India a 'Hindu Nation'. Dalit politics in Mumbai including Athawale always provided strong criticism against this Hindutva ideology of Shiv Sena and BJP. But when Athawale made alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP in 2011, the opposition to the Hindutva ideology declined significantly.

Kamble[27] argued that this political alliance would not change the political framework in Mumbai. The political framework of Mumbai would always been in the hands of dominant political elites which work primarily to fulfill the interest of these dominant elites, and to continue this hold of dominant elites on political institutions and power. Therefore, in the accommodation politics, the Dalit political parties are accommodated for political dominant elites and not for Dalit political parties. Kamble further argued that the Dalit leaders might assume political office but they cannot become a ruling class because the ruling class is a class which maintains its stronghold on the order and ensures continuous fulfillment of its interest and continuous domination over the system. Therefore, the Dalit leaders may become the sections who occupied political office but they serve the interest of the ruling class.[28] It raises a question on the preference given by Dalit political parties to the capture of political power. It has always been claimed by these parties that the political power is essential for the protection and promotion of the Dalits. However, if the political power continues to remain in the hands of the existing political dominant elites, and the Dalit political parties accommodated for maintaining this power structure, then question raise on the usefulness of the objective of the political power.

There were many factors responsible for the emergence of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance in Mumbai such as the political dilemma of the RPI (A) after Maharashtra

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[26] *Ibid.*, 173-174.
[27] Interview with Ramesh Kamble on September 2, 2013 at Mumbai.
[28] *Ibid.*

Legislative Assembly elections of 2009, lack of ideological concern, the role of the Dalit middle class, intellectuals, media, etc. The role of the Dalit middle class was criticized by various scholars and intellectuals for their passive attitude towards the Dalit movement. Dangle argued that "the full time party workers faced financial problems. Therefore, they get attracted by the bargaining and instrumental politics. It affected the Dalit movement."[29] Therefore, they remained least affected by the ideological concern for the Dalit politics. It led to the decline of the Dalit movement and degeneration of Dalit politics in the city. Dalit middle class never actively participated in the agitations for various Dalit issues. They always remained separate from the movement. Dalit movement always carried forward by the poor Dalit masses, most of them residing in slums areas. On the other hand, Dalit middle class did not even actively participate in activities of the RPI. Many scholars also argued that though the Dalit middle class did not actively engage in the socio-political movement, it can at least provide financial support to the movement for the development of the movement because this class is financially stable as compare to poor Dalits. This class always remained engaged in the criticism against the Dalit political parties and their leadership for being selfish and corrupt. It resulted into the passive attitude of this class towards the Dalit movement and Dalit politics. Therefore, they did not create any pressure on the Dalit leadership for ideological concerns.

Subhash Thorat[30], Marxist activist of Maharashtra, argued that there are no struggle in the Dalit movement today as it was in the past. The Dalit Middle class has nothing do with Dalit movement and Dalit politics. They do not want struggle. This class remained engaged in the process of globalization. Therefore, this middle class could not create pressure on the Dalit leaders. As a result, Dalit leaders encouraged to serve their political ambitions. They do not have pressure from the masses. However, this is not the situation of the Dalit Middle class only. This is a situation of entire middle class in India. He further argued that the Dalit politics is primarily concerned for the social issues. The Dalit movement and Dalit politics has to look into these questions. The nature of social problems in the period of globalization has changed significantly. The Dalit movement is utilised for

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[29] Arjun Dangle, "Republican Paksha Konya Eka Jatichi Maktedari Nahi!," in *Ambedkari Chalvaliche Antarang*, ed. Arjun Dangle (Mumbai: Lokvangmaya Griha, 2011), 122.

[30] Interview with Subhash Thorat on September 10, 2013 at Mumbai.

preserving the interests of the established class. It does not have a distinct characteristic in contemporary politics. Even during the atrocity cases on Dalits, the movement does not consistently agitate on that issue.

The Dalit middle class has been also criticized for being ambitious for gaining and utilizing political power for their own sake. Instead of actively engage in various agitations for Dalit issues, this class had restricted the scope of the movement to cultural-reformative programmes.

Bhalchandra Kanango, editor of Marathi periodical 'Saptahik Yugantar', argued that "there is an increase in the class consciousness of Dalits. The inclusion of Dalit leaders such as Udit Raj[31], Ramvilas Paswan[32] and Ramdas Athawale in the Modi wave is not only reflecting a selfishness of these leaders, but also the ambitions of the Dalit middle class to participate in the political power."[33]

The role of intellectuals has also been criticized for the emergence of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. Subodh More[34], Marxist activist in Maharashtra, argued that the intervention of the intellectuals in the Dalit politics in not effective. The RPI (A) has some intellectuals and activists in its party such as Dangle and Mahatekar. But these intellectuals also shifted their allegiances. For instance, Dangle who was actively engaged in the Dalit Panther movement and wrote number of articles on Dalit movement and politics in Maharashtra, strongly criticized the RSS, BJP and Shiv Sena for their anti-Dalit approach. However, with the emergence of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance, Dangle justified this alliance under various circumstances.

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[31] Udit Raj is one of the prominent Dalit leaders who joined the BJP before the Lok Sabha general elections of 2014. *The Times of India*, February 24, 2014, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Prominent-dalit-leader-Udit-Raj-joins-BJP/articleshow/30953437.cms (accessed 17 June, 2014).

[32] Ramvilas Paswan is Dalit leader of Lok Janshakti Party who also formed alliance with the BJP before the Lok Sabha general elections of 2014. *The Times of India*, February 27, 2014, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Ram-Vilas-Paswan-BJP-seal-deal-change-Bihar-equations/articleshow/31061898.cms (accessed 17 June, 2014).

[33] Bhalchandra Kanango, "Ujavikadach Valan," *Parivartanacha Vatsaru* 14, no. 3 (2014): 10.

[34] Interview with Subodh More on September 4, 2013 at Mumbai.

The role of the media has also been criticized for their role in the Dalit movement in the city. It is argue that there are various newspapers which are dedicated to the cause of Dalit issues but they are not performing their duties well.[35]

All these factors contributed to the lack of opposition to the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance and also to the degeneration of the Dalit politics in the city.

7. A Significant Shift from the 'Politics of Issues' to the 'Politics of Interest' in Dalit Politics in Mumbai:

The Dalit movement was meant to be based on the ideology of politics of issues. From the period of the Dalit movement led by Ambedkar, the focus of the movement was to ensure the dignity and equal status for Dalits in the society. The movement articulated the question of justice and dignity in the context of a modern secular framework, rather than the traditional religious mode. Kamble argued that "the Dalit movement exhibited a concern for politics of the issues of the larger marginalized constituency, which also presented a possibility of the broader conception of the politics of emancipation."[36]

Kamble underlined the shift from the politics of issue to politics of interest. He argued that "there is a shift in the Dalit agenda from social movement of the marginalized to political formation to achieve political power for the elites among Dalits. Further, it also marked the beginning of politics of interest in Dalit politics. Political power is controlled by political parties that represent dominance of the upper castes and classes who have been appropriating Dalit votes. Furthermore, it was felt that only through political power in terms of seats in assemblies and parliament could the Dalits hope to change the oppressive order of Manuwad."[37]

Subodh More[38] argued that the lack of response of the Dalit masses to the Dalit politics has lead to the degeneration of the Dalit politics. The strong reaction of the Dalit masses towards the atrocities on Dalits has diminished. He further argued that Dalits with Marxist and Ambedkarite ideology are criticized for their association with the Marxist

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[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Kamble, "Dalit-Hindutva Alliance and the Dynamics of Dalit Politics," 176.
[37] *Ibid.*, 177.
[38] Interview with Subodh More on September 4, 2013 at Mumbai.

ideology. But when the RPI make alliance with the Shiv Sena then it is not criticized very much. This has been a contradiction in the Dalit politics of Mumbai. More also argued that the RPI politics was impressive and dominant till 1990. It started declining after 1990. It was due to the new economic policies. The RPI party workers remained limited to the politics of construction builders, the SRA schemes in Mumbai initiated by the government. The party workers, therefore, became more concerned about their needs.

8. The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* Alliance: 'New Agenda' or 'New Political and Social Equations' of Ambedkarite Movement:

This term has been used by Dangle[39] to define the Ambedkarite movement in a changing scenario of social and political situation at the organizational level of Ambedkarite movement. Dangle argued that "Ambedkarite movement should have a new agenda. This agenda should be based on changing social, economic and political background. There is a need to give a new agenda to the Dalit movement in the changing socio-economic situation and globalization period. It is because of the fact that the strength of Dalit movement to agitate for various Dalit issues has diminished significantly."[40] Athawale in the preface to Dangle's book argued that,

"There was a social and political challenge to the RPI (A) while making alliance with Shiv Sena-BJP. The Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti alliance is not only political. It is important to underline the social aspect of this alliance. While making alliance with the Shiv Sena, the RPI (A) has not given up the principle of Ambedkarism. The Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti alliance came into existence to fulfill ambitions of common people. While achieving this objective, the alliance kept their ideological differences away. This alliance was developed on some common programs. It meant that the Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti is not ideological or intellectual compromise. It is just an alliance on political and practical level. Such equations have always happened in Maharashtra and India."[41]

Atha
wale emphasised on the social engineering process through the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. The Shiv Sena has a large support of the OBCs and the other Scheduled Castes such as Matangs and Chambhars. Athawale claimed to bring these castes and neo-

[39] Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha.*
[40] *Ibid.,* 121.
[41] Ramdas Athawale, preface to *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha* by Arjun Dangle (Mumbai: Bhashya Prakashan, 2014), 11.

Buddhists together through this alliance. It was also argued that the party workers of the RPI (A) would definitely get political power due to this alliance. Lower level party workers would get representation in Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis, Nagar Palikas, Maha Nagar Palikas, etc. Therefore, Dangle argued that "the social equations will change not only in Maharasthra but also in India. This alliance should be seen as positive attempt for social reconstruction."[42] He, thus, claimed that the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance has created a new political and social equation in Mumbai.

The supporters of the alliance had argued that this alliance is merely electoral alliance. It is a political alliance. It is not an ideological alliance or compromise. Such alliances have already occurred in politics of Maharashtra as well as India. For instance, Sharad Pawar's cabinet ministry had Jan Sangh's leaders such as Hashu Advani, Uttamrao Patil. The cabinet also consisted of Shetkari Kamgar Paksha represented by N.D.Patil, Sadanand Varde, and Bhai Vaidya of Socialist Party. The communists had given external support to the government. In 1967 when non-Congress government came in seven states, Punjab government had communists and Jan Sangh in its cabinet. *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* also had Communists, Socialists, Republicans and also Hindu Mahasabha. Janata Party under Jaya Prakash Narayan's leadership had socialist and Jan Sangh together. Left communists had given external support to Janata Party. Shiv Sena-Praja Samajwadi Party, Jan Sangh-Republican, Shiv Sena-Republican such electoral compromises had already occurred in Maharashtra as well as India. Today also in many local self government governments, the Congress Party and NCP had made alliances with BJP and Shiv Sena. In Aurangabad Municipal Corporation also, T.M.Kamble and Prakash Ambedkar made alliances with Shiv Sena. Similarly, Ramvilas Paswan, Mayawati, Nitish Kumar made political cooperation with BJP. There are many instances of such alliances. However, most of such alliances emerged in Indian politics on the basis of 'anti-Congressism'.[43]

Athawale and Dangle criticized the Congress Party and NCP for their inefficiency in preventing atrocities on Dalits. Dangle argued that "it was during the Congress government that most of the atrocity cases filed against Dalits. For instance, the Dalit

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[42] Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha*, 158.
[43] *Ibid.*, 149-150.

Panther movement was established in 1972 to respond to social atrocities on Dalits during the Congress government period. During the *Namantar Andolan* of 1978 also, it was the Congress leaders who were in front of atrocities on neo-Buddhists. Khairlanji case was also occurred during the Congress government's period."[44] While criticizing on the attitude of the Congress-NCP and Shiv Sena-BJP for their ignorance on increasing atrocity cases on Dalits, Dangle further argued that,

"The RPI (A) aligned with the Congress Party and NCP on secular principles because Dalit movement faced challenge of communal forces like the Shiv Sena and BJP, these forces had accepted 'aggressive Hindutvawad', and there were attempts to challenge the constitution of India by connecting Hindutvawad with politics. However, it does not mean that Shiv Sena-BJP is alone responsible for number of atrocities on Dalits. The Congress-NCP alliance was equally responsible for atrocities on Dalits. Though these two alliances in Mumbai are having different political orientations, their approach and behaviour in social sphere is similar. Though the RPI (A) shared political power with the Congress-NCP, the atrocity cases could not stop."[45]

Athawale claimed that the RPI (A) accepted only those social and political principles which included in the constitution of India. The RPI (A) strongly believed in Phule-Shahu-Ambedkar's ideology. Though the RPI (A) has difference with Shiv Sena-BJP on various issues, these issues would keep aside, and alliance allies would work for common minimum programme.

Dangle argued that when the RPI (A) made an alliance with the Congress-NCP, it did not mean that the RPI (A) accepted Gandhism, Nehruvism, or Globalisation. At the same time, when RLDF's experiment was done, it did not mean that the RPI (A) accepted Marxist ideology. The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance is not based on ideology but it is based on common programme. At the same time, he criticized the role of intellectuals and scholars who criticized the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. For Dangle, they do not have any moral or ethical right to criticize Ambedkarite movement because they have not contributed to the movement. These intellectuals attempt to create intellectual dilemma

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[44] *Ibid.*, 157-158.
[45] *Ibid.*, 47.

only. They are limited only to their academics and *Sammelan* on Phule-Shahu-Ambedkar.[46]

9. Electoral Performance of the *Mahayuti* in the BMC election, 2012 and Maharashtra Lok Sabha election, 2014:

The Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance contested the BMC elections of 2012 in which the *Mahayuti* won majority seats and came to power. This political victory of *Mahayuti* depicted a new political and social equation in Mumbai. The RPI (A), as a constituent part of *Mahayuti*, did not perform well in the election. However, the RPI (A) played a significant role in the victory of *Mahayuti*.

Table 3.1

Electoral Performance of Political Parties in the
Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation election, 2012

Sr. No.	Political Parties	Seats Won
01.	Indian National Congress (INC)	52
02.	Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	13
03.	Shiv Sena (SHS)	75
04.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	31
05.	Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS)	28
06.	Others	28
	Total	227

(Source: Maharashtra State Election Commission's official website: www.mahasec.com)

The elections for the BMC were held in February 2012. The Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance won 106 seats out of 227 seats of the corporation. The RPI (A) managed to win only one seat. Sabreddy Mallesh Borra was elected from Mahim Kala Killa ward.[47]

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[46] *Ibid.*, 156.
[47] Maharashtra State Election Commission's official website: www.mahasec.com

In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Athawale's RPI (A) continued its alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP. The RPI (A) headed by Athawale is a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Swabhimani Paksha headed by Raju Shetti, and Rashtriya Samaj Paksha headed by Mahadev Jankar also joined this alliance. Among the other important Dalit parties, the BBM headed by Prakash Ambedkar, had not supported the Congress-NCP alliance. Other factions of the RPI made alliance with the Congress-NCP on the ground that these are secular political parties. Gangadhar Gade of the Panthers Republican Party (PRPI), Jogendra Kawade of Peoples' Republican Party (PRP), Sulekha Kumbhare's Bahujan Republican Ekta Manch (BREM) and K.T.Kamble of the RPI (D) extended their support to the Congress-NCP and had joined the alliance. Kawade argued that an alliance should be made with the secular forces in the state and hence the PRP decided to support the alliance. He criticized RPI (A) chief Athawale for joining the BJP-led alliance in the state.[48]

Table 3.2

Electoral Performance of the *Mahayuti* in the General Elections, 2014 to the Lok Sabha of Maharashtra

Sr. No.	Political Parties	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Votes % in Seats Contested
01.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	23	13308961	27.3
02.	Shiv Sean (SHS)	18	10051090	20.6
03.	RPI (A)	00	71808	00.1
04.	Swabhimani Paksha (SWP)	01	1105073	02.3
05.	Rashtriya Samaj Paksha (RSPS)	00	451843	00.9

(Source: Election Commission of India's official website: www.eci.nic.in)

In the Maharashtra Lok Sabha general elections of 2014, the *Mahayuti* won 42 seats out of 48 seats. The RPI (A) contested one seat from Satara constituency. However,

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[48] *The Free Press Journal*, March 31, 2014, http://freepressjournal.in/another-dalit-party-in-maharashtra-to-support-congress/ (accessed June 17, 2014).

the RPI (A)'s candidate, Ashok Gaikwad, lost in this election. The RPI (A) received 71,808 and 0.1 percent of votes.[49] The RPI (A) as a constituent of the *Mahayuti* could not perform well in the electoral politics. However, Athawale managed to become the MP due to the RPI (A)'s alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP.

10. Conclusion:

When Athawale made political alliance with the Congress Party and NCP, he consistently argued that it was necessary to keep Shiv Sena-BJP alliance away from political power because these are casteist and communal parties. In 2011 when Athawale made alliance with Shiv Sena and BJP, Athawale took different approach and argued that neither Congress Party nor NCP fulfilled promises which they made for welfare of the Scheduled Castes. They used the Dalit political parties to gain political power but never seriously look into the demands of Dalit. It is, therefore, necessary to keep the Congress Party and NCP away from political power, and the Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance should gain political power. Athawale consistently argued that the alliance with the Shiv Sena and BJP is merely political alliance and it is nothing to do with the ideology compromises. Dangle argued that "the RPI (A) was with the Congress Party for about 20 years. During 1990s it was felt that the secularism would come under attack with the alliance of Shiv Sena-BJP in Indian politics and specifically Maharashtra politics. Therefore, the RPI (A) formed alliance with the Congress Party in order to prevent the increasing strength of Hindutvawadi parties. However, the RPI (A) received many humiliating experiences from the Congress-NCP during its alliance politics. Athawale also lost in the Lok Sabha general election of 2009 due to the Congress-NCP conflicts."[50]

The RPI (A) helped the Congress Party and NCP to capture political power but it was alleged by the RPI (A) that these parties ignored various demands of Dalits after receiving political power. Dangle also argued that the RPI (A) decided to make alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP, because these parties are main opposition parties of Maharashtra. The RPI (A) would participate in decision making power in the politics while making alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP. Though *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* is ideologically opposite

[49] Election Commission of India's official website: http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html/
[50] Dangle, *Nava Agenda Ambedkari Chalvalicha*, 143.

to each other, the RPI (A) would attempt to increase communication between both parties and would work to minimize conflicts between each other."[51] Though the alliance has been criticized by notable intellectuals, scholars, the Congress-NCP leaders and other Dalit leaders of Mumbai, the RPI (A) believe that the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* is useful to strengthen the party and party workers in alliance politics. The RPI (A) had differences with the Congress-NCP also when they were in alliance with them. The RPI (A) never accepted the Gandhian ideology of the Congress Party. Dangle argued that the Congress Party and NCP used Dalits for their politics only. It is also argued that most of the demands of Dalits were fulfilled by non-Congress governments. For instance, in 1964 Dadasaheb Gaikwad agitated for certain demands such as Ambedkar's painting in the Parliament, *Gairan* land issue, 'Bharat Ratna' to Ambedkar, etc. However, the Congress government did not respond satisfactorily to these demands. It was only in 1989 when non-Congress government came into power that these demands were fulfilled. It even responded positively to demands such as Mandal Commission report, concessions for neo-Buddhists, etc.

On the ideological question, Dangle argued that,

"It is not correct to criticize the RPI (A) for making alliances with the Shiv Sena-BJP. The RPI (A) had not given its ideology. In fact, it is defeat of the Congress-NCP's trustworthiness, morality and welfare policies that one of the main political parties of Ambedkarite movement given up its alliance with them who called themselves as secular forces. After the Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti alliance, the NCP organized Samajik Hakk Parivartan Parishad. The Congress Party also declared the Samajik Samata Varsh. These attempts of both Congress reflected their intellectual or ideological defeat."[52]

It is important to look at the consistent failure or defeat of the RPI in electoral politics in Mumbai. Though there are two exceptions to this, one is the ILP's electoral performance in 1936 and second, the SCF's electoral performance in 1957. In 1998, the united RPI won 4 seats. Except these elections, the RPI never achieved significant success in the electoral performance. The RPI (A) has also consistently failed to bring desirable success in the election. Though Athawale became the Member of Parliament several times when he was with the Congress-NCP, the party did not perform well in the Lok Sabha and

[51] *Ibid.*, 144.
[52] *Ibid.*, 146.

Vidhan Sabha elections. Therefore, the RPI (A) alliance with the Shiv Sena and BJP was an attempt to build its organisation stronger and influence electoral performance.

Dangle criticized the Congress-NCP for degeneration of Dalit politics in Mumbai. He argued that,

"It is essential for Dalits to participate or get included in the centre of the politics. Otherwise Ambedkarite movement will face political dilemma. Today all forces are attempting to keep Ambedkarite movement aside. It has become compulsion to do alliance politics. Even if all factions of the RPI united, it cannot create an independent political power. The Republican movement followed the principle of 'brick is softer than stone' while making alliance with the Congress-NCP. However, both the Congress attempted to diminish the existence of Ambedkarite movement. Ambedkarite movement and its leaders were constantly insulted by the Congress-NCP. When Athawale declared Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti alliance, the Congress-NCP leaders responded that it would not make any difference in their votes. It meant that both Congress did not see Republican movement beyond vote bank politics."[53]

The Congress Party used the politics of accommodation in order to maintain its dominance in Mumbai politics from the late sixties. Though the social base of the Congress Party was mainly Maratha and Kunbi castes, it also accepted the policy of accommodating other castes also such as OBCs, Dalits, Muslims, etc. As a result of this policy, the Congress Party successfully maintained its dominance in Maharashtra politics. The OBCs, Dalits, Muslims also supported the Congress Party. From the 1990s the situation started changing. With rise of the Shiv Sena and BJP as powerful political parties in Mumbai and the internal conflicts among the Congress Party, the party started losing its hold on social base. With the separation of Sharad Pawar from the Congress Party and emergence of NCP, the Marathas and Kunbis also divided among these two political parties. The support of the OBCs, Dalits, and Muslims also started diminishing. Shiv Sena and BJP utilised the situation of internal conflicts among the Congress Party and NCP leaders, and successfully attracted these social groups. Athawale's RPI (A) was with the coalition of the Congress Party and NCP. It consistently put forth the ideological perspective to make its difference with the Shiv Sena and BJP. The Congress-NCP alliance had always been projected as secular and progressive forces, whereas the Shiv Sena, BJP, Sangh Parivar projected as conservative, communalist, Hindutva, casteist forces. Though

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[53] *Ibid.*, 156-157.

the Congress Party and NCP started losing its hold on Marathas and Kunbis, one group of Dalits under the leadership of Athawale always supported them. However, after the Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections in 2009, Athawale claimed that the accommodation politics of the Congress Party and NCP did not help Dalits to raise their position. The Dalits remained socially, economically, politically deprived.

The RPI (A), therefore, formed the alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP in 2011. However, this alliance reflected the political interests of the RPI (A). For the sake of political power, the RPI (A) initiated the collaboration politics with the Shiv Sena-BJP which still continues in Mumbai.

CONCLUSION

Ramdas Athawale's RPI (A), which is the most visible RPI faction and active participant in the Dalit politics of the city of Mumbai, has undergone from many changes. The RPI's collaborative politics with the Congress Party on the basis of secular ideology was continued by the RPI (A) in the post-1991 period. This process of collaboration with the Congress Party has started in 1967 which continued till today. Some of the factions of the RPI support the Congress Party or NCP in contemporary period. After the failure of the RPI unity in 1989, Athawale established the RPI (A), and formed the alliance politics with the Congress Party. With the establishment of the NCP, the RPI (A) gave up its alliance politics with the Congress Party and formed alliance with the NCP. The alliance with the NCP came to an end in 2009 after the Maharashtra Lok Sabha election. In such a way, the RPI (A) formed alliance with the Congress Party and NCP from its establishment to 2009. The NCP has formed the electoral alliance with the Congress Party from its establishment in 1999. The Congress Party and NCP have remained the governing political parties in Maharashtra. The RPI (A) as a part of this alliance has also shared political power with the ruling political parties. However, while sharing political power with the governing political parties, the RPI (A) could not developed itself as decisive political party in the politics of Mumbai city.

With the advent of new economic policies in 1990s the Dalit politics in Mumbai has witnessed significant changes. The politics of the RPI in the city was basically premised on the notion of the politics of issues and politics of movement. In fact, the RPI was more concerned about the various issues related to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and other backward and weaker sections of the society. It launched various agitations for various demands of the Dalits in the city. The party workers and activists dedicatedly worked for the RPI. In the post-1991 period, with the changing circumstances the RPI politics received a serious setback. The RPI (A) also witnessed similar changes.

The Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance came into existence in 2011 which continue till today. The RPI (A)'s break up with the Congress Party-NCP and failure of the third front in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election of 2009 motivated the RPI (A) to shift its allegiances from the Congress-NCP to the Shiv Sena-BJP in spite of

ideological differences. It was primarily due to the political dilemma which the RPI (A) suffered after the Maharashtra Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. However, after the formation of the Shiv Sena-BJP-RPI (A) alliance, there were primarily two changes seen in the politics of the RPI (A) in Mumbai. Firstly, the RPI (A)'s 'politics of confrontation' with the Shiv Sena and BJP which claimed to be Hindutva political parties, has shifted into the 'politics of conciliation' under the banner of *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance. Secondly, the RPI (A)'s 'politics of issues' and 'politics of movements' which was distinct feature of the RPI, has also been shifted into the 'politics of interest'. These two main changes in the politics of the RPI (A) have been occurred during the post-1990 period.

1. From 'Confrontational Politics' to the 'Conciliation Politics':

This was the significant change occurred in the nature of the RPI (A) politics. The RPI (A) had engaged in contestation with the Shiv Sena and BJP on the basis of ideological differences. It was constantly claimed by Athawale that the Shiv Sena, BJP, Sangh Parivar has completely different ideology which always conflict with the Dalit movement and Dalit politics which is based on Ambedkarite ideology. It, therefore, stood opposed to the Shiv Sena and BJP. It was the continuation of the political strategy of the RPI in the post-1990 period. Athawale's collaborative politics with the Congress Party and NCP helped him to become the MLA and MP. While making alliances with the secular political parties, the RPI (A) maintained its ideological position in the politics. It also helped the RPI (A) to share political power. However, the politics of the RPI (A) shifted to politics of compromise with the Shiv Sena and BJP in 2011. While making this alliance the ideological differences were kept aside, and importance was given to the politics for the sake of power.

2. From 'Politics of Issues' to the 'Politics of Interest':

At the same time, the RPI (A)'s politics based on the issues of the Dalit population in the city was shifted to the politics of interest of the leaders and workers of the party. The primacy was given to their political ambitions. While claiming that the political power is essential for the empowerment of the Dalits in the city, the leaders and workers of the party became so engaged in the politics that they ignored the various issues of Dalit population. It affected the Dalit movement and Dalit politics in the city.

In the first chapter of this study, an argument has been made that the RPI politics in Bombay from the period of 1957 to 1990 was primarily based on the Ambedkarite thoughts, and the various agitations and struggles were conducted by the various RPI factions for different issues of the weaker and oppressed sections of the society, including the Scheduled Castes. Therefore, this period was marked by the 'politics of movements or agitations'. With the emergence of the Dalit Panther in the city, the movement received a radical form. Though the RPI was divided into number of factions, it agitated for Dalit issues. For instance, the Bhoomiheen Satyagraha, extension of constitutional concessions to the Scheduled Castes who converted to Buddhism, *Namantar Andolan*, Riddles issue, atrocity cases on Dalits, etc. were some of the issues upon which the RPI agitated relentlessly. Though the RPI accepted the Congress Party as its alliance partner in electoral politics, it remained away from the political organisations having Hindutva outfits. The RPI considered the Congress Party as the secular force which can create a strong opposition to the Hindutvawadi political parties. The Congress Party's endorsement of the secular polity in India had been appreciated by the RPI. In fact, there appears to be two primary reasons for the RPI's alliance with the Congress Party. First, it wanted to achieve political power which was possible only through alliance politics because the numerical minority of the Scheduled Castes and its division of votes among different political parties obstruct the RPI from winning elections. Secondly, the RPI wanted to create strong opposition to the casteist and communal political parties. It criticized the Shiv Sena and BJP for using the Hindutva as a political plank. Ambedkarite ideology has been against the Hindutvawadi political parties which seek to preserve caste system and promote Hindu nationalism. Due to these two reasons, the RPI found the Congress Party as the convenient alliance partner in the electoral politics. The all-inclusive character of the Congress Party also helped it to project itself as the secular force. The Scheduled Castes and Muslims has traditionally remained vote bank of the Congress Party. However, the RPI's alliance with the Congress Party also affected its politics in the city. The RPI started depending on the Congress Party for its electoral victories. The alliance helped the Congress Party to strengthen its hold on the Dalit politics in the city. On the other hand, the RPI politics in the city received a serious setback.

In the second chapter of this study, the focus has been given to the alliance politics of the RPI (A) with the Congress Party and NCP. An argument has been made

that the RPI (A) made electoral politics with the Congress Party and NCP from its origin to 2009 for the sake of political power. The Congress Party and NCP were the ruling political parties of the Maharashtra. It was convenient for the RPI (A) to make electoral alliance with them because through this alliance the RPI (A) claimed that it believed in the Ambedkarite ideology and therefore, it made political coalition with secular political parties like the Congress Party and NCP. However, instead of political coalition of the RPI (A) with the governing political parties, it could not benefit the RPI (A) to increase its organizational strength in the city. Only Athawale managed became the MLA and MP. The other leaders and party workers were remained away from the power politics. However, during this period the bargaining or instrumental politics of the RPI received more concentration. There has been a shift in the RPI (A) politics from the 'politics of agitations or movements' to the 'bargaining or instrumental politics'. The bargaining capacity of the RPI (A) was depended on its nature of political performance in its strongholds in the city. Due to such politics of the RPI (A), the Dalit movement started losing its aggression and dominance on the ruling political parties. It has been evident in some cases such as the killings of Dalits in Ramabai Ambedkar Colony in 1997, and the Khairlanji Massacre in 2006. The RPI (A) failed to pressurize the government to take action against such atrocities on Dalits, and provide remedies for its prevention. Only some sections of Dalit scholars, intellectuals, activists unitedly raised concern for the atrocities against Dalits in such instances. The leaders of the different Dalit political parties utilised various Dalit issues for their political gains.

In the present study, the third chapter has more significance. In this chapter, the nature of the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance has been analyzed. An argument has been made that the RPI (A) made political coalition with the Shiv Sena and BJP for sake of political power. In the changing circumstances, the RPI has to take this decision because the Congress Party and NCP had lost its influence in the politics of the central government and state government. At the same time, the relationships between Athawale and the Congress-NCP deteriorated after the Lok Sabha election of 2009. In such political situations, it was convenient for the RPI (A) to make alliance with the Shiv Sena-BJP. However, the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance had created deep impact on the RPI politics in the city. Ramdas Athawale, Arjun Dangle, Avinash Mahatekar criticized the Shiv Sena and BJP from many years. They regarded these political parties as Hindutvawadi, casteist, communalist and anti-Dalit. In fact, their alliance with the

Congress Party and NCP was based on the premise of opposition to the Shiv Sena and BJP. However, the RPI (A) had to take decision of alliance with the Shiv Sena and BJP because Athawale lost in the election of the Maharashtra Lok Sabha in 2009. Though Athawale was supported by the NCP and also contesting election from Shirdi reserved constituency, he was defeated by the Shiv Sena's candidate. Athawale held the conflicts between the Congress Party and NCP responsible for his defeat in the election. He, therefore, gave up alliance with the Congress Party and NCP. In the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections of 2009, Athawale formed the third front of political parties which were neither aligned to the Congress-NCP nor the Shiv Sena-BJP. However, this attempt of Athawale could not receive support from the people. Therefore, the RPI (A) had to form alliance with the Shiv-Sena and BJP in order to consolidate its position in the politics of the city. The main issue which was significant in the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance was the ideological deviation of the RPI (A) from the secular Ambedkarite ideology to the communal Hindutva ideology. Athawale and Dangle consistently argued that the *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance is merely a political, and it has nothing to do with the ideological compromise. However, it is evident that while making alliance politics, alliance partners have to take positions which would not affect their alliances. As mentioned in previous chapter, some intellectuals argued that the contemporary politics has been characterized by politics for the sake of power, and therefore, the role of ideology in the politics has declined significantly. Such articulation of the contemporary politics has resulted into the decrease in the pressure of Dalit masses on the Dalit leaders. The efficiency of the Dalit movement has not only depended on its ability to pressurize the governing political parties for the fulfillments of the demands of the Dalits, but also to pressurize the Dalit leaders for leading the struggle in this direction. The political experiment of the BSP-BJP alliance in U.P. has been projected as the example of the collaborative politics which helped the Dalit political party in U.P., to gain political power. Due to these circumstances, the RPI (A) has become soft in its approach towards the Hindutva politics. In fact, leaders of the RPI (A) are taking such positions which are helping the Shiv Sena and BJP to continue their Hindutva ideology. The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance has, thus, resulted into the soft approach of the RPI (A) towards opposition to the Hindutva ideology. The Dalit movement and politics in the city received serious drawback due to such politics of the RPI (A).

While looking at the present study, the four phases can be seen in the Dalit politics in Mumbai. First phase was the pre-independence phase in which the city experienced the strong communist movement on the one hand, and Dalit movement started by Ambedkar at the other hand. Both these movements were coexisting in the city. Though there were some differences between them, some collaboration was seen between these two movements during the ILP. The second phase was the post-independence period. The RPI politics was based on the anti-Congress approach. However, the collaboration politics started emerging between the Congress Party and the RPI from 1967. After this alliance, most of leaders of the RPI came under the control of the Congress Party due to its accommodation politics, and the RPI lost its autonomy and started depending more on other parties for its electoral victories. In the third phase, with the rise of the Dalit Panther movement, the politics of confrontation started against the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena and the Dalit Panther engaged in various conflicts due to their diverse ideologies. In the fourth and current phase, with the advent of liberalization, privatization and globalization in post-1991 period, the emphasis on the struggles and movements for the Scheduled Castes population of the city started decreasing, and the political ambitions of the leaders and party workers became more important. At the same time, ideological compromises were accepted for the sake of political power.

The *Shiv Shakti-Bhim Shakti* alliance has been appreciated by some scholars for its social engineering experiment, and a way to consolidate strong position of Dalits in the politics of the city. However, at the same time, the alliance received criticisms also. However, it is also argued by some scholars[1] that the RPI should follow its independent politics in the city. It should maintain its independent political identity. The Dalit politics in Mumbai should neither form alliance with the Hindutvawadi and conservative forces nor with 'secular' political parties such as the Congress Party and NCP which uses soft Hindutva for their political gains. Dhanraj Dahat argued that "Ambedkarite ideology should create a third front in opposition to existing two political poles (Congress-NCP and Shiv Sena-BJP). This third front should consist of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities. This was also the Ambedkar's

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[1] Dhanraj Dahat, *Teesari Shakti: Ambedkarvadi* (Nagpur: Sanket Prakashan, 2006); Abhay Kanta et. al., *Republicananchi Harakiri* (Pune: Parivartanacha Vatsaru, 2011).

concept of Republican Party of India."[2] However, such kind of attempt has already occurred in Mumbai. As mentioned earlier, the third front was formed in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly election in 2009. However, the third front could not achieve much electoral success in this election. Therefore, the third front was disintegrated. However, all constituent parties of the third front including the RPI (A) can unitedly agitate on many social issues relevant to poor backward sections of the society. Even if this third front cannot gain political power, it can successfully work as pressure group which can force the ruling government (either the Congress-NCP or the Shiv Sena-BJP) to fulfill the demands of the socially and economically backward sections of the society. In such a way, the RPI (A) can maintain its secular ideology.

The RPI has always remained at the periphery of the Mumbai's politics in the post-1990 period. Though the RPI (A) had alliance with the governing political parties, it could not come to the center of the politics of the city. The accommodation politics of the Congress-NCP and Shiv Sena-BJP has been responsible for this situation of the RPI (A) in Mumbai's politics.

There is a significant question raised on the Dalit politics in Mumbai. Though the political power is necessary for making changes in the existing situation, it is not the only means to create impact on the politics. The role of the agitations for the various issues cannot be ignored. At the same time, the role of the ideology in the politics cannot be ignored. The claims for the politics without ideology and 'politics for the sake of power' in the contemporary times cannot solve various issues. In fact, it will make the nature of politics meaningless and selfish. The question is not that whether Dalit political parties will achieve to political power or not. The main concern of the Dalit movement and politics is that whether it can decide the direction of the Dalit politics on the basis of Ambedkar's thoughts or not?

At the same time, participation of the large number of lumpen class in the party has also created deep impact on the Dalit politics in Mumbai. It led to the lack of trust of Dalit population on the Dalit political parties. However, there are some left organisations and Dalit organisations which are engaged with the Dalit issues, but these organisations are limited.

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[2] Dahat, *Teesari Shakti: Ambedkarvadi*, 98-99.

Today, there are number of atrocities being conducted on Dalits in rural areas. During early period of the RPI politics in Mumbai, it launched strong movement against the increasing cases of atrocities on Dalits in rural areas. These agitations received militancy with the rise of the Dalit Panther movement. The neo-Buddhists strongly engaged in these agitations to prevent increasing atrocities on Dalits. The contestation and confrontation against the dominant elites for the protection of the Dalits was the basic strategy of the Dalit Panthers. Though there was a difference in the strategies of the RPI and Dalit Panther in dealing with the atrocity cases, both were concerned about the Dalit issues. However, in the post-1991 the focus of the Dalit politics seems to be changed from these issues of Dalits. The RPI (A) was not exception to this change. It has becoming more concerned about its 'bargaining capacity' in electoral politics. In this process of bargaining/instrumentalist politics, the RPI has ignored its role in the struggle for the Dalit issues and engaged in electoral politics for the sake of power only. This kind of politics has been receiving support from the increasing middle class among the Dalits because this class has remained engaged in the process of globalization so much that their concern for the Dalit issues has diminished. At the same time, many contradictory alliance politics has taken place in the current political scenario.[3] Therefore, the dependency on the agitation or movement has declined. In such circumstance, the focus of the Dalit movement in Mumbai has been changing.

The present study has attempted to open up some of the important questions on the nature of Dalit movement and politics in the city of Mumbai. Firstly, the question raised on the ideological perception of the Dalit political parties. What is the role of an ideology in the power politics? Is gaining political power on the basis of alliance politics is more important in spite of ideological difference? Is it necessary for Dalit political parties to form political alliance with political parties having contesting ideologies? Secondly, does the instrumental politics or bargaining politics of the Dalit political parties resulted into the ignorance of the most of the issues related to the Dalit population in the city? These are some of the question which would determine the nature of the Dalit movement and politics in the city.

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[3] The Political alliance of the some of the prominent Dalit leaders such as Ramvilas Paswan and Udit Raj with the BJP before the Lok Sabha general elections of 2014.

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