

**NEO-BUDDHISM AND DALIT POLITICS IN
UTTAR PRADESH: EMERGING TRENDS**

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It is to certify that the dissertation entitled as “**Neo-Buddhism and Dalit Politics in Uttar Pradesh: Emerging Trends**” submitted by **Shiv Shankar Das** is in the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of **Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University**. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any degree in this University or any other University and is his work.

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Shiv Shankar Das

District Map of Uttar Pradesh



India

Source: www.mapsofindia.com

List of Abbreviations

BAMCEF	Backward And Minority Communities Employees' Federation
BSI	Buddhist Society of India
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CM	Chief Minister
DP	Dalit Panther
DS4	Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti
IJP	Indian Justice Party
LBC	Lord Buddha Club
MBC	Most Backward Caste
OBC	Other Backward Caste
RPI	Republican Party of India
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCF	Scheduled Caste Federation
SP	Samajwadi Party
ST	Scheduled Caste
UP	Uttar Pradesh
US	United States

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Introduction

From the beginning of the neo-Buddhist movement in India, it has been subjected to research from various vantage points in different disciplines such as sociological, anthropological, cultural, economic and political. However, the focus of the research on neo-Buddhism has been Maharashtra. Probably, it happened so as the movement in this region was very vibrant. The fact that according to 2001 census, 73.39% of the Buddhist population of India is concentrated in Maharashtra also attracts many researchers. Compared to this, Uttar Pradesh has a meager Buddhist population that is 3.79% of the total Buddhist population of India. Also, this group is scattered in different districts of the state. Therefore, it becomes difficult to carry out research at the state level in U.P as it is not in the case of Maharashtra. Yet, there are a few studies conducted in some districts. The works of Owen Lynch (1969) and Bellwinkel-Schempp (2007) are the examples, which have explored the understanding of neo-Buddhist movement in Agra and Kanpur district respectively. Both the studies have recorded social mobility among neo-Buddhists.

Being Buddhist has various meaning in varied situations. For some, it is 'alternative religiosity' which is basically rooted in traditional Indian social ethos, whereas others see it as a 'solace' to dalits who have been living their lives in stress. They see neo-Buddhism as a spiritual space linking with the world of Buddhist traditions.¹ Contrary to this, Ambedkar's conception of Buddhism is a departure in many ways, which can be understood only in the light of his book 'Buddha and His Dhamma' published posthumously in 1957. In the book he has defined Buddhism with his reasonable interpretation. His interpretation of Buddhism has a rational and a scientific approach to religion.² In the core teachings, there is rejection of superstitions, the rationality of insights

¹ Kamble, R. (2003). Contextualizing Ambedkarian Conversion. *EPW*, 38(41), p. 4306.

² Bellwinkel-Schempp, M. (2007). From Bhakti to Buddhism: Ravidas and Ambedkar. *EPW*. 42(23). pp. 2177-2183.

and internalization of beliefs.³ The reformulations brought by Ambedkar in Buddhism gave a new look to Buddhism and prefix 'neo' denotes it well. The basic tenets of it are somewhere different from the traditional Buddhism. There are basically three points on which Ambedkar disagreed to traditional Buddhism. First of all, Ambedkar questioned Buddha's 'parivraja'⁴ by which traditionally it is believed that the main reason of it is Buddha's coming across with a dead person, a sick person, and an old person. Ambedkar declared this as an absurd idea, and argues that Buddha took 'parivraja' at the age of twenty nine, and till this age it is not reasonable that Buddha could not have come across these sights.⁵ Thus, for him, there are some misconceptions about Buddha's life.

The second problem he raised on the four Aryan Truths which is considered as an original teaching of Buddha. Ambedkar's critical assessment is that these are later on interpolations. He thinks that four Aryan truths⁶ are stumbling block in the development of Buddhism, if life is sorrow, death is sorrow, and rebirth is sorrow then there is an end of everything.⁷ He views that *the four Aryan Truths make the gospel of the Buddha a gospel of pessimism*.⁸ The third problem he has noticed in traditional Buddhism is the doctrines of soul, of karma and rebirth. Ambedkar clearly want to say that the words used by Buddha such as soul, karma, and rebirth are different in sense as these are used now a days like Brahmins use it. The fourth crucial problem Ambedkar feel relates to the *Bhikkhu*, who are busy in performing religious rites and think as a perfect man, are selfish and also a stumbling block in Buddhism. Ambedkar declared that it is against the Buddha's objective to make *Sangha* and suggested to work as a 'social servant' devoting his life to service of the people and being their friend, guide and philosopher.

³Ibid.

⁴Gautam Buddha left his home in search of 'truth'.

⁵Ambedkar, B. (1957). *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. Nagpur: Buddha Bhoomi Publication.Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay.

⁶A) All existence is *dukkha*. B) The cause of *dukkha* is craving. C) The cessation of *dukkha* comes with the cessation of craving. d) There is a path that leads from *dukkha*.

⁷See B.R. Ambedkar, 1957. Introduction.

⁸Ibid.

All these problems raised by Ambedkar have a common concern that is originality of Buddha's message. He criticised the behaviour of the followers and intelligentsia who are lingering around the '*samadhi* and *vipasana*' as a Buddha's teaching.⁹ Ambedkar vehemently asks; Does the Buddha have no 'social message? The answer is certainly 'yes' for him, he has explained well in the book 'Buddha and His Dhamma' that dhamma is social. This interpretation of Ambedkar is the core of neo-Buddhism, which focuses on social emancipation more rather than any spirituality.¹⁰ The neo-Buddhism is basically a social philosophy of Ambedkar to liberate the marginalised sections of Indian society.

The question immediately comes to one's mind; Is neo-Buddhism a sufficient condition to liberate Hindu masses especially dalits? Ambedkar's life teaches that it is not a source of emancipation in a sole way but it has to be mixed with politics as well. His life struggle clearly tells that he had not only a close relation with the subject of religion, but also with politics as well throughout his life. He contested many elections and launched political outfits. For him, neo-Buddhism is to provide a social meaning, which must be strengthened by mixing it into political life. This means to say that political democracy in India requires a social change which neo-Buddhism may provide in a greater way. He argues that without social change, political democracy will not be a successful experiment. As he himself suggested,

Democracy is quite different from republic as well as from parliamentary government. The roots of democracy lie not in form of government, parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is a more than a form of government. A democracy is a mode of associated living. The roots of democracy are to be searched in social relationship in terms of associated life between the people who form the society.¹¹

The views of Ambedkar on democracy suggest to make Indian society based on the social relationship or fraternity. For him Hindu society is not based on social relationship but is

⁹Kamble R. (2003). p. 4306.

¹⁰Ambedkar opined that the function of religion is to reconstruct the world and to make it happy and not to explain its origin or its end. See. *BAWS*, Vol. 3, p. 442.

¹¹See Wankhede, H. (2008). The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today. *EPW*, 43(6), pp. 54-57.

based on graded inequality, that's why he argues for neo-Buddhism as most suitable philosophy to adopt by which a right order would be possible to establish. By embracing this philosophy he hoped that democracy would be strengthened. The whole political philosophy of Ambedkar, as he claims, is based on Buddha's teachings. Ambedkar reiterated this point on October 3, 1954 in an All India Radio Broadcast:

Positively my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality and fraternity. Let no one however say that I borrowed my philosophy from the French revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political sense. I have derived them from the teachings of my master the Buddha [...]. My philosophy has a mission. I have to do the work of conversion [to Buddhism].¹²

The above expression of Ambedkar clearly denotes his intention that to make India a strong democracy, she has to become a Buddhist nation. His motive came to halt as he died soon on 6 December 1956, just after two months of his conversion.

Ambedkar's call of conversion greatly influenced the Jatav community. The dynamics of it can be understood that Jatavs of Agra converted to Buddhism even before Ambedkar's actual conversion. The neo-Buddhism spread soon in all over U.P. The census of 1961 recorded a good number of Buddhists in western U.P. In latter decades it spread other parts of state. According to 2001 there are 302031 Buddhists, mostly neo-Buddhists. If we see social condition of Buddhists in U.P it is comparatively better than other communities in respect of sex ratio and literacy.

Statement of the Problem

As discussed above, the neo-Buddhists are growing in a significant numbers in Uttar Pradesh. And they are better off in some social aspects also. This raises two

¹² Quoted in C. Jaffrelot (2005), *India's Silent Revolution; the Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics*. Delhi: Permanent Black. p. 133.

questions: a) is this neo-Buddhist community emerging as an identity group? b) Does the identity group throws any challenge to the dalit politics in Uttar Pradesh? In this dissertation, I will try answer these two questions. I think these are important questions to ask as this will allow us to capture the emerging trends in the dalit politics.

Research Methodology

The study is based on primary as well as secondary data depending on the objective of my study. Primary information is collected from interviews and informal discussions and interaction with people from diverse background. Secondary data is gathered from various sources like books, governmental departments like census of India, election commission of India, official websites, newspapers, articles, reports, research studies and other published sources. The data was collected throughout the year starting from July 2008 to June 2009 from JNU central library, department library and census library New Delhi. These materials provided a broader view for the theme being explored. Interview with few people gave a deeper insight into the matter. It is however to state that the categorization into secondary and primary sources based on objectives, is not completely exclusive.

Scheme of the Chapters

This dissertation comprises of four chapters. The first chapter '*Rise of Neo-Buddhism Uttar Pradesh: Analysis of Census Data*' starts with the analysis of various census data on Uttar Pradesh's religious communities as mentioned in the last five censuses (1951-2001). The purpose is to locate neo-Buddhist community numerically, socially and economically. To accomplish the purpose, chapter is divided into three sections and each one of them shows the things with some tables, and figures. The first section deals with the numerically position of various religious communities and shows the emerging trends of change in the religious identities. The possible reasons for the

significant growth rate are also discussed. The second section discusses socio-economic condition of neo-Buddhists based on the indicators like literacy and sex ratio.

The second chapter, '*Neo-Buddhism and Dalit Politics: A Review of Literature*' explores the academic writings on the dalit movement in Uttar Pradesh. The chapter is divided in two parts. The first part comprises of those writings which are not throwing a significant light on the neo-Buddhism and its relation with dalits in UP. The second part discusses those writings which are taking cognizance of the neo-Buddhist assertion in Uttar Pradesh politics.

The third chapter titled as '*Making of Neo-Buddhist Identity in Uttar Pradesh*' is to understand the neo-Buddhist community as an identity group. The chapter is divided into two sections mainly. The first section stands for a theoretical framework on identity. The second section is an effort to look neo-Buddhist identity into the framework as established in the first section. In this section, I have tried to explain the process of identity formation, consolidation and assertion in case of neo-Buddhist group in Uttar Pradesh.

The fourth chapter in this dissertation entitled as '*Neo-Buddhism and Political Parties: Dynamics of Relations*' is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the neo-Buddhist movement and its initial relations with dalit politics. The second part discusses the neo-Buddhism in the perspective of dalit led political parties such as Indian Justice Party and Bahujan Samaj Party.

Chapter 1

Rise of Neo-Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh: Analysis of Census Data

“The Hindu masses when they are enlightened are sure to turn to Buddhism”

-- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar¹

Dr. Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), a vigorous advocate of Buddhism known as Navayana Buddhism in modern India, triggered off a wave of the revival of Buddhism all over the country.² He declared of himself, while speaking in Yeola conference (Nasik) in 1935, that he was born as a Hindu but would not die as a Hindu.³ In October 1956, on the occasion of 2500th birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha he fulfilled this promise as he embraced Buddhism, with his millions of followers in Nagpur (Maharashtra) in the ceremony called *Dhamma Diksha*.⁴ Before his conversion he studied for twenty one years all the religions of India and came to conclusion that Buddhism

¹In 1950, Ambedkar wrote on *Buddha and His Dhamma in The Future`* in the Vaisakha (Spring) issue of the *Maha Bodhi* journal where he condemned Hinduism as of no morality, and full of inequality. See BAWS, Vol. 17 (2). 103. or Eleanor Zelliot, *Ambedkar's Conversion* (New Delhi: Critical Quest, 2005), 21.

²In press conference on 13th October 1956 Ambedkar responding one correspondent used the word *Navayana* to which he converted next day. Though the word *Navayana* is dubbed as Neo-Buddhism by some academicians, which is subject of a contestant among its followers objecting its prefix 'Neo'. See David Pandyan, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Dynamics of Neo-Buddhism* (New Delhi: Gyan Pub. House, 1996), 201-202. The 'Neo' means, 'new', 'later', revived in modified form', and based upon. (See. Collins English Dictionary, 1998 Ed.) Here the purpose is not to discuss the linguistic problems in the words. In this, above meaning has been accepted for both the words.

³See Hari Narake, N. G. Kamble, Dr. M. L. Kasare, Ashok Godghate, ed., *BAWS*, Vol. 17(3), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Egalitarian Revolution: Speeches*, by Dr. Ambedkar (Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 2003), 95. The similar willing is found in his undelivered speech of 'Annihilation of Caste'(1937) which he was suppose to deliver in Arya Samaj's Jat-Pat-Todak-Mandal but could not permitted due to containing in it his 'voice' in favour of conversion.

⁴Ambedkar's idea of Diksha ceremony was mandatory aspect of conversion. As he said in one of his letter "Everyone who wishes to be converted to Buddhism shall have to undergo through ceremony. Otherwise he will not be regarded as a Buddhist." See. Hari Narake, N. G. Kamble, Dr. M. L. Kasare, Ashok Godghate, ed., *BAWS*, Vol. 17(1), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Egalitarian Revolution: Struggle for Human Rights*. by Dr. Ambedkar (Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 2003), 430.

should be considered as the best option.

Many believe that the religious dilemma of the ex-untouchables was ultimately solved with his resolution of 1956 by converting to Buddhism with additional twenty two vows. Ambedkar enlightened the ex-untouchables by introducing them with India's glorious egalitarian past based on the rich cultural history of Buddhism which was absolutely in contrast with the existing dynamics of caste.⁵ Subsequently, all over the country there was an exodus of dalits from Hinduism in a very large number and asserted Buddhism as their original religion in public.⁶ The miraculous growth of 1671 percent of Buddhists in India over the figure of 180823 as it rose 3250227 just in five years 1956-1961, has never been seen in the history of any religion in the world.⁷ According to the eminent Buddhist scholar of modern India D. C. Ahir, the post 1956 period is the period of the revival of Buddhism with intense activity which can aptly be called as '*Ambedkar Era of Indian Buddhism*'.⁸

The present chapter will show that there is a sizable growth in the Buddhist population in U.P in last five decades. I would like to argue that this phenomenal growth can not be due to increase in the birth rate as the national decadal average of birth rate has never been so high. This makes it clear that the phenomenal growth of Buddhist population is due to conversion of the SC population into Buddhism. This conversion is the continuation of Ambedkar's strategy for liberation of dalits from the caste hierarchy

⁵See Eleanor Zelliot, *Gandhi and Ambedkar- A Study in Leadership*, ed. J. Michael Mahar (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1972), 76.

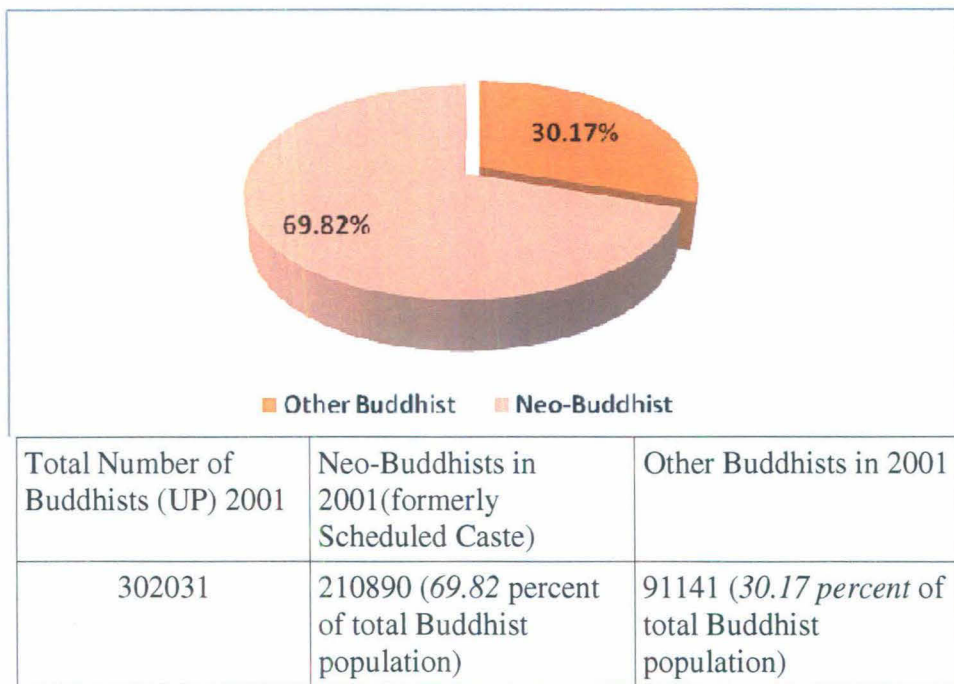
⁶The basic teaching of Ambedkar is that Buddhism is an indigenous Indian religion of equality which is anti caste and anti Brahman. According to myths, in ancient India all were equal and no was untouchables until Brahmans spread the teachings of Hinduism. By this argument it proves that the former untouchables are originally Buddhists (See Own Lynch; *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Myth and Charisma* 1972, p. 99). The assertion of ex-untouchables as Buddhists was in full public view rather than keeping religion in private which has been traditionally in the society. On the contrary, Dalit-Bahujan discourse on Religion it is not individual or private as Ambedkar argued "It is an error to look upon religion as a matter which is individual, private and personal.....religion becomes a source of positive mischief if not danger when it remains individual, private and personal." (See Valerian Rodrigues (ed.). 2002, *The Essential Writings of B R Ambedkar*. (New Delhi, OUP), 225.

⁷See D.C. Ahir. *Buddhism in India after Dr. Ambedkar (1956-2002)* (New Delhi: Blumoon Books, 2003), 40.

⁸Ibid.

of Hinduism. Ambedkar reformulated the Buddhism which is also called as neo-Buddhism. Therefore, in the census though it is mentioned only Buddhism, but seeing the above reasons I will prefer to call the Buddhist community as a neo-Buddhist community. This becomes further clear as we see the census report of 2001. According to the Census of 2001, the number of Scheduled Castes who follow Buddhism is 210890 out of 302031, which constitutes 69.83 percent population of total Buddhists of the state.⁹

Figure: 1 Percentage Share of Neo-Buddhists and other Buddhist in Uttar Pradesh (Census 2001)



Source: Uttar Pradesh The Data Highlights: Scheduled Castes, Census of India 2001.

The data is evident of the most attractive religion of Scheduled Caste for conversion which constitutes 0.6 percent of total Scheduled Caste population and 3.74 percent total Buddhist population of India. Such a high growth rate of Buddhists can not be its internal growth rate which is calculated on the basis of high birthrate and low mortality rate. No community is recorded in the history with such a high growth rate. It is

⁹This is the first time in the census of Uttar Pradesh that the figure of converted Buddhists of Scheduled caste background is provided. Though this figure is not given in detailed district wise format; but overall this is a breakthrough in itself.

seen to be beyond doubt that this must have happened due to mass conversion drive, especially among the Scheduled Castes. After 1990s, one of the reasons of conversion to Buddhism by SCs is the extension of same facilities as they were having being SCs before conversion. The above point is vindicated by Mahendra K. Premi, as he argues that

There have been changes in the Acts on “religion” by the parliament at various points of time; for example, *exceptional growth of Buddhists in some states was due to many Scheduled Caste people converting themselves to Buddhism* and continuing to get benefits applicable to the Scheduled Castes.¹⁰

Here one point seems to be clear that the trends shown in the census regarding high growth rate of Buddhism was basically due to conversion of dalits into neo-Buddhism. The ‘extension of reservation’ for neo-Buddhists in 1990s may be a boosting factor for conversion but it may not sole factor because the figures of previous census of 1991 also have shown a significant increase in the numbers of Buddhists. If reservation is the only factor then there would not have been so high growth of Buddhism before 1991. In fact, it goes without doubt that, the ideological inspirations of Ambedkar must have been playing significant role in motivating the dalits to go for conversion.

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation for the argument I am going to build up in this dissertation; the neo-Buddhists which have a sizable population of dalits in U.P have started articulating its interest and emerging as an identity. This community is better off on some social indicators, and backward economically in comparison of dalits¹¹. This in future might be an internal challenge to the existing dalit politics. I will try to locate this trend in the third and fourth chapters.

¹⁰See Premi Mahendra K., *Population of India, In the Millennium: Census 2001*, (New Delhi: NBT, 2006), 167.

¹¹ Dalit, Scheduled Caste and Untouchable are interchangeable.

1.1 Neo-Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh:

As we know, Uttar Pradesh is the third largest and most populated state in India, and it has a significant place in Indian polity. As the population data of the world tells us that out of 41 persons, one person belongs to Uttar Pradesh. According to census of 2001, the population of Uttar Pradesh is more than the countries of the world except the population of China, US, Indonesia, Brazil and Russian Republic. Out of this huge population the Scheduled Castes constitutes 22 percent (Census 2001). This sizable presence of SC population determines the political dynamics of state. Any change in number due to mass conversion to other group obviously becomes politically significant in a liberal democracy with universal adult suffrage. In Indian politics, religious conversion has always been a matter of importance, conflict and violence. The change of religious identities has triggered off many debates in politics.

Traditionally, the Scheduled Caste (who were treated as untouchable) community has been the most backward community of Uttar Pradesh in terms of social and economic parameters. To overcome the apathetic situation the community has sometimes challenged the dominant Hindu social order also. Kabir, Ravidas, Achhutanand, has been the symbol of voice of disadvantaged since centuries. In modern India the community has added one more hero in its list that is Dr. Ambedkar who fought for their rights constitutionally, socially, culturally and politically. His ideals and visions are of much importance for the empowerment of socially neglected, politically subjugated, culturally destroyed and economically exploited community.

As it is well known that one of the visions of Dr. Ambedkar to empower the Scheduled Castes was to transform India as a *Prabudha Bharat* (Enlightened India), where the values of Gautam Buddha such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice would prevail. There is no doubt that the mass drive of conversion to neo-Buddhism in 1956 was a move towards this goal. Thus we see that the philosophy of Ambedkar is very

much respected among the SCs, which is also evident in increasing numbers of neo-Buddhist population. It seems in U.P that no politics is possible without using Ambedkar as a political symbol. In this context it would be pertinent to see the impact of Ambedkar on SCs as his conversion into neo-Buddhism triggered off a significant wave in UP.

The conversion call, given by Ambedkar in 1956, greatly impressed the untouchables of Uttar Pradesh, especially the Jatavs which is the most dominating Scheduled Caste community. The Jatavs welcomed the historic move of conversion by accepting Ambedkar as their cultural hero, and consequently organized many conversion ceremonies. The former untouchables of Agra responded to Ambedkar's mass conversion drive in 1957 and subsequently removed the Hindu deities from 22 temples and converted them into Buddhist temples.¹² In Lucknow, the successor of Bodhanand, Bhante Pragyanand, organized conversion ceremonies to Buddhism in 1957.¹³ The role of dalit led political outfit RPI was immense to make neo-Buddhist movement widely accepted at that time. RPI demanded the extension of 'reservation facilities' to neo-Buddhist in 1960s, and its leader actively promoted dalits to convert to Buddhism.¹⁴ RPI is the example of combination of dalit politics and neo-Buddhism.

Besides Agra and Lucknow, if we look at census reports it reveals that conversion drive of Scheduled Castes was not confined to these two districts only. In 1961 census, the Buddhist population in large number is noted, especially in western part of Uttar Pradesh like Agra, Meerut, Aligarh, Bareilly Bijnor and Pilibhit districts.¹⁵ The other important places of mass conversion drive are noted in Kanpur, Lucknow, and Mirzapur districts.¹⁶ Subsequently, the Buddhist population is recorded with a great leap in all parts of Uttar Pradesh. Eight of its twelve districts, where there was no representation in 1951

¹²Owen M. Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability, Social Mobility and Change in a City of India* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), 149.

¹³Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, (eds). *Reconstructing the World: B R Ambedkar and Buddhism in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 237.

¹⁴Lynch, 1969, pp. 104-109

¹⁵See annexure 2.

¹⁶*ibid.*

census, also recorded Buddhists population in large numbers in later census.¹⁷ It shows that the dynamism of neo-Buddhism is not confined to any specific area but it's impact is everywhere. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore this dynamism in polity.

According to 2001 census the number of Buddhist population in Uttar Pradesh showed an unprecedented increase of 11899 percent over the 1951 figure of 2517 as it rose to 302031 in 2001 census. The average growth rate of Buddhists (1951-2001) noticed a whooping lead with 194.36 percent against very small average population growth rate of 22.37 percent.¹⁸ The average growth rate of Buddhists (1951-2001) surpassed all the religious communities with a huge margin Hindus (61.92 percent), Muslims (71.56 percent), Christians (48.31 percent), Jains (54.82 percent) and Sikhs (77.79 percent).¹⁹ The trend of whooping growth rate shows that neo-Buddhism is a great matter of public importance, and in democratic politics it is hard to avoid this trend.

To elaborate upon this point further we can have a look at the census data. The growth rate of Buddhist community since 1951 to 2001 is shown as per the census records in last 50 years with the help of tables and charts. As we know there are many changes in geographical boundary of U.P, so the population of other than existing boundary is deducted from the data which is presented and analysed. For, example, Uttaranchal has been carved out from U.P in 2000, so the population of that is deducted not only from 2000 onwards but since 1951 to make study up-to-date. All the data is deducted district-wise in the chapter, and are also clubbed sometimes purposefully. To make things more clear it may be very helpful to look annexure I and II.

1961 onwards the growth rate of Buddhists has been the highest among all the religious communities. No religious community in the modern history of Uttar Pradesh

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸The data is calculated according to present boundary of Uttar Pradesh from 1951-2001 derived from the various Census Reports and Abstracts of Uttar Pradesh. See annexure I.

¹⁹This data is based on present boundaries of Uttar Pradesh and Utrakhand jointly. If the Buddhist population growth rate of 1951-2001 is derived jointly of both states it is 98.97 percent which is also highest among all major religious communities.

has been recorded with such a high growth rate as Buddhists. The following three tables make the picture much clear.

Table 1: Decadal Population Growth Rate of Uttar Pradesh²⁰

Growth in percentage	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Buddhist	316.28	235.42	35.14	340.29	44.80
Total Population	16.38	19.67	25.40	24.56	25.84

Source: Census of India 1951-2001.

Table 2: Composition of Uttar Pradesh Population

Census Year	Total Population	Buddhists
1951	60693755	2517
1961	70640045	10478
1971	84539184	35056
1981	106016301	47373
1991	132061753	208583
2001	166197921	302031

Source: Census of India data on Uttar Pradesh

²⁰The figures are derived from the Census Reports of Uttar Pradesh 1951-2001 after district wise drawing the figures according to present boundary of state.

Table 3: Buddhist Population Growth 1951-2001 Area-wise

Area/Division	1951-1961	1961-1971	1971-1981	1981-1991	1991-2001
Agra	4576	11343	17109	43044	60624
Allahabad	860	5130	4822	11915	23924
Banaras	553	580	1816	20358	34988
Faizabad	111	103	404	12594	23570
Gorakhpur	202	289	1302	37768	58724
Jhansi	188	1847	1919	12327	7568
Lucknow	350	1708	10139	37422	48512
Merrut	2464	11819	7365	17664	16448
Rohilkhand	1174	2327	2697	15491	27673
Total	10478	35146	47373	208583	302031

Table 1, 2 and 3 shows, the growth rate of neo-Buddhists is very high in comparison of the growth of national population. It has increased to 119.99 percent in 50 years (1951-2001). The detailed study of increasing Buddhist numbers can be studied under three phases.

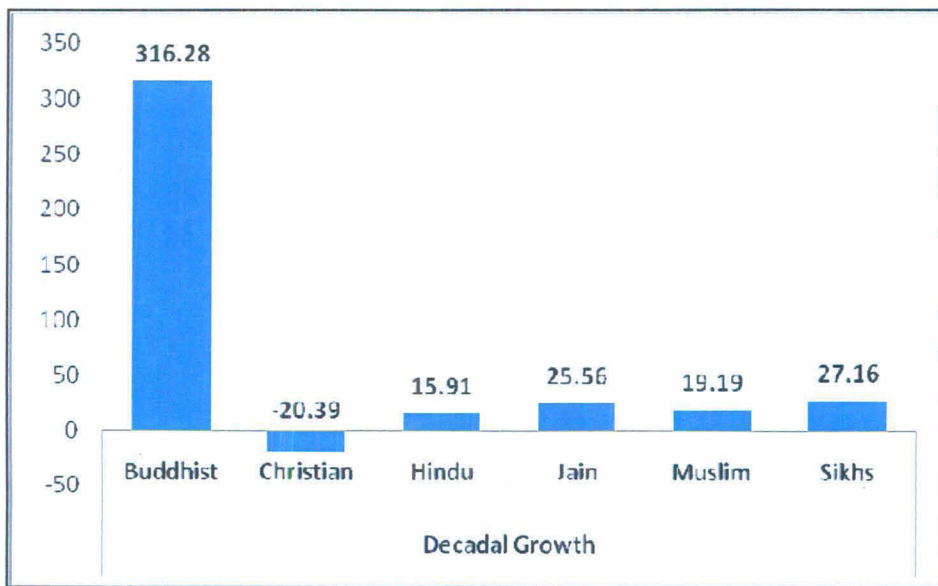
(a): Census 1961-1981(Three Decades)

Uttar Pradesh has been the cradle of Buddhism in ancient Indian history. The religion of rulers and masses declined from the land of its birth and flourishing, and reduced to only 2517 people (0.004 percent of total population of state) in 1951. Before the strengthening of Buddhism in the decade of 50's it had become completely extinct in 12 of its prominent districts viz. Gonda (Plus Balrampur of today), Sultanpur, Barabanki, Kheri, Sitapur, Unnao, Azamgarh, Basti (Plus Siddhartha Nagar and St. Kabir Nagar of today), Mirzapur (Plus Sonbhadra of today), Rampur, Pilibhit and Sahajahnpur.²¹

²¹According to Census Reports of 1951 U.P, twelve of districts were reported having no Buddhists at all.

The districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh which were once the main centers of Buddhism lost its charm due to some adverse situations like the removal of the political patronage since 6th century²² and antagonism of Brahmanism.²³ In the reign of Mauryas and Kaniskas the Buddhist art and culture was at its zenith which reduced to the lowest by 1960's. The documents of Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang presents mesmerizing picture of Buddhism during his visit in the 5th century A.D. According to him there were 30 monasteries and many stupas of Buddhist art and architecture. Sarnath and Shravasti have been very reverent places not only for the Buddhists of Uttar Pradesh but also for the Buddhists across the world. The other Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hian who visited Uttar Pradesh in the 7th Century A.D. and Wu-Kung in 8th Century A.D demonstrates the Buddhist monuments during their ages.²⁴

Figure: 2 Growth Rate of Religious Communities in U.P (Census 1961)



Source: Census of India 1951 and 1961

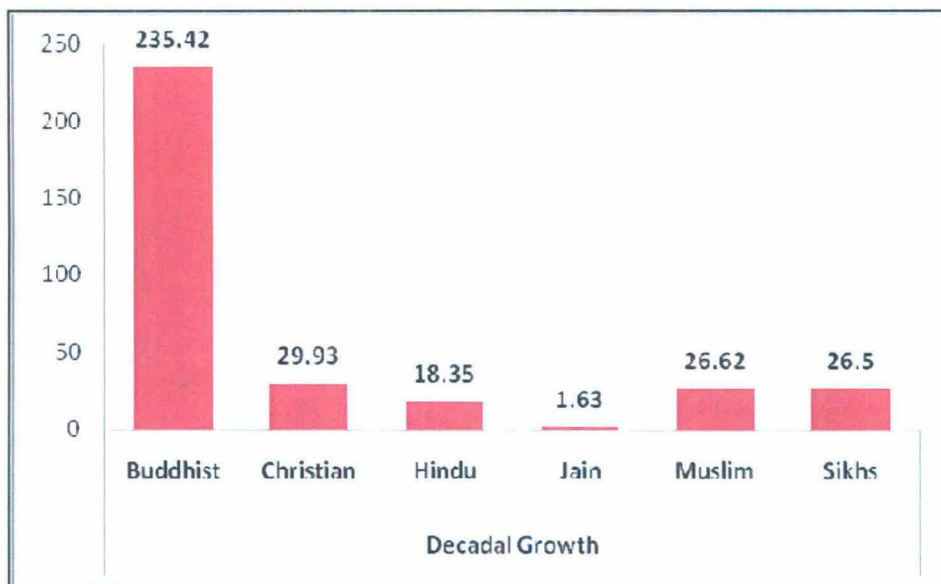
²² N. Dutt and K. D. Bajpai, *Development of Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh*, (Lucknow: Publication Bureau, Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1956), 308-326.

²³ N. K. Singh (ed.), *Ambedkar on Religion* (New Delhi: Anmol, 2000), 349.

²⁴ Dutt and Bajpai 1956, pp. 308-326

In the census of 1961 the number of Buddhists multiplied fourfold and reached 10478 (0.014 percent of total population of U.P) with the splendid growth rate of 316.28 percent against overall growth rate of 16.38 percent. This splendid growth of Buddhists has left behind all religious communities like Christian (-20.39 percent), Hindu (15.91 percent), Jain (25.56 percent), Muslim (19.19 percent) and Sikhs (27.16 percent). The Hindu and Christian communities could not even manage average decadal growth rate.²⁵

Figure: 3 Growth Rate of Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh (Census 1971)



Source: Census of India 1961 and 1971.

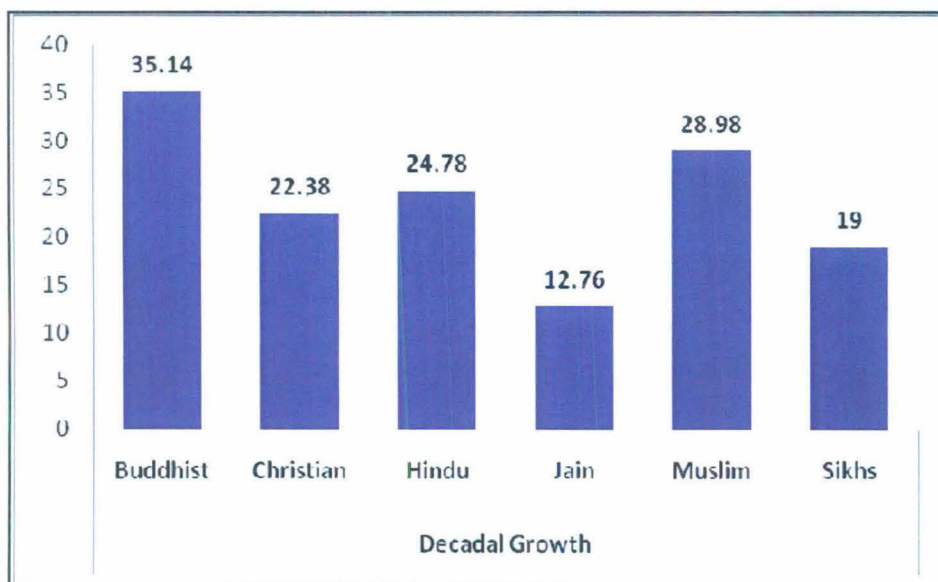
The Figure 3 shows in census of 1971, another great leap of Buddhism. In this decade the Buddhist population growth rate recorded 235.42 percent against the total population growth rate of 19.64 percent only. The number of Buddhists jumped to 35,056 over the 10,478 of the previous census. One more noticeable thing in the development of Buddhism in 1971 census is increase in popularity and conversion of Buddhism in western and central part of Uttar Pradesh instead of eastern part which had been the center of Buddhist teachings traditionally. The traditional prestigious centre of Buddhism

²⁵ For districtwise growth, see Annexure II.

such as Banaras, Kushi Nagar and Shravasti did not witness the wave of the revival of Buddhism in its splendid manner as happened in the western part of the state miraculously. The administrative divisions where the Buddhist population jumped miraculously in census of 1971 were Agra (11343), Meerut (11739), Allahabad (5130), Rohilkhand (2327) Jhansi (1847) and Lucknow (1708), while the Administrative divisions of eastern Uttar Pradesh such as Banaras (580), Gorakhpur (289) and Faizabad (103) could not even touch the thousand marks.²⁶

The census of 1981 showed the slowest growth rate of Buddhism (35.31 percent) since its revival in 1961 census. But even then when compared to other religious communities the growth rate of Buddhism has surpassed all the other religious communities viz. Christian (22.38 percent), Hindu (24.78 percent), Jain (12.76 percent), Muslim (29.28 percent) and Sikh (19.00 percent).

Figure: 4 Growth Rate of Major Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh (Census 1971-1981)



²⁶ Ibid.

Source: Census of India 1971 and 1981

The administrative divisions of eastern Uttar Pradesh where there was slow progress in previous census recorded a remarkable jump in this decade. The divisions such as Banaras, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Faizabad touched the new heights jumping their numbers to 1816, 1302, 10139, and 404 respectively. The decadal growth rate of Banaras, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Faizabad divisions is recorded as 213.10 percent, 350.51 percent, 493.61 percent and 292.23percent respectively. The Agra division of western Uttar Pradesh only maintained a comparatively better growth rate in western Uttar Pradesh touching 50.83percent against the overall Buddhist decadal growth rate of 35.51percent. The administrative divisions where the growth rate of Buddhism was minimal are Rohilkhand (15.90 percent) and Jhansi (3.89 percent). The negative growth rate is recorded in Meerut (-37.26 percent), and Allahabad (-6.00 percent) divisions.²⁷

Stimulating Factors of Splendid Growth Rate

In the above description we have seen that in 1961, 1971 and 1981 census there is a significant growth in Buddhist population. According to general reports on 1961 census there are two reasons for the high growth rate of Buddhism: (a) The most important factor which contributed to the enhancement of the Buddhist population of the state with the stipulated growth rate of 316.28 percent has been phenomenal on account of a large scale conversions especially from amongst the Scheduled Castes of Hindus and (b) migration of a large number of Tibetans, all Buddhists, in 1959, when the Dalai Lama sought political asylum in India subsequent on the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese.²⁸ The first reason is reflected in the available studies as a vibrant reason behind the splendid growth rate of Buddhist. The Hindu untouchable community of many districts of western Uttar Pradesh (Agra, Aligarh, Meerut and Pilibhit) claimed themselves as Buddhists and began to assert that Dr. Ambedkar as their cultural hero. Particularly, the Jatav which is the most important dalit community in U.P accepted him as their hero and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See General Report on the Census; Census of India, Vol. XV Uttar Pradesh, Part I-A (ii), p. 128

that came to many as surprise because he did not belong to the Jatav caste of Uttar Pradesh but was born in Mahar caste in Maharashtra state. In spite of the fact that he did not belong to the Jatav community; he was received as their 'own' hero. This thing for some sociologist is a unique incident in history of India where primordial loyalties plays an important role. But in the case of Ambedkar all these things became secondary and he was accepted as their 'own' hero because of similarities in the experiences of Ambedkar and Jatav community of U.P As, Lynch argues,

He has become the culture hero of the Jatavs, and the attention he receives borders on worship. This is at first surprising because Ambedkar was not a Jatav from Uttar Pradesh; he was, on the contrary, a Mahar from the state of Maharashtra. These two facts, different caste and different regional affiliation, might ordinarily disqualify a man for leadership in India where such primordial loyalties run deep and sharply separate one group from another. Much of the impetus to the Jatavs' unusual selection of Ambedkar as their leader lies in the similarities of their life histories with his. Ambedkar's life epitomizes the painful realities, knotty problems, and radical solutions which has been part of their own lives; it was, thus, easy to transcend narrower loyalties of caste and region by identifying with him..... The Jatavs feel that Ambedkar's experiences and their own are identical. Because of this they follow him and adopt his methods and ideas for overcoming their own problems. Legends, like ideas, sometimes have consequences.²⁹

The above description of Lynch makes point more clear how Ambedkar, who is different from the U.P's Jatav community in terms of caste and region, has been accepted. Why did Jatavs accept Ambedkar as their ideal? The answer is 'commonality of experiences' which was main threads connected Ambedkar to Jatav community. Both were victim of caste hierarchy and untouchability, so they admired his ideas and methods to change their life. As Lynch further writes, "the outstanding reverence to Dr. Ambedkar among the Jatavs had some reasons which helped in the wide acceptance of Ambedkar as their unquestionable hero and his interpretation of Buddhism as a substantive scope for

²⁹ Lynch 1969, pp. 130-131.

an alternative identity”.³⁰ Buddhism gave them a ray of hope- a set of fundamental values and an ideal model of society. And as Lynch argues, “*to make these a reality Jatavs have taken to political action*”.³¹

There are several reasons for the overwhelming support to Ambedkar, in which the first is cultural. By cultural component Lynch meant a heritage of literature, myths, art, symbols and values of Jatavs. For him, there are two prominent north Indian traditions of Jatavs- (a) religious tradition of Kabir and Ravi Das; (b) and heroic tradition of Alha and Udal. Both the traditions have fought against Hinduism and untouchability. In the struggle of religious tradition Kabir and Ravi Das rejected caste dimensions of Hinduism and their teachings are very much similar to Ambedkar’s message. Both the figures of religious tradition rejected Hinduism and preached equality. Ambedkar fits in both the traditions. He continued first traditions of Kabir and Ravidas by his vehement opposition for Hinduism and caste system. He regarded Kabir as one of his Gurus along with Jyotirao Phule and Gautam Buddha. Thus as a religious reformer, like Kabir, he was easily accepted by the Jatavs. The heroic sense of similarity between Ambedkar and Jatavs is attempted to establish by the heroic work of Alha and Udal (supposedly as untouchables) who by heroic deeds helped King Parmal in his war against Prithviraj³² and proved that untouchables are great warriors in *heart, word, and deed*. In the same way Jatavs believe that the work of Ambedkar against untouchability, his fight for education and his role as the fathers of Indian Constitution is similar to their traditional heroes, Alha and Udal.³³

The second reason is a historical link between the Jatavs of Agra and Ambedkar’s struggle. The Jatavs initially contacted Ambedkar and sent a telegram supporting him over Gandhi in 1930-31 during the second round table conference in which a bitter dispute arose between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The Jatavs felt Ambedkar’s position was

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid, pp. 127-128.

³²The 12th century Chauhan ruler of Delhi.

³³Lynch, O. (1972). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar- Myth and Charisma. In J. M. Mahar (Ed.), *The Untouchables in Contemporary India*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. 107. And, Lynch 1969, pp. 140-141.

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correct. The other historical linkage enhanced with the many visits to Agra and giving priority rating for the railroad shipping of Agra shoes during World War II when he had power as a member for labor in central cabinet.

The third reason lies in Ambedkar's structural position. He was a revolutionary which has one commonality with the Jatavs i.e. both were untouchables under the codified structure of society in Hinduism. This commonality strengthened the feelings that "*he is one of our men*" one who could really understand as an insider their problems and feelings and attained status of great prestige, power, and responsibility in India. The fourth reason of overwhelming support for Ambedkar by Jatavs is symbolic importance of Ambedkar. The charismatic image of Ambedkar which emerged from his glorifying deeds had a lastly prominent influence on the Jatavs.

The continuous increasing Buddhist population and its popularity among Scheduled Castes show the relevance of 'Ambedkar and neo Buddhism' for them. The credit of carrying the message of neo Buddhism after Ambedkar goes to the parent organization established by him like The Buddhist Society of India (Bhartiya Baudh Mahasabha) and the Republican Party of India. The BSI was registered by Dr. Ambedkar on 4th May 1955 in the office of the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai, it had a very active work all over India, and in UP, Agra was a main city of its activities.³⁴ The leaders of these organizations actively participated in the conversion drive and by their efforts convinced the untouchables to accept neo-Buddhism for their ray of hope to overcome the age-old social and mental slavery which Ambedkar hope would come to an end after conversion to Buddhism.

Though, in the census of 1961 and 1971 Buddhism is seen as taking new feet all over Uttar Pradesh. But the overall analysis of 1981 census is very important to know the causes of the slow progress of Buddhism in comparison of previous census. A unique

³⁴See Fiske, A. (1972). Scheduled Caste Buddhist Organisations. In J. M. Mahar (Ed.), *The Untouchables in Contemporary India* (pp. 112-142). Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 118.

methodology was followed for the 1981 census. The figures of religion for 1961, 1971, 1991 and 2001 are based on the religion of every individual whereas the figures presented in 1981 were based on the religion of the head of the household. Thus most probably it seems that the slow growth rate of Buddhism was reported due to this factor. The argument behind this is that the conversion of untouchables is found mainly in new educated young people within a family and not by the chief of a household and their entire family. The positive stimulating factor in this period for high growth is again conversion of dalit community in it. Bellwinkel (2007) writes that during 1970s after weakening of RPI, Dalit Panthers came as a vibrant non-political group, by which many conversion drives were performed.³⁵

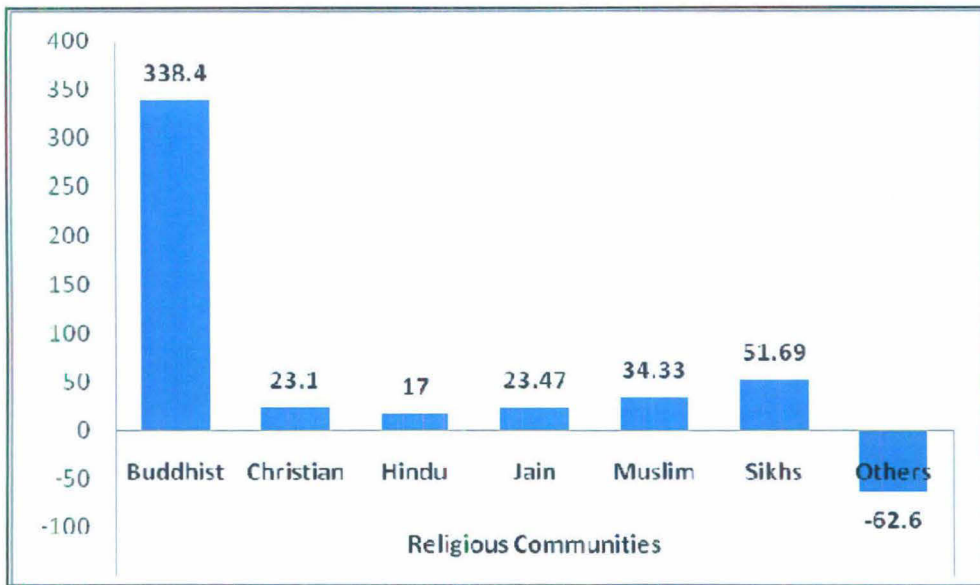
(b) Census of 1991 and 2001 (Two Decades)

In the census year of 1991 and 2001 there is splendid growth rate of Buddhist population. In the modern history of the revival of Buddhism, the census year, 1991 recorded the highest growth rate of Buddhists (338.44 percent), while Hindu population growth rate was found at another nadir point (i.e.), 17.03 percent against the overall population growth rate of 24.56 percent. The growth rate of Buddhists among the divisions in descending order is Faizabad (3017.32 percent), Gorakhpur (2800.76 percent), Banaras (1021.03 percent), Jhansi (542.36 percent), Rohilkhand (474.37 percent), Lucknow (269.08 percent), Agra (151.58 percent), Allahabad (147.09 percent) and Meerut (139.83 percent). The comparative analysis of the development of Buddhism with other religions is charted below.³⁶

³⁵Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp, 2007, p. 2181, *EPW*.

³⁶The figures are charted on the basis of Census of India 1981 and 1991.

Figure: 5 Growth Rate of Buddhism with other Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh (Census 1991)

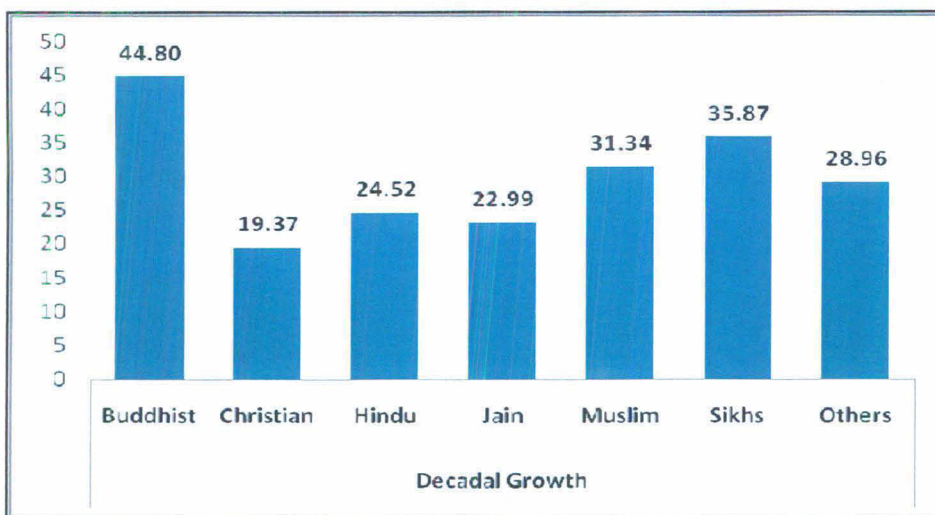


Source: Census of India 1981 and 1991

Figure 5 clearly shows the splendid horizontal growth rate of Buddhism winning over all other communities such as Hindu, Muslim, Jain, and Christian has no match.

During the decade (1991-2001) the average population growth of Uttar Pradesh is observed to be 25.84 percent, while the Buddhist population observed the growth rate of 44.80 percent which is the highest among all other religious communities.

**Figure: 6 Decadal Growth Rate of Religious Communities in Uttar Pradesh
(Census 2001)**



Source: Census of India 1991 and 2001

Though, it is true that the Buddhist growth rate is not observed with much tempo in comparison with the previous census but the numbers have multiplied and established its importance in splendid manner. The other communities in the decade which failed to touch even the average mark are Hindu, Jain and Christian. In Allahabad division the net Hindu population growth is recorded as 22.36 percent which is less than the average. While Buddhist growth rate is recorded as 100.78 percent in the same district. The Allahabad division recorded the highest growth rate of Buddhists i.e. 100.78 percent while the Hindu population grew only 22.36 percent. The other divisions such as Faizabad, Rohilkhand, and Gorakhpur recorded Buddhist growth rate as 87.15 percent, 78.63 percent and 55.48 percent respectively. For details see table 3.

The Divisions which are recorded with less than overall percentage growth of Buddhists are Agra (40.84 percent), Lucknow (29.63 percent) and Meerut (6.88 percent). The negative Buddhist growth rate of -36.80 percent was recorded in Jhansi division. This is due to decrease of Buddhists population by 5447 in Jalaun district without any knowing reason till date. In Meerut division, Meerut District observed a fall in the population by 5012. Leaving these negatives it cannot be denied that the upsurge of Buddhists population in the Uttar Pradesh in 2001 census has touched its new zenith.

Possible factors in Substantial Growth

It is shown above that there is a splendid growth in neo-Buddhist community in UP in the decades of 1980s, 1990s. Let us see the possible factors for this growth. The most important turning point which may lead so much growth of Buddhists in census 1991 was the widening of reservation facilities to the converted Buddhists of Scheduled Caste background under the title of *Neo-Buddhists* by the Union Government of India in 1990.³⁷ Thus the fear of losing the constitutional advantages (reservation) which has been

³⁷Republican Party of India from long was struggling for its demand for quotas for untouchables converted to Buddhism. See. Lynch 1969, p. 104.

one of the hindrances in the assertion as Buddhists came to end. The other possible factor which has a say, may be the political awakening of the Scheduled Castes in the period through the activism of Dalit Panther, Udit Raj's Conversion and emerging political outfit i.e. Bahujan Samaj Party led by Kanshiram and Mayawati.

The decade of 1990s has been of great contradictions in the field of social and political stability. On one hand the Hindutva forces like Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal etc. tried to establish the social and political norms based on the Hindu ideology, on the other hand dalit backwards led political groups such as BSP and SP also came as a strong representative of dalits and backwards, Bellwinkel (2007) argues that the political discourse instigated by Sangh Parivar – the Hindu fundamentalist did not have any impact and was rejected vehemently by the neo-Buddhists of Kanpur.³⁸

An important, event in social and political history of Uttar Pradesh is the emergence of BSP, a political party led by Scheduled Caste leaders. Ilaiyah (1994) argues that the goal of BSP was to break the caste system and introduce social transformation.³⁹ Pai (2002) argues that BSP had a significant role in making dalits conscious towards the social change/ transformation.

It (BSP) has constructed a strong Dalit movement, based upon identity and consciousness, while on the other hand despite considerable politicization of Dalits in U.P in the 1980s, and 1990s, the BSP has failed in its avowed goal of displacing manuvadi (representing Upper Caste) forces and introducing social change.⁴⁰

³⁸In that period, Hindu organizations began to appropriate Buddhism through Hinduism, but it was rejected by neo-Buddhists. See. Maren Bellwinkel Schempp, 2007, p. 2181. *EPW*. In political behavior of dalits and backwards also 'Hindutva' was neglected in rural UP. See. G. K. Lieten, 1996, pp.1411-1416.

³⁹ See Ilaiyah (1994), BSP and Caste as Ideology. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29(12), 668.

⁴⁰ See Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh - Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge* Vol. 3, (New Delhi: Sage, 2002), 1.

The argument put forth by Ilaiah and Pai on BSP may have some linkages with neo-Buddhist community's splendid growth rate. As neo-Buddhist movement is also based on the consciousness against caste system like as BSP. Neo-Buddhism has been one of the most important bases of social change but Pai and Ilaiah are not hinting towards Buddhism in reference to social change and growing Buddhist population as a result of that.⁴¹

1.2 Social Indicators of Neo-Buddhists in U.P

The Census of India illustrates specific social aspects like sex ratios and literacy of the religious communities. In both these aspects Buddhist community is continuously improving and occupying a better place in comparison with the other religions. The other aspects such as the participation of Buddhists in higher education are not available in census data or NSS survey. The other significant data that can be helpful is of National Family Health Survey but that too is not available at the state level. Being so tight handed now we can only highlight two important aspects of Buddhists' social lives, (a): Sex Ratios, (b): Literacy which is available in Census 2001.

(a): *Sex Ratio*: The sex ratio (defined as number of females per 1000 males) indicates the status of women in that community. The high sex ratio may be interpreted as a indicator of higher status of women. It was for first time in the 2001 census that the classification of population on the basis of sex between 0-6 years age group has been done.

Table: 4 Sex Ratios of Major Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh: A Comparative View of 1961-2001 Census

⁴¹For detail, see. Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Communities	Census 1961 ⁴²	Census 2001	Census 2001 (0-6 years)	Possible Growth
Buddhist	833	895	928	+ 33
Christian	903	961	936	- 25
Hindu	907	894	911	+ 11
Jain	920	911	846	- 65
Muslim	922	918	935	+ 17
Sikh	770	877	831	- 46

Source: Census of India 1961 and 2001

The above tabulated figures are very important for analysis. The above figures clearly indicate that with the passage of time there has been a spectacular improvement in the sex ratios of Buddhist community. The sex ratios between the age group of 0-6 years it is a sign of progress. In other comparison with Scheduled Caste also, neo-Buddhists are much ahead. The sex ratio for the Scheduled Castes at 2001 census is 900, which is lagging behind 28 points of neo-Buddhists.

(b): *Literacy*: It is also for the first time in Independent India that the census office has released data on literacy by religion. Literacy is an important indicator of social and human development which directly affects fertility as well as mortality, especially child mortality (sex ratio). Buddhism is the largest growing religion of the state with conversion of Scheduled Castes on a large scale. The literacy rate of Buddhists is much better than the Scheduled Castes. When compared with the Scheduled Castes, Buddhists are in much better position but if compared with other religious communities, it is lagging behind. The following tables make the point clear.

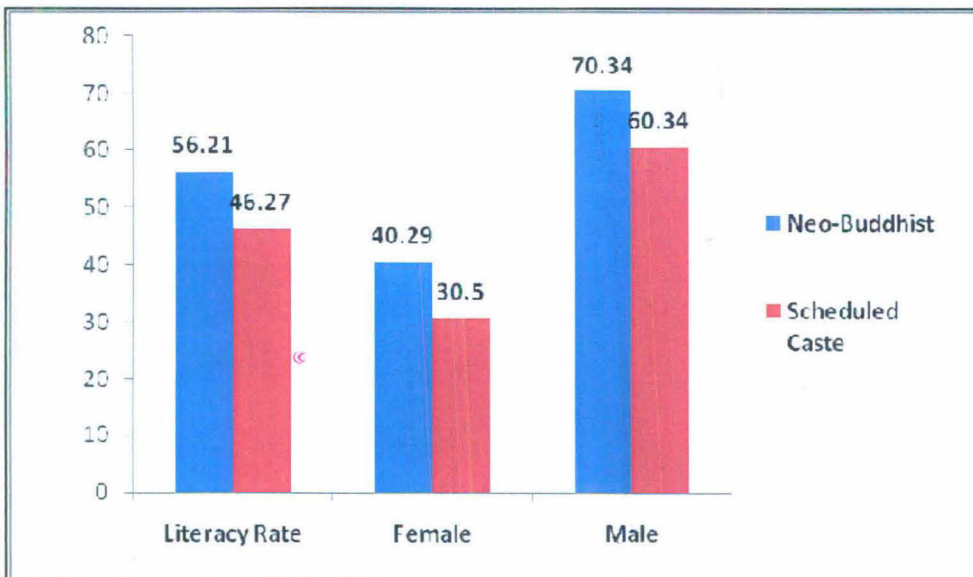
⁴²The census 1961 is based upon before bifurcation of the state into two parts U.P and Uttaranchal. See Annexure I for more clarification.

Table: 5 Literacy Rate by Religious Communities of UP, 2001

Religious community	Percentage Literacy
Buddhists	56.2
Christians	72.8
Hindus	58.0
Jains	93.2
Muslims	47.8
Sikhs	71.9
All	56.3

Source: Census of India 2001

Figure: 7 Literacy Rate of Neo-Buddhists and Scheduled Caste in Uttar Pradesh (2001)



Source: Census of India 2001

From the above Table 5, it is clear that the literacy rate of Buddhists (56.2 percent) is better than Muslims only (47.8 percent) while other communities are noticed with high literacy rate like Jains (93.2 percent), Christians (72.8 percent), Sikhs (71.9 percent), and Hindus (58.00 percent). Figures 7, depicts that the literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes is 46.27 percent, while neo-Buddhist are recorded with a better literacy rate of 56.21 percent.

1.3 Economic Condition of Neo-Buddhists in U.P

Economic condition is one of the important variables for the human survival. A community with sound economic base always has an upper hand in various fields like politics and higher education. The economic characteristics of a particular community is calculated on the basis of the sector of economy they are engaged in, the nature of work they perform, employment status as to whether they are employers, employees, or independent workers and the status of their earning. In this regard, to know economic status of Buddhists community with others we can take following elements:

(a): *Work Participation:* The formula to derive 'work participation rate' is $\text{Work Participation Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of workers of all ages} \times 100}{\text{Total Population}}$. The data extracted by above formula in earlier census are called 'crude' because the denominator includes even children in the 0-4 year's age group who are not expected to be working.⁴³ In 2001 census, the numerator related to only those workers who are in 15-59 years age group. The work participation rate by religious communities in 2001 census is following:

⁴³See Mahendra K. Premi, *Population of India; In the New Millennium: Census 2001*, (New Delhi: NBT, 2006), 235.

**Table: 6 Work Participation Rate by Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh
(2001)**

Religious Community	Total	Male	Female
Buddhist	33.4	46.7	18.5
Christian	33.9	46.7	20.6
Hindu	33.2	47.3	17.5
Jain	28.8	50.1	5.5
Muslim	29.1	46.6	12.4
Sikhs	32.7	53.4	9.2

Source: Census of India Abstract – 2001

The table 6 indicates very good overall work participation of Buddhists, second only after Christians. Where Christian's total work participation is 33.9 percent, Buddhists stands at the second position with 33.4 percent. In terms of female participation also Buddhist community is second highest by occupying 18.5 percent while in Christians it is highest with 20.6 percent. The other communities which lag behind the Buddhists in total Work Participation are Hindus (33.2 percent), Sikhs (32.7), Muslims (29.1) and Jains (28.8). The religious communities in which female work participation found lower than the Buddhists are Hindus (17.5 percent), Muslims (12.4 percent), Sikhs (9.2 percent) and Jains (5.5 percent). In comparison of Scheduled Castes the proportion of workers in neo-Buddhist community is marginal low. Whereas for Scheduled Castes the proportion of workers is 34.7, Buddhists have little less 33.4.

(b): *Workers' Activity Pattern:* The workers activity is mainly divided into three sectors as primary, secondary and tertiary sector. On the basis of this classification we can analyze the extent of specialization and diversification of labor of a particular

community within a particular society. This is regarded as an indicator of economic progress by the economists. The 2001 census provides with the data of workers on the basis of divisions such as Cultivators, Agricultural laborers, Households workers and other workers, on the religious basis which is given in the following table.

Table: 7 Distribution of Category of Workers by Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh (2001)

Category	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Jain	Muslim	Sikhs
CL	41.0	14.8	44.2	5.0	25.7	51.3
AL	35.4	13.1	25.6	1.9	21.6	9.1
HHI	3.1	5.0	4.4	5.9	11.9	3.4
Others	20.5	67.1	25.9	87.2	40.7	36.2

Source: The First Report on Religion Data Abstract, Census of India, 2001

Abbreviations:

CL = Cultivators⁴⁴

AL = Agricultural Labourers⁴⁵

HHI = Household Industry Workers⁴⁶

OW = Other Workers⁴⁷

The above table 7 shows, that the workers of the neo-Buddhist community are largely involved as the cultivator laborers (41 percent), Agricultural laborers (35.4 percent), and other workers (20.5 percent). One noticeable thing shown by the above table is that the neo-Buddhist workers engaged in agricultural works (35 percent) are

⁴⁴A person engaged in cultivation of land owned or held from govt.. Private person or institution.

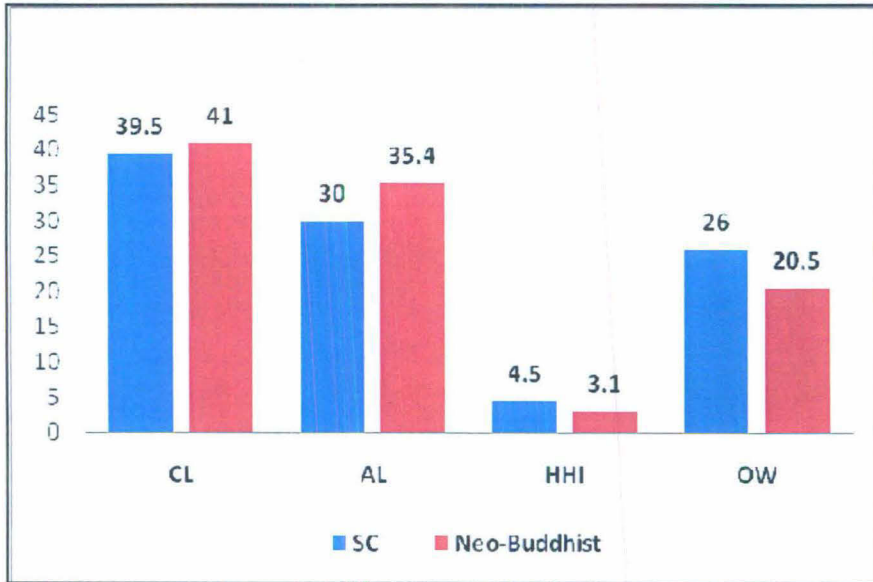
⁴⁵A person who works on another person's land for wages in money or kind.

⁴⁶Industry conducted by one or more members of the household at home or within village in rural area

⁴⁷Workers who have been engage in some economic activity during the last one year like workers engaged in govt. servants, mining, construction, political and social work, teachers, trade, commerce, etc.

highest in all other religious communities; viz. Hindus (25.6 percent), Muslims (21.6 percent), Christians (13.1 percent), Sikhs (9.1 percent) and Christians (1.9 percent). Thus we can say that their participation in the primary sector is maximum.

Figure: 8 Categories of Workers SC and Neo-Buddhist (Census 2001)



Source: State Primary Census Abstract for Individual Scheduled Caste and the First Report on Religion Data Abstract, Census of India, 2001

The other reasonable comparison of neo-Buddhists with other communities can be with the Scheduled Castes. The figure 8 shows that total workers in neo-Buddhist community largely are cultivating labourers (41 percent), and agricultural labourers (35.4) leaving behind the Scheduled Caste. The percentage share of Scheduled Caste in cultivating labourers is (39.5 percent), and in Agricultural labourers it is (30 percent). In the other two sectors, HHI and others, Scheduled Caste dominates in comparison of neo-Buddhists. Whereas Scheduled Caste's workers share in HHI and OW is 4.5 percent and 26 percent, neo-Buddhist accounts for 3.1 and 20.5 respectively. The neo-Buddhist community is largely based in primary sector especially in cultivating which means that this community has largest share in land rather than any other religious community or Scheduled Castes. In this comparative study we find that the Buddhist community has upper hand in the field of cultivating and agricultural laboring, while it is lagging behind in household industry and other services.

Conclusion

The above study based on the available census data reveals that the neo-Buddhist community is the fastest growing religious community in Uttar Pradesh. The conversion among Scheduled Caste is the main reason of so high growth rate. The point is clear as 2001 census declares that there is approx 70 percent of the total Buddhist population as dalits. The most crucial factor about this growth is Ambedkar's ideological influence on dalits. This signifies that dalit community is greatly influenced by Ambedkar's philosophy of Buddhism. The trends of growth rate in the census make this thing clearer. The socio-economic condition in some aspects is also noteworthy in comparison. Can dalit politics be live long without taking cognizance of the factor of neo-Buddhism? The question is very important. In the next chapter, let us see the available literature on dalit politics and neo-Buddhism to know the things in better way.

Chapter 2

Neo-Buddhism and Dalit Politics: A Review of Literature

In the first chapter, it is found that the neo-Buddhism is the fastest growing religion in Uttar Pradesh in last five decades. The reason of so high growth is mainly the influence of Ambedkar and his philosophy of Buddhism on dalits. The traditions of dalit community of UP has some similarity with Ambedkar's philosophy of Buddhism that provided a boost for the conversion for dalits. The socio-economic condition of neo-Buddhists better than scheduled caste in some aspects, and in some points better than other religious communities also. Overall the neo-Buddhist community is very important due to its splendid growth rate, and its socio-economic condition comparatively is better in some aspects.

The present chapter is designed to look how the emerging trends of neo-Buddhism as mentioned in chapter one are articulated in available academic literature on dalit politics and neo-Buddhist movement of Uttar Pradesh. Does emerging neo-Buddhism is mentioned as a significant factor in the available literature on dalit politics? In this chapter an attempt has been made to know the possible directions of this movement, its dynamics as identity and its assertion available in the contemporary literature. For this purpose the chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will cover those contemporary writings on dalit politics which are not taking the cognizance of neo-Buddhism as a serious matter. In second sections the writings which articulate neo-Buddhism in area of importance in dalit politics are included. The central argument in this chapter is that contemporary literature on dalit politics is taking no serious attention to the emerging neo-Buddhist identity. While, there is certainly a link of it with dalit politics which is not found in most of the writings.

Recently, since 2000, there is an emergence of books, articles, and seminars etc. all over India, dealing with Uttar Pradesh dalits' political assertion through Bahujan Samaj Party. The recent writings on dalit movement of Uttar Pradesh linger

around the phrase ‘the *assertion of dalits*’ in north India or U.P politics.¹ A few pieces of literature which also deals with the dalit assertion but in its cultural-religious terms are also in the flow.²

2.1 Taking No cognizance of Neo-Buddhist Identity

Prof. Sudha Pai’s field study is published in vol. 3 in the series of Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge in 2002, titled as ‘Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh’. The book examines the emergence, ideology and programmes, mobilization strategies, electoral progress and political significance of the Bahujan Samaj Party against the backdrop of a strong wave of dalit assertion in Uttar Pradesh. Based upon extensive fieldwork in western U.P, government reports and interviews with dalit leaders, this study, while highlighting the BSP’s considerable achievements, explores the reasons for the party’s failure to harness the forces of dalit assertion in UP as she says, “*BSP has not been able to fully harness the strong wave of assertion because it is more*

¹The examples of these books are *Dalit Assertion* and *Unfinished Democratic Revolution*, the Bahujan Samaj party in Uttar Pradesh (Pai 2002), *India’s Roaring Revolution*, *Dalit Assertion* and *new Horizons* (Vivek 2006), *India’s Silent Revolution*, the *Rise* (assertion) of Lower Castes in North India Politics (Jaffrelot 2002), *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion* in North India, Culture, identity and Politics (Badri Narayan 2007), *Dalit Assertion* in Society, Literature and History (ed. Imitaz Ahmad 2007), *Political Sociology of Dalit Assertion* (Prakash Louis 2003). In addition to these books there are ample of articles published in various magazines and journals. For example, *Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit Identity; Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut District of Western Uttar Pradesh* by Jagpal Singh in EPW 1998. In order to understand the historical roots of socio-religio-economic and political assertion of Uttar Pradesh a national seminar was held on 10-11 March, 2005 titled as “Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s: Critical Perspectives on Society, Polity and Economy” in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

²Recently, in 2008 Ambedkar Chair in JNU published a book, *Ambedkar, Dalits and Buddhism* (2008) in which there is one article covering Bellwinkel’s study of Buddhism in Kanpur (U.P); another book is *Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices Global Connections* (E. M. Hardtmann 2009). In the latter book there are two important articles which deal with the cultural-religious issue of dalits, first is chapter no. 4, *Dalit Discourse in Modern India*, and second, chapter no. 5, *Buddhism and Parties in Lucknow*. Another literature which is not focused on Uttar Pradesh but is significant in the related issues is C. Jaffrelot’s book ‘*Analyzing and Fighting Caste: Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability*’ (2005), in which there is one chapter ‘*The Solution of Conversion*’ discussing the whole purpose of Dr. Ambedkar’s conversion. Valerian Rodrigues’ small booklet ‘*Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India*’ (Critical Quest, 2008) and Eleanor Zelliot’s ‘*Ambedkar’s Conversion*’ (Critical Quest, 2005) is also notable. One of the most important writings about neo Buddhism is ‘*The Reconstruction of the World: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in Modern India*’ (Oxford, 2004). The book is an intellectual effort to understand Ambedkar’s views on Buddhism through multidisciplinary academic debate. In this book there is one important chapter written by Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp titled as ‘*Roots of Ambedkar Buddhism in Kanpur*’ which is quite important to understand Ambedkarite Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh. In the little old studies but quite important, are Owen M. Lynch’s, ‘*The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in the City of India*’ (1969), J. Michael Mahar’s edited book, ‘*The Untouchable’s Role in Contemporary India*’ (1972).

interested in capturing political power than grassroots mobilization for social transformation” (P.05).

Pai sharply distinguishes BSP and other dalit movement. Her observation and study of BSP highlights that in contrast to other dalit movement which have been anti-brahmanical, BSP is less negative in attacking on upper caste Hindus leaders. BSP had no comments on the various dalit issues such as; theory of the origin of caste and Aryan theory of caste. In addition, it is also not opened for Buddhism (conversion issue).³

Pai divided the whole movement of dalit's assertion of Uttar Pradesh from colonial period onwards into three phrases⁴-- (1) In colonial period when Jatavs of Agra, Aligarh, Meerut and few other districts renounced the Gandhian ideals under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar. The phase is significant for the negation of earlier attempt of *sanskritisation* or upward mobility within caste structure. The movement in this period was an attempt to capture political power through the Dalit Federation of India. The new identity of dalit provided them a political unity but they failed to capture political power after the defeat of SCF⁵ in 1946 election. (2) After 1956, Dalit through SCF and RPI again tried to capture political power but this attempt was also in vain as the Congress party had become powerful by that time.⁶ (3) The third phase of dalit assertion starts with the emergence of BSP in 1980s, and in this phase also Pai believes that in spite of some advances, there are many drawbacks in the socio-economic liberation of dalits.

In sum, it can be said that in all the three phases, despite some achievements and adoption of democracy and democratic institutions, a democratic revolution in the society and politics (egalitarian society) is still far away. She defines the meaning of democratic revolution which has failed in UP, in three ways-- (1) Social equality: a

³This expression is taken from the Gail Omvedt's perspective. See G. Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1994), 165.

⁴In her article, *From Harijans to Dalits*, (See. G. Shah ed. 2001, *Dalit Identity and Politics*, Sage: New Delhi) also she divides the post independence SC movement of U.P into 3 phases. Phase 1: 1956-1969; in this phase RPI was formed. Phase 2; 1970-1977; in this phase SC attempt to capture political power was withered with the co-option strategy of the Congress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi with its radical doctrine of *garibi hatao*. And Phase3; 1980 onwards: This phase is remarkable because of formation of separate party (BSP), ideology and identity.

⁵ Scheduled Caste Federation

⁶Owen Lynch (1969) also cited the same expressions in his book.

struggle for equal status with the upper and middle caste is not achieved. Evidences can be found in many cases like, untouchability, caste atrocities and ill-treatment. (2) Economic equality: There is a discrepancy between the dalits and rest of the society in terms of opportunities of life such as, education, employment and living standards. (3) Political equality: equal share in political power for determining the development of Indian society and polity still does not exist.

Characteristics of BSP as a 'Movement' or 'Party': Pai divides BSP into two phases in order to understand whether it is a political Party or a social movement. In the first phase of its existence in 1980s, it was regarded both, a party and a movement. In this phase, it was noted to abuse other parties as manuvadi, which created an identity of dalit and spread the ideology of Ambedkarism, together with its virulent critique of Gandhi and Hinduism. However after 1980s it was converted from a movement to a party with its failure of Bahujan project and opportunistic share of power with the BJP.

Her understanding of the characteristics of BSP can be highlighted under the following points-

- It provided a new social identity which brought about a new confidence and self-respect among the dalits.
- It provided a Counter Ideology to the Ambedkar's grass root ideology in the social field, and a powerful dalit identity in political field based on 'Ambedkarism'.
- It used caste as a class which is expected to help in further democratization of the civil society.
- It is a systemic or a statist party, which believes, 'Politics is the key, by which any lock (obstacle) can be opened.'
- It is based on exclusivism i.e., its ideology and goals appeal to only a segment of the population-the dalits and backward castes, and poorer sections. It is based on *Gemeinschaft*- a feeling of community or social group- rather than *Gesellschaft*- an association of voluntary members.

On the basis of her field study in Meerut, Sudha Pai reveals that the 'BSP is

not a party interested in mobilization for social change 'from below. It is interested in capturing political power in order to introduce change 'from above' and conceives of empowerment of dalits, purely in political terms. In another expression in her article 'From Harijans to Dalits: Identity Formation, Political Consciousness and Electoral Mobilization of the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh' in the edited book of Ghanshyam Shah 'Dalit Identity and Politics' (2001) she says similar words,

Although it (BSP) has emerged out of a social action group, it is not a religious or reform movement; it is definitely a political organization whose aim is to capture power and use it to improve the conditions of the SC community.

In her another celebrating article 'New Social and Political Movements of Dalits: A study of Meerut District' based upon fieldwork in selected villages, examines 'new' forms of dalit assertion in Meerut district. Despite a long history of dalit assertion, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has not been electorally successful in this region, and has had to compete with the Samajwadi Party. Dalit assertion here has taken different forms, as much socio-cultural as political. Two forms analysed here are the desire for education to compete with upper castes, and attempts to control local politics and resource distribution through the new *panchayats*. The study shows that the traditional structures of rural dominance based upon land and social status are undergoing a change. The traditionally dominant position of the Rajputs, Jats and Gujars has been challenged by the dalits, and to a lesser extent by the 'Most Backward Castes' (MBCs), but identity assertion and desire for upward mobility have also created conflict between the dalits and the MBCs. The article concludes that socio-cultural and political assertion by dalits at the grassroots level is of greater significance and more helpful to the BSP in establishing itself as a party/movement, than its electoral successes or capture of political power in the state. Now the question comes, what is that socio-cultural assertion of dalit which is helping the political movement of BSP without discussing the conversion movement of SCs. Prof. Sudha Pai's writings are totally silent over the issue of conversion to neo-Buddhism.

Jagpal Singh in his article 'Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit Identity: Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut District of Western Uttar Pradesh' (*Economic and Political Weekly*) tries to explain the Sudha Pai thesis that – socio-cultural and political churning of dalits in UP extended the Bahujan Samaj Party's base. The

ingredients of this socio-cultural and political movement are religious conversion of dalits and Republican Party of India. Jagpal believes that both these factors are real base of BSP's current strength. Jagpal sees that though, currently, the Bahujan Samaj Party commands the allegiance of a large number of Jatavs, it should not be overlooked that the roots of self-assertion of Jatavs of the western UP go back to the process of Ambedkarisation initiated by the Republican Party of India in the 1960s. In this study he attempted to see the relation of BSP with the earlier dalit socio-cultural and political movements of western UP and came at a conclusion that RPI is a party of Ambedkarite ideology against BSP. The reasons he gave is that RPI intervened in the socio-cultural arena through socio-cultural assertion of dalits at grassroots level-like denouncing caste-system and Hinduism and prefer conversion to Buddhism to redress their grievances especially among Jatavs. But BSP is running differently.

The socio-cultural move in 1950s and 1960s was supported by RPI and other SC led political parties, but he believes that BSP is not concerned with that. RPI was a party devoted to ideology and politics while BSP did not start with any concern for the cultural change and is centered around the empowerment of 'bahujans' rather than cultural change, "Unlike the RPI of the 1950 and 1960s, it did not take up the question of land reforms. Nor did it take up the cultural issues, such as reflected in Ambedkarism. The method of cultural change he tells is against caste system and Hinduism; and conversion to Buddhism which is completely lacking in the BSP ideology. A matter of concern for Jagpal is - how BSP sustains among these assertive voices which once focused upon an alternative identity. The pessimism in Jagpal's thought is based on the reasons as he said, in BSP there is nothing new, it is only replacement of high caste's hegemony in politics and administration and empowerment of the 'bahujans'. In conclusion he said 'it did not initiate any cultural movement among them. Nor has it taken up the issues of land reforms, its priority is power, not the economic and cultural issues'. So it is to be said that it is not based on Ambedkarite ideology but based on political opportunism.

Christophe Jaffrelot's treatise 'India's Silent Revolution, the Rise of Lower Caste in North India Politics' (2002) is an attempt to demonstrate the extent to which the low caste movement has gone and the caste politics have indeed led to fundamental as well as systemic changes in the Indian political system. Initially, in

the book, he is very critical of Indian democracy because it is more procedural or political rather than social and substantial. He began his book with the quotation of Babasaheb Ambedkar which says that, to establish a successful political democracy it has to be supported with substantive social participation.

We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well....On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality.⁷

This is not social or substantial because there is no apt representation of lower castes in that. For him; these allegations are of ethnocentric bias and theoretical fallacy.

He agrees with Pai and Jagpal that since 1960s a new assertiveness among the lower castes of UP (especially Jatavs/Chamars) has brought about consciousness among lower castes which now has strengthened the process of democratization of the political system. Why Revolution is silent for him? Jaffrelot called the lower caste assertion in North India politics as silent because it has a theoretical fallacy. That is, – no ethnisation, on the call of Ambedkar to make political democracy to social democracy. He analyzed the success of lower caste politics on the basis of the expectations of Ambedkar. In his study he found that no doubt, the monopoly of upper caste in the politics is withering but social and economic disparities are still intact, and without social and economic revolution, the present assertion of lower caste is a Silent Revolution. It means that the whole political assertion of the lower caste in North Indian Politics is without any wave of socio-cultural revolution⁸ or ethnisation. Mainly, his meaning of ethnisation is from the identity based only on religion (Buddhism).

Unlike Jaffrelot, Kanchan Chandra in her study 'The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India: The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur' defines ethnicity-- as used to refer to identities based on ascriptive categories, including race, language, caste and religion. Like Pai, he also believes that assertion of dalits, and subsequent trends of representation in the national politics is a

⁷Speech by Dr. Ambedkar on 25 November, 1949, in *Constituent Assembly Debates*, New Delhi, Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1989, Vol. IX, p. 979.

⁸Jaffrelot sees Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism as a socio cultural revolution which is evident in 1956 onwards all over India. In Uttar Pradesh also SCF and RPI have been greatly involved in this by holding many conversion ceremonies among Jatavs.

healthy sign of democratization of India, and that the social and economic effects of this silent revolution are bound to multiply in the years to come. In his book 'B. R. Ambedkar and Untouchability; Analyzing and Fighting Caste', Jaffrelot explains what is socio-cultural revolution. He sees the lower castes conversion to Buddhism as a socio-cultural revolution, which is Ambedkar's core idea of Buddhism as a priori to true political democracy. He quoted Ambedkar as,

Positively, my philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality and fraternity. Let no one however say I borrowed my philosophy from the French revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master; the Buddha.....my philosophy has a mission. I have to do the work of conversion [to Buddhism].

This is a fact that Ambedkar perceived Buddhism as an alternative to Hindu social order which is reflected in the practical details of his conversion.

In Uttar Pradesh the conversion to Buddhism by Dalits began before Ambedkar's public declaration of embracing Buddhism. On April 1956, 2000 people of Jatav community converted to Buddhism in Agra district. After that, 1956 onwards many Jatavs of Agra accepted Buddhism and many temples converted into monasteries. The socio-cultural ethnisation which he noticed in his writings is on the basis of Owen Lynch's field study done between the period of 1956-1965 (SCF and RPI period). In this period, the Jatavs denounced Hinduism in large numbers and converted to Ambedkarite Buddhism in Agra and the adjacent districts. People gave up the Hindu identity and acquired a new ethnic identity as Buddhists. As C. Jaffrelot writes:

Conversion to Buddhism endowed the Jatavs with a new identity, of an ethnic type. In this alternative identity they found both, a new self-esteem and a feeling of solidarity. The Jatavs adopted it as a message of equality after Ambedkar toured Northern India in 1940s and they were to become the most ardent supporter of the SCF and later the RPI in Northern India. (p.139)

In one chapter of the book 'The renewal of dalit politics, the BSP, Party of the Bahujans?' he analyses the transition of BSP from Kanshi Ram's BAMCEF to Mayawati's three times Chief Ministership in UP. Jaffrelot highlights under which process BSP converted from social movement to political party which Sudha Pai also has discussed. He notices the different views of Babasaheb Ambedkar and Kanshi

Ram on the issue of social and cultural conversion while on the political views he sees commonality in both the figures. In his own words

Some reproached him (Kanshi Ram) for neglecting social reform whereas it was one of the areas of interest of Ambedkar. Nor is Kanshi Ram interested in conversion to Buddhism because, according to him, such a move would only make sense if all the Dalits converted en-masse. (p. 423)

Unlike Sudha Pai's charge for BSP as an opportunistic party, Jaffrelot sees commonality in the political move of Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram. The alliance with other parties, in his opinion, should not be seen as opportunistic but it reflects a pragmatic approach in legalistic sense like Ambedkar did, when he joined Viceroy's Council. He writes,

However, his approach to politics has much in common with that of Ambedkar. First, they both regard the capture of power as the main objective for emancipating the lower castes from elite domination—a prerequisite for social reform and redistributive justice. This priority implies the making of alliances that critics of Kanshi Ram describe as opportunistic but which reflects a pragmatic approach: he, like Ambedkar, when he joined the Viceroy's Council – is flexible enough to collaborate with any ally in a position to give him access to power.⁹

He argues that another similarity in the power project of both of them was to choose the path of democratic election rather than communism/violence (a revolutionary ideology of Marxism).

'India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion and New Horizons' written by Vivek Kumar and published by Gangandeev Publication, Delhi in 2006 is an attempt to present a comprehensive document of dalit movements, their leadership, assertion, aspiration and new horizons they have achieved during centuries of their struggle. But that assertion discussed in the book, is in the political term only; which is covered from local to national and now at the global level.

In the book he is confined to only one type of revolution i.e. political revolution, the other aspects of revolution like social and cultural are not discussed in detail except few lines in the beginning of the book for background set up while

⁹See C. Jaffrelot, 2003, pp. 423-424.

defining the various types of dalit movement. In his own words 'It is a fact that politics is just one facet of total gamut of institutions, which are prerequisites for society to exist.' The book basically is written to make a comparative study between the independent dalit political leadership and dependant dalit Political leadership.¹⁰ He recognizes that the dalit movement of the present time is only confined to the movement led by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and its leader Kanshi Ram and Mayawati.

The author has recorded the structural changes brought about by the dalit movement in Uttar Pradesh in particular, and how it has strengthened the Indian democracy and process of nation building in general. In sum the book captures the phenomenon, how dalit assertion is working for the construction of a positive image of the erstwhile stigmatized identity of the dalits. He views that prior to 'dalit' as an identity there were many nomenclatures or identities such as Chandalas, Hinhatians, Avarnas, Antyajas, Achhuts, Pariahs, Namsudras, Untouchables, Harijans, Unapproachables, Outcasts, Panchamas, exterior castes, depressed class, etc. The identities linking their aborigines of the land are Adi-Hindu, Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhra. Dr. Ambedkar suggested five alternatives – the non-caste Hindus, the protestant Hindus, the non-conformist Hindus, the excluded castes, and the exterior castes. Constitutionally, the identities i.e. dalits also exist. The other identities of the present time which he talks about are propagated by BAMCEF and popularized by BSP like 'Bahujan' and 'Moolnivasi'.

The author details some achievements of BSP like making democracy participatory, breaking political hegemony of upper castes and Hindu majority, empowerment through reservation and other rights and creation of dalit literature,

¹⁰Harish Wankhede in his article 'The Political and the Social in the dalit movement Today' (EPW-2008) discusses post Ambedkarite dalit movement of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra comparatively. Here he argues that both the movements are lagging behind from the Ambedkarite ideology- on the one hand U.P is a mere political in absence of moral values, and on the other hand Maharashtra's social movement is mere social (values of morality—which seems in conversion and Buddhism). While in Ambedkar's philosophy there is a relationship between religion and politics like Machiavelli by making morality a common signifier. In the paper he tries to synthesize both the movement into one by linking first, the Ambedkarite philosophy on which Ambedkar worked by proposing 'Navayana Buddhism' to Dalits just to bridge the gap between the political ideals and societal norms. In short, for him both the dalit movements lack certain guidelines of Dr. Ambedkar.

history and symbols (physical and cultural), developing a feeling among the dalits to become rulers. Despite all these achievements he also accepts some limitation of the BSP leadership, viz.

1. Ideological Vagueness: The BSP's claim as based on the ideology of 'Ambedkarism' and also propagation of other aspect of ideology i.e. 'Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation' has confused the dalits.

2. No Unified Identity: The BSP could not develop a unified identity among dalit masses in Uttar Pradesh. Still they are known with multiple identities such as; Chandals, Untouchables, Harijans, neo-Buddhists, Dalits and even by their distinguished caste names as Chamars, Dhobis, Bhangis, Khatiks, Mushars etc. The identity of 'Bahujan' has a very restricted use among very few dalits.

3. No True Ally: The BSP has not discovered a genuine ally in social and political spheres. Socially it has started to mobilize MBC rather than OBC. In political front it is like rolling stone sometimes with SP, an OBC based party while some other time with BJP and Congress led and dominated by upper castes.

4. Atrocities: The BSP leadership has not been effective enough to curb the atrocities inflicted on dalits by the upper castes in the state.

5. Reservation: Despite giving some preferences to reservations in jobs, its leadership could not give much preference in its programme to the fulfillment of the reservation quotas meant for SC under article 335 of the Indian Constitution.

6. Women leadership: Despite Mayawati, a woman in charge of BSP, the party could not ensure adequate representation of dalit women in the BSP leadership.

Like Jaffrelot, he also concludes on the same point that without addressing the core issues of education, economic status, abject poverty- in terms of acquisition of land and livestock etc., and reducing the number of atrocities committed on them, real development of dalits cannot be achieved.

In highlighting the nature and scope of dalit people's demands, the socio-cultural demands reflected in conversion is completely missing in the book. Though, he accepts that the BSP, in its programmes and policies refer time and again to the teachings of Buddha. Even the two districts have been renamed as - Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida), and Mahamaya Nagar (Hathras) but that is not substantive unless we

study the orientation of leadership in more details about neo-Buddhism.

To understand the BSP leadership, Amit Ghosh has written a book on Mayawati titled as '*Behenji – An Autobiography*'. It brings his in-depth experience of Indian politics for over three decades to this pioneering political biography of Mayawati. He explores the background of her meteoric rise and examines the growing national clout of this unique woman who could, quite possibly, determine the shape of the central government one day. He also presents a hope that even she can be the country's prime minister also in future. He has not brought any descriptions or hint about her any desire or compulsion to join the camp of the neo-Buddhist world.

Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture Identity and Politics: Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge (Volume V of the series of Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge), written by Badri Narayan Tiwari by Sage publication, in 2007. This volume explores how Mayawati's image is being built by BSP by using examples of brave dalit women (viranganas) of 1857 such as Jhalkari bai. The book demonstrates how myths and memories of the role of dalits in India's freedom struggle are employed for constructing identity, and then reconstructed for political mobilization. The book narrates some of the tales which are used to develop political consciousness at the grass-root level. It also reveals how stories picked very much from the people themselves--are reinterpreted, packaged and disseminated orally and via pamphlets, describes how Gods, heroes and other cultural resources of each caste are converted into political capital. In short, it shows how the BSP creates and recreates historical material to expand its electoral base. This book is also like other books above which do not see any linkage of BSP with Buddhism.

In another book '*Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse*' Badri sees a new change which is explicitly visible today in Indian society. The Dalits lying dormant and silent have now become assertive, carving out their independent identity. This is found in the narrations of their own culture and tradition. This is a new voice and not a voice appropriated either from brahmanism nor lacking originality as is commonly believed. This is precisely that this book attempts to explore. Many folk heroes are now at the centre of new dalit discourse and they have been put into mythical frameworks. The Contemporary

Indian politics is making attempt either to snatch those myths or twist these to serve its end. Even the dalits are using these myths for its political mobilisation. This book provides an evidence and explanation of these socio-political developments through the study in Bihar. In his telling of various myths he has not mentioned the myth that Jatavs (SC) are originally Buddhist which is a prominent myth used by Owen Lynch in his study of Agra. Lynch sees this myth as a powerful myth of political assertion of dalits.

In one of its article 'Heroes, Histories and Booklets' (EPW-2001) Badri Narayan discusses the new emergence of the educated and politically conscious middle class of dalit-bahujan origin in UP and Bihar active in writing, propagating and publishing literature, with a view to creating awareness among the backward classes coincides with the rise of bahujan politics through the early 1980s. The emergence of new heroes, in literature and hitherto neglected and ignored traditions, is related to the need to acquire self-respect and social acceptance. But in its search for identity, dalit-bahujan literature, by propping itself up as counter-literature, also seeks realization by a negation of brahminic literature. In short, we can say that here the author is seeing a counter brahminic identity among increasing writings of dalits but is quite silent about the growing anti-caste and anti brahminic phenomenon in form of conversion to Buddhism; which is greatly seen in UP.

Nicolas Jaoul in the article 'Learning the use of symbolic means, Dalits, Ambedkar statues and the state in Uttar Pradesh' (CIS-2006) discusses the relation of dalit Movement with the symbolism. The article shows the foremost symbol of that is Dr. Ambedkar's statue. The author believes that Dr. Ambedkar's statue stands as a major feature of the dalit movement. In the media, the dalit emphasis on symbolic politics has been dismissed as mere tokenism, and the Ambedkar icon has been denigrated as westernized.¹¹ Despite attempts at studying dalit politics since the BSP became one of the key players in Uttar Pradesh, there has been a lack of scholarly attention to the deeper social changes involved in the Dalits' relationship with the state. This study of the Ambedkar statues in Uttar Pradesh tries to fill this gap by

¹¹Ambedkar statues are in proper suit.

taking three dimensions into account: the iconography, the way in which the statues have spread historically, and the meanings and stakes involved for those who mobilise around them. The assumption is that the dalits' struggles for the imposition of their symbol in public places can contribute to an understanding of the manner in which dalits have imagined the state and engineered strategies towards it. These statues seem to be the focal point for renewed aspirations towards democracy, while the ceremonies organized around them have provided these deprived citizens the opportunities to build some support within the state. The article seems to be only focused on Ambedkar's statue as a political symbol.

The other part of the symbolic power which is missed here is Ambedkar's status with Buddha which is found in large scale all over Uttar Pradesh. Ambedkar had himself said that my social philosophy, based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is taken from the Buddha's Dhamma. So unlike this expression, UP being a fast growing in Buddhism; it can be a possibility of emerging Indian Buddhist iconography of Ambedkar with Buddha which is to be known!

An art historian from Iowa State University, Gary Michael Tartakov,'s article 'Art and Identity: The Rise of a new Buddhist Imagery' (winter 1990) published in Art Journal highlights new Buddhist iconography. The author sees the developing Buddhist iconography in terms of exploring, defining, and legitimizing dalits' new identity as a Buddhist in connection with past established Buddhist tradition with sufficient modifications according to modern times like Ambedkar's epithet, Maitreya. In the author's own words,

As in this adoption of the epithet Maitreya, the new Buddhists have resurrected and revived a number of traditional Buddhist concepts and imageries. In the interest of exploring, defining, and legitimizing their Buddhist identity, they have also taken symbols and motifs from Buddhist Imagery to fit their modern situation.

The new Buddhist monuments created or brought by neo-Buddhist people and antique monuments as well are of great identical significance for them. Tartakov says,

If the adoption of traditional Buddhist forms allows the community to signal its identification with that tradition and to legitimize itself through this prestigious connection, the creation of new imagery

allows it to explore its interests and destiny as the modern Indian community is struggling for its place in the second-half of the twentieth century.

The neo-Buddhists usually pilgrimage those monuments and hang portraits in their houses which assert their new identity. The vast store of ancient Buddhist imagery serves as a source of emblems and decoration for public monuments as well as private homes. As it can be seen in the Hindu rooms the decorative elements filled with deities of the well known pictures of the Hindu monuments, in the same manner the Buddhist houses also carry the replicas of Buddha and photographs of the important Buddhist monuments like Sanchi, Sarnath, and Bodhgaya.¹² In public, Buddhist monuments are mostly images of Buddha Sakyamuni, Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule which can be seen at cross roads, public squares, etc like Gandhi, Shivaji and Subhas Chandra Bose. In this article the writer has focused totally on Maharashtra. Now the thing is to judge outside Maharashtra especially in UP where the neo-Buddhists conversion is on a high.

Kancha Ilaiah in his article published in EPW titled as BSP and Caste as Ideology (Mar. 19, 1994) studies BSP's tilt towards the issue of religion and caste. He tells that BSP leadership is less inclined towards the religion and sees it as an abstract reality. While in reality, caste is the sole force of division in the Indian society. Therefore, to unite people, caste can only be a unitary factor in BSP's perspective. That's why BSP talks about caste ideology (unite the caste in one ideology) rather than religious ideology to de-establish caste hegemony and disunity. It is regarded in BSP camp that only caste ideology has great appeal and it can harness greater mobilization among the people; that's the reason BSP does not campaign openly in favor of any religion including Buddhism.

Kanchan Chandra also has studied the BSP as an ethnic party in her book, 'Why Ethnic Parties Succeed' and her article Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability.

¹²In his article Tartakov uses some other cultural important documents and monuments such as Ambedkar's 'Buddha and His Dhamma', Sakyamuni Buddha in Meditation (Shantivana, Nagpur), Shanti Vihara (Nagpur), Ambedkar Statue (Ajanta Road, Aurgabad), Ambedkar and Sakyamuni Buddha Statues (Nagpur), Babasaheb Ambedkar Memorial Complex (Nagpur), Ambedkar Memorial Shrine (Dadar, Bombay), Triratna Buddha Vihara (Bombay), and some portraits of Babasaheb Ambedkar created by P.B. Ramtake and B.G. Sharma.

Against the popular view of empirical democratic theory an ethnic division (based on language, caste & religion etc.) threatens the democratic institutions greatly, as she claims it as a outbidding. In counter of this argument she make an intuitive claim that ethnic parties can sustain a democratic system if they are encouraged by institutions. Her argument is based on the anomalous case of ethnic party behavior in India. It implies that the threat to democratic stability, where it exists, comes not from the intrinsic nature of ethnic divisions, but from the institutional context within which ethnic politics takes place. Institutions that artificially restrict ethnic politics to a single dimension destabilize democracy, whereas institutions that foster multiple dimensions of ethnic identity can sustain it. In her book also she argued that BSP being an ethnic party is getting success.

In another article, Party Strategies in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections, 1996 (EPW 1997) written by Kanchan Chandra and Chandrika Parmar argue that ethnic identity in the form of caste and religion is not likely to disappear from Indian politics, and put a key question to ponder upon i.e. whether ethnic mobilization can be successfully separated from the ethnic polarization. The article argues that, unfortunately, the conditions that led to the moderation of political party behavior in UP are not stable. An analysis of the election strategies of each of the principal parties or groups of parties reveals that for all parties, except the Congress, the incentives towards moderation were a product of immediate circumstances that are likely to change, rather than structural conditions that can be expected to endure. In the article it is detailed that a case where political parties attempted precisely this separation is seen in the Vidhan Sabha elections of Uttar Pradesh 1996. In this election, it cannot be denied that political parties did not construct the electorate as a collection of ethnic blocs, and sought to expand its vote share by targeting certain blocs and ignoring others, but this identification of the ethnic 'other' that has in the last elections proved a highly successful strategy in UP politics was apparently absent. By this illumination, it is expected in future of the Indian politics that caste and religion may affect the trajectory at national level.

2.2 Taking Cognizance of Neo Buddhist Identity

To understand a theoretical aspect of neo-Buddhism, there is an ample of literature available. Ramesh Kamble in his article, 'Contextualizing Ambedkarite Conversion' (EPW 2003) declared that Ambedkar was in favor of making India a Buddhist nation. By embracing Buddhism he wanted to create a righteous, moral and social order which was seen by him only in conversion to Buddhism. Jaffrelot, in his book, 'Analyzing and Fighting Caste: Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability', clearly explains the purpose of Ambedkar's conversion as a strategy of social emancipation. The emancipation is possible in Buddhism because it is against hierarchal caste based social order, and is an egalitarian creed. Jaffrelot sees Ambedkar's conversion as social and not political.

In the first chapter it is shown that in the 1961 census, there is a significant jump in the Buddhist population in UP. The study of Michal Mahar, based on the study of Khalalpur (Saharanpur district) shows no impact or appeal about neo-Buddhism on the dalit. He, in his study shows two appealing factors in the history of dalits -1) The Old Dharma, based on Hinduism prior to 1947, and 2) New Dharma: Indian Constitution 1947 onwards. In conclusion he notes that despite the widespread acceptance of neo-Buddhism in Agra and Maharashtra in the 1950s and 1960s there are hardly any adherents or those having interest in neo-Buddhism in the villages. As Michal Mahar puts in his words

The few who knew of the movement expressed their unwillingness to participate in it, as they felt conversion to Buddhism would not improve their position in the village- a Chamar by any other name would still be treated as a Chamar. Several men also voiced the view that they were Hindus, and they did not want to forsake their own religion despite the denial to them of Brahman services and access to the village temple.

The above expression clearly hints that neo-Buddhism is not seen by dalits as a liberation theology. He presents a picture of status quo, where dalits are still in the dominance of brahmanism or Hinduism. His findings are contradictory to many other writers. Contrary to Michal Mahar's findings, Owen Lynch (1969) shows a different picture through his study of Agra district in 1969. Owen M. Lynch, Professor of

Anthropology in state University of New York at Binghamton has done a field study on the neo-Buddhist movement of Agra district (Uttar Pradesh). He has stayed many years in India, one and a half year with the Jatavs of Agra in search of their new identities amid conversion of Jatavs into Buddhism on a large scale after 1956. The book 'The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India' (1969) is his empirical field study in the precious words of the book. The techniques involved in the study are participant observation, open interviews, documentation from the people of the reasons, the course, and the personal involvements, their ongoing lives and unfolding careers. In short we can say that the book is the most significant document to know the social, cultural and political transformation of Jatavs of Agra after Independence. In short, to know the theme of the book, it can be divided into three parts-

- How the Caste of Jatav/Chamar works and changes in the present day India?
- What are the different strategies that Jatavs have followed in search of self-respect? Is there any functional alternative to sanskritisation and westernization?
- What type of social relations within and beyond a neighborhood, inhabited mainly by Jatavs in the Agra City?

In every section of the book there is one theme - 'adaptive structure' which means that caste takes different forms in different environments.

The work of Owen Lynch should also be seen as a means of other Indian sociologists and anthropologists like M. N. Srinivas who tries to codify the major dynamics of social change in India with *sanskritisation* and westernization. The anthropological and sociological study of changing nature of caste in modern India is seen through the tests of Srinivas and Lynch. While Srinivas sees that the traditional fission nature of caste is replaced by fusion through westernization, Lynch carries forward his perception. The project of Lynch is to study initial industrialization, with the efforts of persistence of identity and its transformation in the era of pressure of modernization. In the words of Owen Lynch—"My thesis is that political participation for some castes, such as the Jatavs, is replacing and is a functional alternative to

sanskritisation and westernization” (p. 07). He further clarifies that

The Jatavs, then, have changed from mobility through *sanskritisation* to mobility through active and separate political participation. In modern independent India political participation is a functional alternative to *sanskritisation*.¹³

In his study of upward mobility among Agra’s Jatavs he has heavily relied on the reference group theory.¹⁴ He has classified it into three parts 1) Imitation, 2) Identification, 3) Negative. The Jatavs of Agra’s imitation reference is when they imitate the tactics of other Indian political parties such as Congress and Jan Sangh, identification reference is found in their identification with the Buddhist world, and their negative reference groups are the orthodox Brahmans and the rich upper castes and classes. Here I would like to focus his study in more detail with whom Jatavs identify the most.

From the beginning of India’s Independence struggle, M. K. Gandhi always projected himself as a big man for all in general, and the saviour of untouchables in particular. The Jatavs of Agra deny Mr. Gandhi as a big man and instead of that they embraced Ambedkar with open hands as their leader during the round table conference and even after that. In the words of Owen Lynch

During the 1930s, when the Jatav Youth League was organised, the Round Table Conference was taking place in England. As far as the Dalits were concerned they had two protagonists, both of whom claimed to be “the” leader of the untouchables: Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Of the two, only Ambedkar was an Untouchable. He was a man of exceptional qualifications and accomplishments. The struggle between Ambedkar and Gandhi on the issue of separate elections for Untouchables was known to the Agra Jatavs “big man.” They, along with other untouchable groups wired London to insist that Ambedkar, not Gandhi, was their leader.¹⁵

Lynch in the book colloquially explains how the Jatavs under the impression of Ambedkar denounced Hinduism and turned towards Buddhism in large numbers.

¹³Lynch 1969, p. 126.

¹⁴Reference Group Theory – aims to systematize the determinants and consequences of those processes of evaluation and self appraisal in which the individual takes the values and standards of other individuals and groups as a comparative frame of reference.

¹⁵For detailed understanding of differences between Ambedkar and Gandhi. See Eleanor Zelliot’s essay ‘Gandhi and Ambedkar – A Study of Leadership’ (In the edited book of M. Mahar; The Untouchables in Contemporary India)

Through conversion, a revolutionary or conversion campaign (*krantikari daur*) was initiated - in which many Hindu temples were converted into Buddhist temples by Jatavs. Later on SCF took an active role in the politics of Agra. By adopting SCF and RPI in their political behaviour, they quit their *sanskritisation* behavior of upward mobility and took neo-Buddhism as a better way of emancipation. Lynch also discusses the difficulties which came in the way of Buddhism's growth in Agra such as, lack of organization, leadership, funds and time, furthermore, effective leadership and energy of caste directed to politics rather than to religious movement in absence of any missionaries (national or foreign). Finally in the words of Lynch "the Jatavs are, on the whole, more Ambedkarites than they are Buddhists. Though, here it should also be cleared that conversion has not changed their economic and social position in Indian society among other castes."¹⁶ Lynch also makes his statement about the future of the neo-Buddhist movement in Agra. According to him there are three possibilities: success (if the government extends the benefits of reservation to converted), re-absorption (in Hinduism), or secularism.

Unlike Lynch's Agra study, Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp in her article 'From Bhakti to Buddhism: Ravidas and Ambedkar', studies the navayana (neo) Buddhist movement of Kanpur in the 1980s onwards with her theoretical linkage of Buddhism with Ravidas and Kabir (the great bhakti saints). While Lynch's study is between the period of SCF and RPI; Bellwinkel studies the period of Dalit Panthers and BAMCEF-BSP. In Kanpur, 1950s and 1960s there was no such conversion movement as such in Agra and Lucknow. Unlike, Agra and Lucknow this period here was quite different. In Bellwinkel's own words,

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of optimism, industrial expansion and intellectual fermentation in Kanpur. For the second generation of educated dalits, there were new openings in government services, education and politics through reservation. Many of those who had been members and supporters of the Adi Hindu Sabha first joined the SCF and became members of the RPI later, which was designed by Ambedkar, politically, they became Ambedkarites but socially they

¹⁶David Pandyan in his study mentions three objectives of behind the conversion to neo-Buddhism; a: Economic welfare, b: social progress, c: spiritual satisfaction. Uttara Shastree in her book 'Religious Converts in India' studies the social, economic and political impacts of neo-Buddhist conversion which she shows are not quite satisfactory. N. K. Singh in his book, 'Contemporary Indian Buddhism' (2008) also expresses the efforts as emptiness which could not bring any significant change in the social, economic and political arenas for the neo-converts.

still follow the Adi Hindu notions.

In the article, she says that the Kanpur's Navayana Buddhist movement developed quite later but in concrete form. While there were large scale conversions in Agra and Lucknow in 1950s and 1960s, the SCs of Kanpur were still Adi-Hindus socially. Later on mass conversions in Kanpur in 1995 and 2001 were to serve the political ends and were a clear signal against Hindu appropriation and a claim for justice, equality and brotherhood.

From 1980s onwards, a great mass conversion drive was launched by the Dalit Panthers in Kanpur which popularized the navayana Buddhism. The main credit of popularising the dalit iconography goes to Kanshi Ram (1936-2006), the founder of BSP. Later on, Mayawati, a close associate of Kanshi Ram brought a new height in the popularity of Buddhism by creating Ambedkar Villages, Buddha parks, and Ravidas Ghats when she was the CM of UP in 1995, 1997 and 2002-03. Now, according to Bellwinkel, navayana Buddhism in Kanpur is seen with great enthusiasm, which is evident in the large scale private and public Buddhist rituals - like the celebrations on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti (14th April), the Buddha Jayanti, the Diksha Divas (conversion day on October 14), and Parinirvan Diwas (Ambedkar's death anniversary on 6th December).

David Pandyan in his book, 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Dynamics of Neo-Buddhism' (1996) gives a little detailed summary of various conversion programmes of U.P which are quite noteworthy, such as:

1. Gorakhpur Ceremony on 14th April 1970.
2. Gazipur Ceremony on 18th April 1970.
3. Mirzapur Ceremony on 7th May 1970.
4. Sarnath ceremony on 29th May 1970.
5. Allahabad Ceremony on 20 Nov 1971.
6. Basti Ceremony on 30th January 1972.

Besides this, according to author as reported by the Deccan Herald on 12 August 1990; ten lakh harijans converted to Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh.¹⁷ His study is

¹⁷Pandyan, 1996, p. 114.

basically echoing the voice of Ambedkar on the conversion issue. He, like Ambedkar believes that conversion has helped in social upward mobility, economic prosperity, academic progress, and political awareness. The social mobility means the neo-Buddhists are not Hindus anymore and are beyond the pale of caste identity. In the economic terms he is sure that neo-Buddhism by providing a positive cultural change will develop economic prosperity, which he wants to prove by Max Weber's thesis that positive change in cultural setting leads to economic prosperity. He also notices Academic progress in neo-Buddhist society which has developed due to opening of many colleges by Ambedkar himself. Politically, he believes that presently converted Buddhists like Mahars have become highly politically awakened and acumen. David Pandyan also regards dalit politicians like Kanshi Ram as a neo-Buddhist who though officially could not convert to Buddhism but are Buddhists at heart. Many politicians don't convert into Buddhism to save their right to contest elections under the SC category. Thus David sees neo-Buddhism not only as totally a religious movement, but a political movement as well. In his own words,

Neo-Buddhism is not only a religious movement but a political mentor too, reminding the neo-Buddhists the political achievements of Dr. Ambedkar and their utility value for them. ¹⁸

Eva-Maria Hardtmann in her latest book, 'Dalit Movements in India: Local Practices, Global connections,' (2008) studies the history of dalit movement and its scope today not only in India but also extensive abroad. In her opinion, off late, there is a significant dalit discourse across the country, which can be divided into three influential movement perspectives all expressed and presented within the same alternative counterpublic (subaltern counterpublic),¹⁹ which she defines in the following three categories----

(a) Dalit Buddhism: In this section she deals with Ambedkar's theoretical journey from Marxism to Buddhism, and later on, how his followers took the issue. She accepts that in the event of 1956 conversion the role of Ambedkar's political party

¹⁸Ibid, pp.122-123

¹⁹Hardtmann describes that Fraser (1992) has used the term 'Subaltern Counterpublic' by taking the term 'subaltern' from Spivak (1998) and 'counterpublic' from Felski (1989). In Indian context subaltern has by and large referred to a Marxian notion of a working class, by the influential school of subaltern studies (Subaltern Studies I-IX, 1982-96). To avoid any discrepancy, Hardtmann uses 'Alternative Counterpublic' for the voices of Dalits.

SCF was extensive. The conversion took place where this party had influence like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Here she discusses in detail the post Ambedkarite conversion in Bihar which she witnessed. On the view of identity of new converts she finds through some interviews with Dalit activists that the new converts feel inevitable to add the prefix Ambedkarite before Buddhism.²⁰

(b) Dalit Theology (Christianity): Here she clearly shows how the Dalit Christian theology is different from the Bishop's interpretation of Christianity. The Bishops see Christianity out of reach for dalits because they have a wounded psyche. Against such Bishop's interpretation which is similar to the dominant Hindu culture, a dalit theology came up with the cry of social justice accusing the dominant Christianity in India as insensitive towards the cause of Dalits. In the words of Gladstone, as she quoted, follows:

Dalit theology is a reaction against 'dominant Hindu Culture', and it demands social justice in society at large. At the same time it aspires to social justice within Christian church, and finds Indian Christian theology to be insensitive to dalit issues. Dalit theology is two edged. It is directed against the caste system and the Hindu culture and also criticizes the missionaries and the upper caste Indian Christians for not having taken care to train a dalit leadership in proportion to their numerical strength within the church.²¹

The above two sections she categories into one, i.e. a liberation theology. The similarities in the adherent (dalits) of both the theologies are upward self respect & consciousness. The difference on the opinion to see it as a political theology is evident in both the theologies. Sometimes the scholars see it as a Dalit Theology rather than adding suffix *theology* in Buddhist and Christian. Now let us see how she explains the third segment of the vast dalit movement.

(c) Dalit Politics: In this section she attempts to look at intensive party politics behavior of Dalits in north India politics especially as per the emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party in U.P, 1990 onwards. The BSP's critical position against Gandhi is discussed. The dalits are to be found discussing on the status of Ambedkar versus Gandhi. This Gandhi-Ambedkar debate she accumulates through various standpoints

²⁰N.G.Uke's Interview held by Hardtmann, p. 93.

of different intellectuals on it. Kanshi Ram's the Chamcha Age also makes the discussion much hot. In the Chamcha Age one important thing in the view of political acumen Kanshi Ram is to see political action as a long term solution and the social action is a short term solution of social problems. While for him, the durable solution is only possible through a cultural change or control. The author says that after the formation of BAMCEF leadership the problem of Chamcha Age darkened and under the social action of Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sanghrash Samiti (DS4), the dalit masses awakened. After that, BSP formed in 1984, which came as a political action. At last, as per the guidelines of Kanshi Ram to solve the problems durable is to do Cultural Change and control, which is not probably possible in this generation as Hardtmann says,

Finally, a durable solution for the BSP will be achieved through cultural change and control. This is something that will probably not be solved during this generation. Still, it is the final goal to 'change a culture of perfect inequality into one of absolute equality.

After studying the efforts of social and political changes by dalits in the form of BAMCEF, DS4 and BSP, the author discusses the efforts of cultural change by present generation of dalits in the next chapter 'Dalit Activities in Lucknow: Buddhism and Party Politics in Local Practice'. The chapter can be studied by dividing in two sections.

Firstly, in this chapter she attempts to show the politics of the BSP with Kanshi Ram and Mayawati. She believes that after the continue increasing political success of the BSP, it has certainly challenged the cultural values of Caste-Hindus and made public its counter public discourse (as anti-Gandhism) in a conscious effort.²² She says,

The political success of the BSP has certainly challenged cultural values that historically put the SCs in invisible positions in relation to others. The BSP has given a face to SCs or Dalits in the public spheres. During her periods in power Mayawati has worked to capture public places symbolically.

²²Valerian Rodrigues also endorses this standpoint in his book 'Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India' (2008). He discusses 'subaltern counterpublic discourse' in the sense of religion. As he says "To the extent they acknowledge religion, dalit Bahujan thinkers do not regard it as private. The notion of public space, which is bereft of religion or which excludes religion, is not central to dalit Bahujan thought as has been generally the case with mainstream liberal and Marxist stands".

Hardtmann sees the BSP success through achieving political power in 2007 bringing as great change in *Indian Culture of Politics*. But, some people didn't see BSP's political success as stable because of its alliance with Hindu Nationalist BJP in 1995, 1997, and 2002. Over the issue, the disappointed neo-Buddhists leaders began to revive old political parties²³ like RPI in 1996 under the guidance of three key figures- Mirajkar, Iswar Sevak and Chandrapal Mitra. The author studies further the efforts of these three figures and their supporters, how they are involved in the Buddhist activities in Lucknow.

Conclusion:

As it is discussed above, the literature is not mentioning the emerging trends covered in the first chapter as a political importance in dalit politics. To Owen Lynch there was a time (1960s) when neo-Buddhism was too strong, but it withered shortly as political parties led by dalits adopted 'caste identity' as a primary tool of mobilisation rather than religion. BSP is its best example which is found in Sudha Pai, Kancha Ilaiah, and Kanchan Chandra's writings. To conclude it can be said that available literature on dalit politics has two dimensions, first type of literature sees contemporary dalit movement dominated by BSP and having no clear ideology about neo-Buddhism. The second type of literature sees neo-Buddhist movement with the political linkages, however such literature is old as it takes back to 1960s. The latest literature brought on dalit politics such as of Eva Maria Hardtmann is noticing neo-Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh politics but it locates such trend under the ambit of RPI, thereby ignores the dominant politics of BSP. Therefore, it can be said that the existing literature is not locating neo-Buddhism as a significant factor in the core of the 'dalit politics' in the state of U.P Rather it is taking the neo-Buddhism to the periphery, linking it to other social as well as cultural aspects. The next chapter will focus on the emergence and development of the identity of neo- Buddhist, its present status in the state of U.P and finally to examine if it holds the potential of being utilized as an instrument to gain political leverage

²³Some of them within BSP were greatly dissatisfied and alleged BSP mainly loyal to own (Chamar) caste group apart from making an alliance with BJP. Subsequently, the Kurmi Mahasabha leader transformed their organization as a separate political party 'Apna Dal'. By the fraction of BSP, some other leader formed small parties such as Bahujan Samaj Dal (BSD) and Bhartiya Loktantrik Dal (BLD).

Chapter 3

Making of Neo-Buddhist Identity in Uttar Pradesh

Indian society witnessed many fundamental changes or mobility in the post-independence period in the politics, social, cultural, economic and religious fields.¹ Consequently, the politics of identity change also took a new upsurge in every aspect of the society. Change in the religious identities of former untouchables of Uttar Pradesh in the last fifty years, as shown in the first chapter of this thesis, is one of the vibrant examples of the changing identities. Lynch (1969) in his study on Agra's Jatav community stimulates a vibrant mobility and social change in the community. One of the main stimuli in this has been the political changes occurred in India (since independence). Through these changes, they have got new possibilities to remove their social, cultural, and political destitute.²

The present chapter is a humble endeavour to understand neo-Buddhist community as an identity group. Does it form an identity? The second thing discussed in this chapter is the modes of things involved to consolidate their identity. And third thing is to explore their assertion in the politics. To accomplish this, first of all basic theories of identities are discussed to know the formation of any identity. Secondly, to know consolidation of any identity Althusserian concept of ideological interpellation is discussed. Thirdly, assertion of identity is also discussed. Finally, the theoretical framework is applied to the purpose.

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Three Moments of Identity Movement

In India as we know that after independence Indian polity is based on liberal democracy. Since 1960s there is emergence of many identity groups on the basis of sharing common attributes have began to assert in politics of India. The backward

¹See Owen M. Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability, Social Mobility and Change in a City of India* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969).

²Ibid.

caste movement and dalit movement are its best examples. The so called new social movements have strong pressure on defining and redefining the Indian politics. The main reason of emerging of these identity groups is because of injustice on them. With the emergence of these movements identity politics starts in order to affect political or social change, the result is often called *identity politics*. According to Stanford Encyclopedia, the laden phrase "identity politics" has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups.³ It means that identity politics has a voice of difference and disagreements. This definition aptly endorse that there is certainly a voice of difference which is giving space to identity politics. In this background it is very important to know the process of identity, its consolidation and assertion.

Let me first take the process of identity formation. In philosophy, Leibniz's law and essentialism are main theoretical discourse of identity formation. The principle of 'indiscernibles of identicals', also known as Leibniz's law states that objects, which are alike in all respects, are identical, which means that if a group of things have all their properties in common, or belong to exactly the same class, they are identical in the sense of being really only one thing. This is frequently used for the converse principle of 'the identities of indiscernibles', the principle which states that if a group of things are identical (i.e. are really one thing, though perhaps described in different ways), they have all their properties in common. Now on the basis of the above law and its converse, If $x=y$, then whatever is true of 'x' is also true of 'y'. Supposing that $x=2$, then 'y' will be equal to 'x' only when the properties of both 'x' and 'y' are identical to each other. Let $x=2$ and $y=2$, then $x=y=2$. Now, let the property of $x=2$ be $(1+1)$ and let the property of $y=2$ be $(3-1)$. Then, according to Leibniz's law x is not equal to y because the properties are not identical. There are, however, two versions of the above law- strong version and weak version. The strong version says, "If x is identical to y , then whatever is true of x is true of y (and vice-versa)". The weak version says, "If x is identical to y , then any property of x is a property of y (and vice-versa)".⁴

³<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/>

⁴See T. Williampon, (Ed.). (1998). Identity. In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (First ed., Vol., pp. 675-680). London and New York: Routledge.

Other than above law, essentialist theory invokes the whole debate of identity. The basic invocation on 'identity' begins with the essentialism, by which it is believed that individuals or groups have an immutable and discoverable (not inventory) 'essence' – a basic, invariable, and pre-social nature.⁵ In ordinary language, we talk of the "essence of the matter", by which we meant it's 'meaning' or significance, the most important or defining aspect of thing, besides which other aspects are just accidental or 'unessential'. Identity must have the essence (underlying reality or true nature) that cannot be observed directly but take us into an observable similarities shared by members (entity) of a category (identity). Therefore, essentialism is the idea that certain categories, such as 'dog', 'man' or 'intelligence' have an underlying reality of true nature that gives objects their identity.

The second stage of the process of making an identity is its consolidation, feeling of solidarity among the member, identification with the group as a member. In contemporary times, development of many new identity groups such as caste, religion, gay, gender etc have undergone this process and therefore, are becoming more visible in the public sphere. How does the identity group consolidate itself? To answer this question we can take help of the theory of ideology which has an origin in Marx's writings but has actually taken shape in Althusser's writings. According to Althusser society, for analytical purpose can be considered as constituted of three structures: economic, political and ideological. He argues that these structures are dialectically interrelated to each other and any particular structure can play dominant role in this relationship. Althusser's well known theory of 'over determination' suggests that which particular structure will play dominant role is determined by the economic structure. In this scheme of things the ideological structure is more abstract part of the social reality which has to do with the consciousness of the people both at the collective and individual level. Without going in to detail of this aspect of the theory for my purpose here, I would like to explore to what extent his theory of ideology can be useful for understanding of the process of consolidation of identity. The aspect of the theory of ideology that deals with the working of ideology can be helpful in this context.

⁵See Susan A. Gelman, *The Essential Child: Origins of Essentialism in Everyday Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Althusser argues that ideology 'interpellates' individual.⁶ By interpellation he means the process through which ideology influences individual mind.⁷ There are two processes involved in the working of 'interpellation': a) mode of interpellation and b) means of interpellation. The first process is about the answers to various types of questions that any particular ideology provides. Let us elaborate upon it. Suppose a child asks a question about death of his mother. Obviously it is difficult to give a scientific explanation of the phenomenon of death to a child. So, one tell her that mother has gone to God as he needed her help. The child is convinced of the answer and starts believing in God. There could be hundred such examples even in the case of adults where one seeks answer to questions that one encounters in everyday life and there are different sets of answers available of the same question. Take another example. Imagine a dalit boy who is suffering some exploitative relations and finds it difficult to manage and he asks a question to himself about the reasons of his sufferings. A set of answer is available in the caste ideology and he is convinced that he is suffering due to the fact that he is a dalit. The moment he recognizes this he will start identifying himself with that group. Similar could be the case with the idea of nation, ethnicity, religion, gender etc. According to Althusser, this process of being convinced is called interpellation. This is how ideology convinces people or 'recruits' individuals as Althusser calls it. The aspect of interpellation is the mechanism through which this works. Althusser considers educational institutions, mass media, entertainment industries, advertising agencies, etc. as instruments of interpellation. This is why we find so many contests over the contents of the text books for the school children.

Now, each identity group in order to consolidate its position formulates an ideology and works hard to bring people under its fold. For this it propagates the ideology by various means. We can use Althusser's concept, each ideology tries to interpellate individuals and for this it uses all the mechanisms mentioned above. Therefore, if we want to explore the process of consolidation of identity, methodologically, it would be pertinent to read between the lines of the writings, publications, films, songs, visuals, slogans etc.

⁶Althusser, L. (2006). *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (B. Brewster. Trans.). In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1st ed., p. 117). Delhi: Aakar Books.

⁷ Ibid.

The third phase of the making of the identity can be named as 'assertion of identity'. The mature moment for any social identity is its assertion which can be seen in its collective action such as demonstration, producing literature, developing iconography and rituals etc. Thus the assertion can be in social, cultural, and religious fields etc. In post independence period of India, the assertion of identities in political field is a strong example of identity assertion. The 'political identification'⁸ gives an identity a means of 'sense of belonging to a group' more thickly. Apart from political field, the assertion is also finding in socio-cultural and religious fields as Lynch has described in his study of neo Buddhist movement in Agra. Here it should be noticed that assertion of identity in politics can also simultaneously consolidate it.

3.1.1 Neo Buddhist Identity: In Search of Essence

According to census 2001, the neo-Buddhists are basically the scheduled caste people who converted into Buddhism under the influence of Ambedkar. The first question and basic in nature is that if the neo-Buddhists and dalits constitute a singular category. There are scholars who believe that there is no essential difference between them. If we invoke Leibniz law here, one may argue that the neo-Buddhists share the essential feature of the Scheduled castes and therefore, they constitute the same group. For instance, Gopal Guru argues that the essential commonness between the two is reflected in their desire for 'emancipation *from exploitation*' Guru argues:

These categories belong to the same logical class in as much as they share the same positive utopia of creating a society free from coercion, exploitation and thus dehumanization of people.....how can the category Buddhist be in opposition to dalit or dalit in opposition to subaltern, class and bahujan when all encode the promise to engage the toiling masses into the radicalization of politics necessary for challenging the forces of hegemony. The accommodation of these categories into an emancipatory project is not out of convenience; it has authenticity in as much as all these categories confront various structures of domination and exploitation.⁹

⁸International Encyclopedia of the social sciences describes the 'political identification' as means of a person's sense of belonging to a group, if that identification influences his political behavior.

⁹See Gopal Guru, 1998, The Politics of Naming. *Seminar*, 471, p. 14-18.

The expression of Guru shows that the essence of neo Buddhist and dalit is the same and that is their emancipatory project. However, there is a possibility of arguing otherwise. One may argue that there are so much of differences between the Dalits and Buddhists that we cannot call them belonging to the one and the same identity. However, one may invoke the weak Leibniz law to suggest that despite the differences if the essential features are similar there remains a possibility of identity formation. For instance, Lynch (1969) in his study of Agra's neo Buddhist movement finds that the 'myths' (take it as properties in a weaker sense of law) of scheduled caste and neo-Buddhists are very much different. Whereas among dalits, the myth that they are original Kshatriyas is prevalent, neo-Buddhists claim as originally Buddhists. The differentiation in myth draws us to think that there is certainly a gap in properties but the core and causal essence in 'both' (myths of identities) is same i.e. emancipation from exploitation and hegemony of Brahmanism.¹⁰ Lynch describes that 'Ambedkar' is perceived by dalits as their 'hero' of neo-Buddhist and dalit community both because 'he' represents the emancipatory spirit.

As essentialists believe that the quality of an essence is immutable, stable and unchangeable, apply on the essence of neo-Buddhist and dalit also as still they are fighting for emancipation. And Ambedkar is their symbol of emancipation. He is undoubtedly stable, leader of neo-Buddhists and dalits. The neo Buddhist regard him so much which is seen in their produced literature. As Bhartiya Bauddh Mahasabha, UP brings out a souvenir of its activities in which almost 80 lessons including Dhamma reports, articles, poems, etc are published every year. The name of a souvenir is *Dhamma Sandesh*. There is hardly any page which does not contain any symbolic representation of Dr. Ambedkar or about his teachings. Apart from this, most of the advertisements published on the last pages contain complimentary messages on the Dr. Ambedkar's birth anniversary. *Dhamma Sandesh*, 2008 has 50 pages of advertisements, in which 297 out of 354 are complimentary messages on Bodhisattva Dr. Ambedkar's 117th birth anniversary. This pattern of observable advertisements drags anyone to ponder over which shows how much they are internally memorizing him. The other evidence can be derived from the quarterly magazines of neo-Buddhists, *Dhamma Darpan* published from New Delhi. Its cover page contains the

¹⁰See. Lynch 1972, *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar- Myth and Charisma*, In M. Mahar (ed.) *The Untouchables in Contemporary India*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press) pp. 96-112.

teachings of Ambedkar and Buddha simultaneously. The teachings of Ambedkar have heading as *Baba ke Sandesh*, and Buddha's teachings are accommodated under the title *Buddha ke Sandesh*. It shows that even after 65 years of the origin of neo-Buddhism, Ambedkar is observed as an unchanged and stable hero.

Having suggested that there is a possibility of sharing the hero, ideals, the project of emancipation between groups which are not fully identical but broadly identical, one should also be aware of the possibility of their internal contradictions. If in case of an identity group we find weak Leibniz law working there is a possibility of developing of internal contradictions. Perhaps this is happening in case of Neo-Buddhists in Uttar Pradesh.

Let us ask some questions to make the above point clear. Are the properties of dalit and neo Buddhist same? Are they following the same path for their emancipation? Does 'Ambedkar' represent the same 'image' for dalit and neo-Buddhists? The answer of this categorically will be no. Whereas dalit are banking on Ambedkar's constitution only, neo-Buddhists also have in addition Dhamma. Michal Mahar (1972) in his study of Khalalpur village (Saharnpur district, U.P) finds that dalits are inclined towards Indian constitution unlike neo Buddhist. The dalits he says, *expressed their unwillingness to participate in it [neo-Buddhism] as they felt conversion to Buddhism would not improve their position in the village – a Chamar by any other name would be still be treated as a Chamar*'. Mahar further mentions that several men also voiced the view that they are Hindus, and did not like to forsake their 'own religion' despite the denial to them of Brahman services and access to the village temple. This explanation clearly shows that dalit community still regard themselves as apart of Hindu religion unlike neo-Buddhist, and sees Indian constitution as a sufficient way of emancipation rather than Dhamma. Thus, it can be seen that dalits and neo-Buddhists have different identity.

3.1.2 Consolidation of Neo Buddhist Identity: In Search of History, Symbols and Rituals

The essence of neo-Buddhist is not hidden or unknown anymore as it has been discussed above. The essence of neo-Buddhist identity is emancipation, to which some

writers finds it closer to 'liberation theology'.¹¹ As we know the second moment of any identity is its consolidation by propagating its ideology with the help of certain modes or means. The neo-Buddhists are also in the process of consolidating their identity by propagating their ideology which is seen in their historical perspective and symbols.

The various expressions/narrations of neo-Buddhists about their beliefs pertaining to history and culture approves that they have framed an ideology in the historical perspective and are in the process of its propagation also. Dr. Vishal Singh Dinkar, a neo-Buddhist in Delhi, depicts the whole ideology of neo-Buddhists in historical perspective which is echoed in other writings also. He believes that the ancient culture of indigenous people was '*Buddhist Culture*'. His argument is based on the excavation of the site of Mohenjodaro by archaeologists. His whole narration can be categorized in three parts. In the first part he expresses ancient culture of India as a Buddhist where peace and harmony was well established.

From the excavation it has been found that the people of Indus Valley Civilisation followed Buddha's Dhamma. We find *stupas* in the city of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Similarly, an ample number of seals displaying the characteristic features of Buddhism are found. There are seals featuring two deers and dhamma chakra along with some displaying Buddha as a monk wrapped in ascetic robe except right shoulder which is left bare. Also, one seal depicts Buddha in yoga posture with two deers on both sides. All this proves that Buddha's Dhamma was prevalent during that period when people lived in peace and harmony.¹²

The above narration of Dr. Dinkar has resemblance in the Dr. Lella Karunyakra's (L. Kennedy) book '*Modernisation of Buddhism*' 2002. He also describes ancient culture of India as a Buddhist culture:

In fact, Buddhism has been divided into many schools and sects since the time of Gautama Buddha. It is even believed that the Buddhism was prevalent and dominant religion of Mohenjodaro people in Indus valley civilisation. There were many Buddhas however with scanty historical evidences, for e.g. Kunakamana Buddha.¹³

¹¹See Gail Omvedt (1994) and David Pandyan (1996).

¹²See. Dinkar, Vishal Singh (1997), *Dhamma Darpan*, No. 125, p 115. Translated by me.

¹³See D. L. Karunyakra, *Modernisation of Buddhism*, (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2002). 160-161.

Generally, it is known that Buddhism came up with the teachings of Buddha. One would like to question this kind of claim about prevailing of Buddhism before Buddha and that too in the Indus valley civilization. Shanti Swaroop Baudh's reply is worth considering: It is believed that before Gautama Buddha there were 27 Buddhas, which depicts the ancient Buddhist culture prevalent before Gautama Buddha.¹⁴

The above statement of S. S. Baudh strongly supports Dinkar's claim. Dinkar further argues for differentiation of Buddhist culture from other culture. He discusses the way the way Buddhist culture was destroyed by others and it was subjugated. He describes:

Various inscriptions, literatures and other signs of civilization were destroyed. In order to mould the social system in their favour, they killed aboriginal,¹⁵ intellectuals and kings, and established themselves as original inhabitants of India. It was said that various castes came into existence from the primeval man called 'Brahma'. And placing various castes in a hierarchical order, a societal set up was made where Brahmin was placed at the apex, while Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra were placed at the lower pedestal in respective terms. Accordingly, rights and duties have been distributed as mentioned in Rig-Veda, the so called oldest scripture. In terms of rights and duties, Brahmin being at the supreme while Kshatriya and Vaishya were having those in decreasing order, and Shudra were barred from enjoying any rights and are thus meant only for duties.¹⁶

The above expressions of neo-Buddhists show how strongly they are locating themselves in the history of India and are in continue propagation of it in masses by publishing these types of descriptions in their writings.

One of the most important mechanisms for interpellation of neo Buddhist ideology is its symbols. They are very conscious to protect their symbols such as image of Gautam Buddha. As among Hindus, Buddha is regarded as one of the Hindu gods, neo-Buddhists dismiss the claim of Hindus and differentiate their 'Buddha' from various vantage points such as philosophy and history. The claim of Hindus is counter claimed by neo Buddhists immensely. There are many expressions of neo-

¹⁴Personal interview on 11th April, 2009, New Delhi.

¹⁵The terms aboriginal seems very popular among neo-Buddhists, through History they invoke themselves as original inhabitants of India.

¹⁶Dinkar, p. 36. Translated by me.

Buddhist found in their literature to counter mythological view of Hindus. As B. P. Singh Baudh says, *Ambedkar viewed that Buddha was Margdata, not a Muktidata, in the same manner Buddha also disbelieved many metaphysical things such as soul and god.*¹⁷ He prefers to call Him Tathagat Buddha.¹⁸ They even sometimes demarcate Gautama Buddha from the Hindu Puranic Budha. Roshan Baudh dissociates Gautama Buddha from the claims of Hindus by keeping clear-cut bifurcation in the characteristics of Hindu 'Budha' and Gautam 'Buddha'. Apart from spelling, he narrates many characteristic differences.¹⁹

Difference in Bhagwan²⁰ Buddha and Puranic Budha

Gautam 'Buddha'	'Puranic Budha'
Gautama Buddha (childhood name Siddhartha) was born at Lumbini forest in the Tarai region of Nepal.	In Puranic literature, Budha is said to taken birth in the country called as Keetak.
His mother's name was Mahamaya.	
His Father's name was Shuddhodhan.	His father's name was Anjan.
He wore clean ascetic robes.	His robes were unclean.
Buddha took bath daily.	Budha did not take bath daily.
He brushed his teeth daily.	He never brushed his teeth.
Buddha carried begging bowl in his hands while walking.	Puranic Budha had <i>marjini</i> in his hands.
He walked on the roads like a ordinary man	Budha walked on the roads like Jain ascetic.
He believed in the welfare of majority of people- <i>bahujan hitay, bahujan shukhay.</i>	His motto was to destroy the original inhabitants of India.
His followers became successful in getting enlightenment and served humanity throughout their life.	His followers were unsuccessful and thus defeated.

¹⁷See. *Dhamma Sandesh* (2008), Bhartiya Baudh Mahasabha, Uttar Pradesh, p. 84. Translation is mine.

¹⁸Many expressions are found to negate this mythological view on various grounds. (For Example, see *Dhamma Sandesh* 2008, p. 84).

¹⁹See. Roshan Baudh (2009) *Samtayug Smarika, Bhagwan Buddha, Vishnu Ke Avtar Nahi*, New Delhi p. 51.

²⁰As sometimes Gautam Buddha is called as Mahatama Buddha also among Hindus. The neo-Buddhists do not refer in their expression 'Mahatma' to Gautam Buddha and even deny it because the word denotes to 'soul' to which Gautam Buddha negated. Rather than Mahatma, they prefer other prefix such as Tathagat or Bhagwan. Some call him as a Bhagwan also categorically as Gajendra Singh (Firozabad, U.P) argues, "the follower of Buddha in Buddha Vandana says '*Namotaseye Bhagwato Arhato Samma Sambudhhasye*', Bhagwato here refers to Bhagwan so it is right to use.

Thus, it is to be seen that neo-Buddhists are seriously engaged in propagation of their ideology as through this the consolidation of identity will be possible. This also may have some link or inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar when he says, “*Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise both will wither and die.*”²¹

The neo-Buddhist ideology has come up in public view with the construction of iconography and changing their rituals/customs. They are very keen on preserving the monuments, *shilalekhs*, *stupas*, monasteries, sites, educational places, and parks of Buddhist period erected by the Kings such as, Asoka, Guptas, Mauryas, and Harshavardhan etc, who gave protection to Buddhist culture. The related concern can also be seen in the literature found in various articles and news published. A letter of demands presented in the mega gathering of Bhartiya Baudh Mahasabha, U.P having the following demands shows deep concern to preserve their culture.²²

1. Pali is the original language of Buddha Dhamma. It must be protected. Let this language not be wiped out from the 8th scheduled of the constitution of India.
2. Pali-language should be taught at the primary level teaching programme.
3. The governments should buy the products of Meerut’s sculptures since traders exploit them by paying very less money as compared with the value of the product. In the same way, it is requested to force the government to buy the saris and sports items produced by the labourers of Banaras, Sarnath and Agra.
4. Mahabodhi Vihar of Baudh Gaya should be handed over to Buddhists. The act of 1949, which grants non-Buddhists to become members in the managing committee, should be null and void.
5. Archeology department of Government of India should be given the responsibility of protecting the Asoka pillars spread all over the country.

²¹ See Ambedkar, BAW.S. Vol. 1. p.80.

²² Dhamma Darpan 2006, No. 118, p.11. Translation is mine.

6. The neo-Buddhists should be allowed to get certificates by the respective district collectors in all the states as per the certificate of *Bhartiya Baudh Mahasabha*.
7. The Buddhist Prayers (Buddha Vandana) and Dhamma Sandesh should be telecasted and broadcasted before *Vande Matram*.

Their concern for protection of Buddhist sites is not confined to any region but it is for every corner where any Buddhist symbol is found, or endangered. The neo-Buddhist writings are continuously engaged in introducing world's Buddhist sites and demanding for the protection of their safety.²³ In addition to this, neo-Buddhists are very happy with the continuous excavations/findings by ASI, and protection of Nalanda University site by Bihar Government. The irony of Nalanda site is that the Buddha statues in the surrounding areas are still unprotected. According to Madukar Pipliyan,

In India, Buddha and His Dhamma have begun to glorify again, the Buddhist sites are getting care and attention. Scholars have also developed interest in the Buddhist culture. But why nobody is paying attention towards the insult of historic Buddha statues of Nalanda.²⁴

The neo-Buddhists are continuously engaged in the construction of many Buddhist/Ambekarite sites in order to promote the Buddhist cultural capital. The construction of this symbolic iconography creates a strong consolidation in identity and gives one a meaning.²⁵ The construction of Buddhist sites by individuals or Buddhist organizations is in progress. Dr. Angney Lal²⁶ has written a book, '*Bundelkhand Main Baudh Dharam*' mentioning 35 Buddhist sites/Viharas built by local neo-Buddhists in modern times in many districts such as Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur, Banda, Datia, Gwalior and Bind.²⁷ The construction of iconography on so large level shows their level of conviction and these sites have become the meeting

²³For example, when Bamiyan site was bulldozed by Taliban administration in Afghanistan, neo-Buddhists condemned it and demanded Indian government to raise the issue on international area to build up a pressure on Taliban administration.

²⁴ See Samtayug Samrika 2008, SBVPS. p. 21.

²⁵Op. cit. in Cerulo, 1997, and Tartakov 1990.

²⁶He is a retired professor, Ancient Indian History and Department of Archeology, Lucknow University

²⁷For detail see Annexure III.

points for neo-Buddhists. Thus, it shows a greater sense of consolidation in neo-Buddhist identity.

Besides the erection of Buddhist sites they are also active in writings and publishing activities. For example, Shanti Swaroop Baudh runs a publishing house in Delhi, and has written more than fifty Books on Buddhism. He is an artist also who has made hundreds of pictures of Ambedkar and his movement, which can be seen in the houses of dalits and neo-Buddhists. The neo-Buddhists also write in the dalit magazines also on large level. Apart from this, in one of its research project G. B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad finds 27 books on Buddhism in U.P which are on popular sale among dalit community²⁸ which also add many things in the propagation and consolidation of neo-Buddhists.

The rituals are other meeting points to see neo-Buddhist's congregation. Hermanowicz and Morgan (1999) opines that rituals, for groups, as an extent to define themselves by which they attain a collective self image. The rituals in the form of festivals, or public behavior play a significant role by integrating many people through shared sentiments and beliefs. As Durkheim argues:

The rites servesto sustain the vitality of [common] beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness. Through it, the group periodically renews the sentiments which it has of itself and of its unity; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social natures.²⁹

Now let us see the way rituals play important role among neo-Buddhists. Among neo-Buddhists there are some famous festivals that are celebrated with a new fervour like Buddha Jayanti, Ambedkar Jayanti, Mahaparinirvan Day of Ambedkar, 14 October, and *Dussehra*. The celebration of these festivals has increased significantly among the neo-Buddhists. It is a well known fact that the Ambedkar Jayanti and Mahaparinirvan Day have been widely celebrated in all the districts of Uttar Pradesh. Now the turn is to know the Buddha Jayanti celebrations. The Buddha Jayanti celebration, 2009 is reported from more than 22 districts of Uttar Pradesh by

²⁸See <http://dalitresourcecentre.com>

²⁹See Hermanowicz, J. C. & Morgan, H. P. (1999). Ritualizing the Routine: Collective Identity Affirmation. *Sociological Forum*, 14(1), 197-214.

Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagran, Hindi newspapers of 10th May, 2009. As Hindi News Papers have reported the places where celebration took place are Agra, Allahabad, Kanpur, Varanasi, Moradabad, Kanpur, Meerut, Lucknow, Bareilly, Balia, Badaun, Ghaziabad, Gazipur, Lalitpur, Mainpuri, Hathras, Basti, Sonbhadra, Mathura, Etawa, Hamirpur, Hardoi and Sahajahnpur. In all these districts, the celebration took place in various forms such as- garlanding the statue of Buddha/Ambedkar, conferences, marches and rallies, exhibitions, lectures, and tying the knots (marriages). These activities have come in routine among neo-Buddhists which can be seen widely on the occasions.

Apart from above celebrations *Buddha Paritraan Paath* also has come into prevalence among the neo-Buddhist community. The village *Pradhan* of Athalkada, district Jaunpur, (Uttar Pradesh) and Santosh Kumar Baudh organized a week long 'Baudh Katha' (22-28 January, 2008). On the last day ceremony of 29th January more than 5,000 people participated in the public food (*samuhik bhoj*).³⁰

In Delhi, every year on 11th February, Buddhists hold a huge congregation, 'Baudh Parivar Milan'. The Buddhists of Delhi and neighboring states such as U.P and Haryana mainly participate on the occasion. The purpose of '*Milan*' is to introduce each other, and help in the searching of marital partner for eligible youths.

Apart from above ways of propagating the neo-Buddhist ideology these groups also organize training camps for the converts. These camps are intended to guide a person about Buddhism in the right way, train neo-converts and also those who want to convert. Every year many training camps of Buddhist organizations are held all over Uttar Pradesh. The period of camps usually varies between 1-10 days, in which the Buddhist intellectuals open many insightful lectures to promote the participants. In the camp Buddha's Dhamma and life-struggle of Ambedkar is discussed. For example some of the camps organized camps are mentioned below:

- In Ghaziabad (U.P), a training camp (*Dhamma Prashikshan Shivir*) was held from 24th October-2 November 2008, in which 100 women participated. According to

³⁰ For more details, see. '*Vishal Baudh Katha Samaroh*' Dhamm Darpan, Issue 126, p. 41, Delhi 2008

organizers, the motive behind organizing these types of camps is mainly to enlighten them, develop good conduct by removing superstitions among them, and to promote for fulfilling the mission of Bodhisatva Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in national interest.³¹

- In Gorakhpur (U.P), a ten day long (17 Feb - 26 Feb, 2006) training camp named as *Shramnair-Baudhacharya Shivir* was organized by Buddhist Society of India. According to the organizers 60 new comers were trained in which 21 were women. The participants were from many districts such as Sultanpur, Balrampur, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Maharajganj and Allahabad. After successfully passing verbal and written tests they were awarded with Baudhachari/Baudhacharni certificates. The new trained persons are supposed to spread Dhamma in the masses.³²
- In Saharanpur district of U.P, a two day short Activists Training Camp was held which began on 12 March, 2005. The organizer was Bhartiya Baudh Mahasabha, Saharanpur. Many officials of the organization, especially five trainers trained the participants and took a vow from them to spread Dhamma in villages to fulfill the dream of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, '*Buddhamay Bharat*'.³³
- On 06 August, 2005, The Buddhist Society of India, Muzzafarnagar organised a Baudh Conference, in which the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Ambedkar were highlighted. The emphasis was given on world peace, compassion, *maître*, fraternity, equality and liberty. The increasing Hindutva assault on Indian culture by destroying the Babri Masjid on 06 Dec. 1992 was also in the main list of concerns. According to one speaker, the Babri Masjid demolition highlights the apathy against not only Muslims but also for Buddhists because the date selected for demolition was anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar's Parinirvan (*death*).³⁴

³¹ Dhamma Darpan, 2006, No 129, p 34.

³² Dhamma Darpan, 2006, No.11, p. 09-11.

³³ Op. cited in Dhamma Darpan 2006, No. 115, p.11.

³⁴ See. Dhamma Darpan 2005, No.117, pp. 10-11.

The increasing number of training camps³⁵ is a hint towards the identity consolidation of neo-Buddhists. The neo Buddhist are also in the process of expanding their identity across globe. They are greatly concerned about what is happening around the world. The demand to revive democracy in Myanmar, a Buddhist country can be seen in many writings. They have been demanding to release Aung San Su Ki, who is a democratic leader of Myanmar. They are very critical about the role of Indian and Chinese governments in maintaining the status quo in Myanmar.³⁶ They charge India that being a democratic country; she is not supporting the establishment of democracy in Myanmar.

In addition to this, one great burning issue of Tibet's liberation also provide a kind of rallying point for neo-Buddhists as they support this cause whole heartedly. Tibet is a neighbouring country of India, though officially, it is the part of China. But the Tibetan Buddhists under the leadership of Dalia Lama are demanding for a separate state. The neo-Buddhists strongly condemn the Chinese and Indian governments particularly the then Nehru Government- by which it was validated that Tibet is a part of India. As Dr. Ambedkar also strongly condemned Indian government on this issue, following him the neo-Buddhists are also very critical about India's position on Tibet issue.

Yet another concern of neo-Buddhists is the recent demolishing of Bamiyan site by the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. The incident is strongly condemned and covered in the magazines published by neo-Buddhists in India. The neo-Buddhist literature also finds a place for Buddhist countries' culture, festivals, heroes, stories, sites, and new researches and other happenings which shows their move to consolidate their identity. Thus, we see that neo-Buddhist identity is in the process of consolidation which is evident in their ideology, and its propagation through writings, camps, and rituals.

³⁵Recently, TBMSG also has began to organize many spiritual camps to train neo-Buddhists. (for critical understanding of spirituality in neo-Buddhism, see. Gopal Guru's article in *EPW* 'Hinduisation of Ambedkar in Maharashtra and subsequent response to it by D. Lokamitra, a TBMSG supporter).

³⁶See Dhamma Darpan, 2007. No. 125, p. 04 and 41.

3.1.3 Assertion of Neo-Buddhist Identity in U.P

The third move of any identity is assertion in politics. The neo-Buddhists ideology is not confined to only in socio-cultural and religious matter but they are invoking Asoka as an ideal ruler in their invocations with Ambedkar and Buddha. In politics their main dialectic is with Hindutva/Hinduism's cultural and political values.³⁷ They are very much critique of Hinduism and subsequently Hindutva also. They strongly condemn the cultural values of Hindutva i.e cultural nationalism. They claim that Hindutva forces are against cultural diversity and respect of Indian Buddhist culture as well as Indian constitution which is based on Buddhist cultural values. They believe that Hindutva is against communal harmony-a trademark of Indian Buddhist culture. As it is shown earlier how they claim ancient culture of India as Buddhist culture which was destroyed by Brahmins in ancient India, in the same way they believe that presently the Hindutva forces is recent attack on Buddhist culture of India, which must be checked immediately. The editorial of *Dhamma Sandesh*, 2008 (U.P) says,

In secular India, the present requirement is to have a serious discussion on the problems of Buddhists and to ameliorate their situation, certain positive steps need to get implemented. This is desperately required to maintain 'communal harmony' which was previously emphasized by Asoka, the Great and could now act as panacea for the problems of Buddhists.³⁸

Thus they see themselves possibly safe only if Hindutva forces are weak. According to them there are many examples of breaching of communal harmony by these Hindutva forces for their interests even at the cost of Indian constitution. In the same editorial it is written,

There have been intensifications in the criminal activities in the entire country after 6th December 1992, the date when Babri Mosque in Ayodhya was demolished. Since then there is serious attack on 'communal harmony' in the State where minority (ies) living in different parts is/are exploited in the name of religion. There are various examples like brutal murder of Christian missionary Graham

³⁷In dalit political discourse both the words are seen as same because both have discrimination for a certain sect (see. Gopal Guru's article 'Hinduisation of Ambedkar in Maharashtra' and subsequent reply on it by S. Deshpandey, *EPW*).

³⁸Translated by me.

Staines and his children in Orissa, incidences of exploitation and slaughter of Christians, Muslims in Gujarat, etc. on the basis of which political leverage on the basis of demography could be established to attain power. These incidents basically act as a foundation stone to foster petty interests of Hindu fundamentalism, which is actually against the ideals of the constitution.³⁹

Thus, the above expression invokes Ambedkar-Asoka duo along with constitution of India to save Indian Buddhist culture, by which as they claim, India can be save itself. They want to establish the trio (Buddha-Asoka-Ambedkar) for the betterment of all beings. Presently, they see Indian constitution as a substantive example to preserve Indian Buddhist culture of peace embodied in it through the adoption of many Buddhist symbols as Bhagwan Das Ahirwar expresses:

Government of India has paid respect to Gautama Buddha and Asoka, by depicting Dhamma Charka in the middle of the national flag, *Dharmachakra Pravartnay* on the seat of honourable President of India, and by adopting Asoka symbol (four lions facing four directions) on the national currency, and adopting it as national emblem.⁴⁰

The neo-Buddhists seem to challenge Hindutva forces not only by attacking on its ideological base but on its political identity by calling them to become 'one' with the secular forces. Editorial of Dhamma Darpan 110 says,

If there is true faith among various intellectuals, secular leaders and defenders of Indian unity towards Indian constitution, in making India a benevolent state, there is essential requirement of these to come together and join hands against caste, religion and communalism, and also against those political leaders who utilise such factors to create fractions. With this, they can uphold the dignity of the constitution and of India in the world and can prove as a true patriot.⁴¹

The same type of expressions in a pragmatic approach is found in the writings of Karunyakara, who himself converted to Buddhism. He writes,

Modern Indian State under democratic polity outwardly accepts Buddhist ideals as state symbols. However, *since polity's main concern is vote banks, and Buddhists are less in number*, the agenda of

³⁹Translated by me.

⁴⁰See. Dhamma Darpan, No. 110, p. 33. Translation is mine.

⁴¹Translation is mine.

Buddhist interests doesn't form part of agenda of mainstream politics.⁴²

The expression in above statement is acceptable as according to government's statistics that population of Buddhists in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi is not so much politically significant. But there are many neo-Buddhists, who are irresistibly engaged in spreading Dhamma. Shanti Swaroop Baudh and Bhagwandas see the politics in the census data also due to which number of Buddhists is shown lesser than the actual number. They see the census data as unfair. Shanti Swaroop Baudh writes an editorial in Dhamma Darpan and shares his views on census of religion in India.⁴³ He calls to take serious steps for fair census of religion as he says, the U.P State Assembly Elections were held in 2007 and Mayawati became the Chief Minister. His words indicate towards a miraculous result if it is held in fair manner.

Our long experience tells that census of population has been the greatest tool of political interest....the main tool which is adopted by census officials during the census is that they are recorded as Hindus despite telling them Buddhist. Second, 2001 census was recorded by H.B. pencils, and it is a serious doubt that the officials may have changed the records in their offices or houses when making it final.⁴⁴ Further he suggests the election commission of India to adopt such a mechanism which would leave minimum ground for doubts. The census sheet must be prepared among the people at the spot, and one carbon copy should be given to the family member. Both the sheets (original and carbon copy) must be duly signed by the resident to avoid any discrepancy.....now onwards, all the Buddhist activists should be alert and promote their community people to register their religion as Buddhism in every village and *mohallas*. This is the duty of our sincere activists that they stop any other possibility of wrong recording anyway. *Be Buddhist, Register as a Buddhist and Look Buddhist.*⁴⁵

The suggestions of Shanti Swaroop Baudh to held fair census is a deep cry for the establishment of democratic set up as prescribed in the Constitution of India. The 20 editorials of Dhamma Darpan⁴⁶ show the political voice of neo-Buddhists strongly in favour of democracy and democratic values of Indian constitution. Eight out of 20

⁴²See Karunyakra, 2002, p. 153.

⁴³ No. 130, Jan-March 2009.

⁴⁴Translated by me.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶The issue no 110 to 130. year 1994 to 2009.

editorials are found concerned with democracy, and favoring other constitutional values. The classification of 20 editorials can be done in the following themes.

Table:8 Theme Based Classification of Editorial of Dhamma Darpan
(2004-2009)

Pro-Democracy	08
Against Hinduism & others	04
Revival of Buddhism	04
Pro-Reservation and anti-caste	02
Dalit Assertion	01
Science & Buddha's teachings	01

The above illustrations show that neo-Buddhists regard the Indian constitution as a reflection of Buddhist-Asoka cultural values of secularism, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. There are various cultural symbols of Buddha-Asoka a tradition which are incorporated in the Indian constitution respectfully, reflect the true Indian culture of the past. The neo-Buddhist sees constitution of India as a vital document to preserve and ensure their culture. They also see the Indian constitution loaded with Buddhist values, which are part of the basic principles of Indian constitution.⁴⁷ The idea of secularism, right to religious freedom is regarded as an idea of ancient Buddhist culture- incorporated in the constitution. The concept of equality, liberty, justice and fraternity are thought as Buddhist sacrosanct values- assembled in the Indian constitution by the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar. Thus it is very clear that new-Buddhist ideology of politics is based on the principle of Ambedkar's constitutional spirit, and Buddha and Asoka's principle of secularism and communal harmony.

Political Quest of Neo-Buddhists and Contemporary Dalit Movement: As they look sound in ideological understanding of politics, they have begun to criticize contemporary dalit movement ideologically. They charges dalit movement as it is not complementary to Buddhist cultural movement. 117th editorial of Dhamma Darpan clearly validates this point, as it says,

⁴⁷Ambedkar declared that his philosophy of liberty, equality and fraternity is enshrined in Buddhist values rather than in French revolution.

As Bodhisatva Babasaheb passed away, the responsibility of the revival of Buddhist movement came in the hands of the politicians, who were close to Ambedkar. These politicians exploited the vulnerable followers of Babasaheb only to fulfill their interests, used them only to get echelons. They did nothing to build independence, self-respect, and spread of Buddhist culture. As a result, these political leaders wondered as a rolling stone from one party to another party in the greed of a post. The same thing is happening today also. All dalit leaders are engaged in the rat-race of getting the post of prime minister or minister while they have no political base. They have forgotten that without cultural change, political change is not possible.

The same type of expression is found in the Dhamma Sandesh 2008, (U.P) when J. N. Aditya writes how badly the neo-Buddhists are treated among dalit leaders.

It is a great irony that the path shown by Dr. Ambedkar to live a dignified life by the action of dynamiting caste-system is not hold on by the dalit politicians properly. They are lost in the political comforts, and don't miss any opportunity to ignore Buddhists. Buddhist monks and even respected Buddhist organisations' officials have to wait to complain their grievances to the high echelon political leaders. Even dalit leader occupies Buddhist stages too. The dalit political leader took front seats and with the help of their stooges, succeeded in making the *Bhikshus* and dedicated officials of Buddhist organisations to occupy seats at the back. However it is noteworthy that only that candidate wins who has highest caste density in his/her favour. It is clear as crystal, that there is no value for ability, morality and character in politics but only and only density of caste.⁴⁸

In addition to this, he invokes the neo-Buddhists to make pressure groups in order to influence politics. He says,

As it is visible today, all the religious communities of society have pressure groups to influence politics. In addition to this, there are some organisations functioning like a Rapid Action Force to handle the spontaneous troubles, but such type of things is totally absent among Indian Buddhists.⁴⁹

The above statements clearly express their desire for power but with morality as enshrined in the principles of Buddha, Ambedkar and Asoka. They invoke 'Asoka's Empire' or 'Asoka's Rule' as a perfect example, in which values and

⁴⁸Translated by me.

⁴⁹Ibid.

morality were at zenith. Asoka as a king was fond of peace, justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, morality, communal harmony, religious freedom, non-violence and arts. He converted into Buddhism and spread Dhamma all over world. On the same lines some neo-Buddhists are also willing to gain political power on the Asokan model- so that spreading Dhamma may become an easy task. By acquiring political power, it is supposed to save constitutional values and make *dhamma prachar* easy.

Hardtmann in her recent book (2009) notices the revitalising political activities among neo-Buddhists in Lucknow. She discusses three neo-Buddhist figures of Lucknow, who took efforts to revive the Republican Party of India in 1996. Among these, Chindrapal Mitra is the man who embraced Buddhism in 1946, ten years prior to Ambedkar.⁵⁰ The main reason noticed in their reemerging activity is due to their apathy towards the functioning of BSP, a dalit led party. Hartmann also notices that other two figures Mirajkar and Iswar Sevak are no-doubt neo-Buddhists but are supporter of Marxism and Naxalism also. They did not find any contradiction in Buddhist philosophy and Marxist sympathies. See how Mirajkar responded the author.

In self-defense you must resort to violence, but ideologically you should believe in non-violence. That is also what Buddhism preaches. The Naxalites are fighting for the cause of the poorest section of the society, and making sacrifices for that. So I think they are the well wishers of the poor, or their saviours in that sense. Of course, that is my personal conviction.⁵¹

The above statement of Mirajkar has some similarity with the narratives of B.P. Singh Baudh.⁵² He writes on the many misconceptions prevalent about the Thatagat Buddha. Among those the debate on non-violence and violence is spread more than the reality. Being a Buddhist does not mean to be non-violent unconditionally. He says,

In reference to Tathagat Gautam Buddha, there is much illusionary propagation. The principle of non-violence of Buddha is propagated more than reality. Buddha was only against 'unreasonable violence'. Buddha did not preach non-violence in case of any assault on anyone's dignity, justice, national security or welfare of the people. Although,

⁵⁰Owen Lynch also notices that in Agra also before Ambedkar's conversion many dalits embraced Buddhism.

⁵¹“qtd” from Hardtmann, 2009. *The Dalit Movement in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

⁵²He resides in Moradabad district and is a Bank employee.

Buddha never carried any weapon, but it should not be taken that by this propagation we sit idle in case of injustice. On 15th March 2008, Communist China attached Tibet, a Buddhist country in the imperialist spirit. Around the same time, a message was spread on behalf of China Government's stooge and religious leader, Pancham Lama that 'violence has no place in Buddhism'. This is absolutely wrong because the Tibetans are fighting for human rights. Buddhist ideology opposes unreasonable violence, but when someone is breaking basic freedom by propping in its internal matters, it is futile to teach non-violence.⁵³

The above expressions of neo-Buddhists hint towards their strong demand for salvation from injustice and exploitation and appear to resort violence conditionally. In this situation, when neo-Buddhist community is in distressed mood, it becomes mandatory to study their political behavior also. Is it the situation that the neo-Buddhist who has been a strong supporter of democracy and constitution of India has been turned towards anti-democratic values by adopting violence and supporting naxalism? Is there no duality in their expression when they link violence and Buddhism conditionally? To search for this answer is a subject of further research, but here it can be surely said on the basis of interpretation of some data that they have statistically moved close to political activism since 1990s.

Table 9: Neo-Buddhists Contestants in Assembly Elections, Uttar Pradesh 1991-2007

Year	Total Seats	Total Contestants	Average	Neo-Buddhist Contestants			% of neo-Buddhist Contestants
				Male	Female	Total	
1991	419	7851	--	10	03	13	0.16
1993	422	9726	23	24	01	25	0.25
1996	424	1029	02	08	00	08	0.77
2002	403	5533	14	11	03	14	0.25
2007	403	6086	15	19	04	23	0.37

Sources: Statistical Reports on General Election, 1991 - 2007 to the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

- The identity of neo-Buddhist contestants is derived from their surnames/last-names. Most of neo-Buddhists have their surnames/last names either as Gautam or Baudh.
- The table shows that the participation of neo-Buddhists in politics is indicating the political assertion of neo-Buddhist community. The data is analysed only from the year 1991, because before it, their participation was negligible.

⁵³See. Dhamma Sandesh, 2008, p. 85. Translated by me.

The statistical reports on state assembly elections of U.P though not revealed in a clear cut data on religious lines, it mentions about Scheduled Caste. As it is known most of neo-Buddhists are of Scheduled Caste background and even Government of India includes them within Scheduled Caste. In the following table their identity is detected from their surnames / last names- *Gautam* or *Baudh*, which are very popular among them. The inference drawn from the above table-- The percentage of neo-Buddhist contestants increased to 0.37% in 2007 as compared to 0.16% in the year 1991. There was a sharp rise in the year 1996 and the percentage went up to 0.77. The increasing participation of neo-Buddhists in the politics is somewhere the imagination of neo-Buddhists. Earlier, the politics was controlled by dalits only but now within dalits there has come up some voices of disagreements within it with the emergence of neo-Buddhists.

Conclusion

Contrary to contemporary available literature on dalit and neo-Buddhist movement, this chapter establishes neo-Buddhist community as an identity group. The essence of this is emancipation from caste hierarchy of Hinduism and Ambedkar's philosophy of Buddhism as a remedy of it. The consolidation is seen in their descriptions of history, symbols, and other congregation programmes. And finally it is found that the neo-Buddhist identity has an imagination of politics also, because their interests are not taken by political parties seriously. In next chapter the behaviour of political parties towards neo-Buddhist movement will be discussed.

Chapter 4

Neo-Buddhism and Political Parties: Dynamics of Relations

In the first chapter, it is found that neo-Buddhism is the fastest emerging religious community in the last five decades of census in Uttar Pradesh. The conversion of dalits is considered to be the main reason behind this phenomenon. The philosophy of Ambedkar to liberate dalits by embracing Buddhism is appealing a lot to dalits. The socio-economic indicators also are found better in neo-Buddhist community comparatively in some aspect. In the second chapter, an effort has been made to locate and observe these emerging trends of neo-Buddhists in available academic literature. It is found that a very few literature throw some light on this issue. Therefore the third chapter is an attempt to fill this literature gap. For this, an analysis of primary and secondary sources is pursued to understand neo-Buddhist community as an identity group. It is found that it is in the process of consolidation of the identity and has an imagination for politics also, because the interests of the group are not taken seriously in political domain. The present chapter is to look the policy, programme or strategy of political parties regarding the issue. Are political groups serious regarding the neo-Buddhism? Or are somewhere forced to ideological power of neo-Buddhism and emerging neo-Buddhist identity? The matter is pursued in the chapter.

The chapter is divided into three parts, first the neo-Buddhist movement since 1960s-1980s is highlighted briefly. Second section comprises the IJP President Udit Raj's conversion movement, and thirdly BSP and its ideology, programmes are discussed. A critical appraisal is also the part of this chapter. The main argument behind the chapter is that neo-Buddhism has been an ideological pressure on dalit based political parties.

4.1 Neo-Buddhist Movement and Dalit Politics: Initial Dynamics

Owen Lynch in his study of Agra's neo-Buddhist movement in 1969 provides some clear cut imprints that the political and religious movements have been very close to each other since its inception. Before Republican Party of India Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF), a non-political party was the main attraction of 'conscious' dalits. Later with the formation of RPI, the leader of SCF joined RPI and began their political activities along with spreading of Buddhism. The RPI Charter of Demands presented to then Prime Minister of India in 1964 depicts two demands out of ten regarding neo-Buddhism. These two demands which echoed several times in different resolutions of RPI unit can be stated as: a): Extension of all privileges guaranteed by the Constitution to such Scheduled Caste as embraced Buddhism.¹ b): The portrait of Babasaheb, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, "The Father of Indian Constitution" must be given a place in the Central Hall of Parliament.²

Both the demands especially the first one shows the close relationship between the party and Buddhist movement.³ The fulfillment of these at that time might lead to political cum cultural success of Jatav's neo-Buddhist movement but later on, as Owen Lynch hoped at that time,⁴ the movement retrograded leading to non-proliferation of the effects in terms of embracement of Buddhism, and in turn strengthened 'Hinduism'. This was basically the result of non-fulfillment of the first demand to assure reservation to the neo-Buddhists. As a result, Jatavs were forced to intact their identity as a Scheduled Caste to gain privileges and trajectory of RPI led Jatav movement to neo-Buddhist movement was cut short. The RPI could not mobilise dalits in large numbers to join Buddhist camp in absence of assurance of the privileges as they were having as a Scheduled Caste. Therefore, after a short period of success in the mid 1960s in few urban and rural pockets in western and eastern UP, RPI faced a great setback,⁵ and after that dalits turned to congress's electoral base in influence of Congress's anti-poverty slogans. In addition, the renowned dalit faces in Congress as

¹This demand was fulfilled in 1990, when Janata Dal occupied political power and V.P. Singh became PM.

²The portrait of Dr. Ambedkar was unveiled by Prime Minister of India, V. P. Singh on 22nd April, 1990.

³Lynch, 1969, pp. 104-105

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Jagjivan Ram and B. P. Maurya⁶ also garnered dalits in the Congress fold with the promise of raising their economic status.⁷

After gaining no political success the neo-Buddhist movement and also the dalit movement in UP experienced a dark side in later years. The long awaited image of Jagjivan Ram as a powerful national leader of dalits could not materialise as he was not accepted for the post of Prime Minister by some of the conservative politicians of that time after the 1977 General Elections of Lok Sabha.⁸ The Janata Party government (1977 to 1979) also failed to check the dalit atrocities, and Indira Gandhi's theatrical condemnation of atrocities was just to woo dalits for political favour.⁹ In this context, the dalit masses became deeply disillusioned with mainstream political parties and concentrated on the possibilities of reviving the Ambedkarite movement. Therefore, some non political organisations came up to meet the ideological demands such as Dalit Panther (DP) and BAMCEF in 1970s.¹⁰

The dalit panther, a strong militant movement was originated in Maharashtra became soon popular in Uttar Pradesh. In 1980, DP began to mobilise dalits in a radical way against the government machinery. DP also protected a mass conversion drive into Buddhism.¹¹ Under the influence of Dalit Panthers many dalits actively participated in reviving the neo-Buddhist movement without any political affiliation.

In Maharashtra Backward And Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF) was founded in 1978 by Kanshi Ram along with some colleagues. It soon attracted government employees of dalit-backward-minority community in UP. Prior to this, Kanshi Ram dismissed other SC/ST employees' association which were having connection with Jagjivan Ram and the Congress, and declared Jagjivan Ram¹² as a

⁶B.P. Maurya was a towering leader of RPI, later on joined Congress Party as Indira Gandhi started to appeal dalits and other marginalised sections with her slogan '*Garibi Hatao*,' eliminate poverty.

⁷Jaoul, 2007, p. 194.

⁸Jaoul, 2007, (ed.) *Political and Non Political Means in dalit Movement*, New Delhi: Pearsons, pp. 142-168.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid, p.195

¹¹Bellwinkel, 2007, p. 2181, *EPW*.

¹²There were ideological differences between Ambedkar and Jagjivan Ram since beginning; the followers of Ambedkar are critic to Jagjivan Ram due to many reasons. J. Ram openly called Ambedkar as a Coward who could not lead his people when Ambedkar declared his conversion

'Chamcha' (sycophant) and his well wishers as 'chamchas of chamcha'.¹³ He alleged that the dalit leader was pitted against Ambedkar and was 'useless and selfish', who could not favour dalit community, despite of occupying positions. Being fed up from this, Kanshi Ram thought to redefine dalit activism by launching BAMCEF as a *non-religious, non-agitational, and non-political*' organisation, and then political activism with fresh dedicated, noble supporters. Simultaneously, Kanshi Ram also planned to launch a Buddhist Research Centre to propagate Buddhism among masses; however he could not materialise it.¹⁴

4.2 Neo-Buddhist Movement and IJP

After, a long propaganda through BAMCEF and Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sanghrash Samiti (DS4), Kanshi Ram dissociated from BAMCEF for his political innings, and launched Bahujan Samaj Party in 1984 to provide the dalits an alternative against RPI and Congress. This political movement of Kanshi Ram was not welcomed by BAMCEF cadre, and many fractions in BAMCEF emerged with an aim of reviving Kanshi Ram's earlier sense of mission' as a non political Ambedkarite mission. They alleged Kanshi Ram for diluting the non political mission.¹⁵ Consequently, many ideologically committed Ambedkarites began to create Buddhist organisations dedicated to religious conversions and Buddhist weddings. Dramatically, these non political organisations also became puppets in the hands of existent political parties, and unity was seen only on some specific events like commemorating Ambedkar, or on certain issue based mobilisation.

These various organisations were headed by the Dalit Panther activists and BAMCEF cadre, and were organised at national level by Udit Raj (President of Indian Justice Party), an income tax officer, who was born in UP and resides in Delhi. During his student life he was a communist in Jawaharlal Nehru University, and turned to an Ambedkarite under the influence of Kanshi Ram in the mid 1990s. But he could not

project in 1936. This type of statements has made him politically alienated from the Ambedkarites (see N. Jaoul, 2000, p. 190).

¹³Ram, 1982.

¹⁴Singh, 2008, p. 12.

¹⁵This type of reaction might be because of failure of earlier political experiments under the leadership of RPI.

stay long with Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, as he says in personal interview he was not happy especially with Mayawati.¹⁶ Therefore, he disassociated from Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, and founded Lord Buddha Club in 1996 with an objective to impart education, Buddhist philosophy, cause of commercial and entrepreneur activities for deprived and dalits, besides the cause of human rights, self respect, brotherhood and other charitable acts etc.¹⁷ The main motive of the club is to bring socio-cultural and religious change in the country as its website asserts 'India can never progress until and unless rational culture and religion replaces the present one'.¹⁸ Most of the members of it are government employees ranking from officers to clerks hailing from dalit background.

The club has been organising many conversion ceremonies among dalit masses to bring a blood less revolution as Ambedkar did in 1956 by embracing Buddhism. In a similar manner, the club asserts '*We are committed to bring about socio-cultural and religious revolution in the country in the coming decades*'.¹⁹ The LBC also promotes Buddha Education Foundation, a trust to arrange alternative education for dalits that helps in removing superstition, fatalism, idealism, dogmatism. The message of its chairman Udit Raj on the club's website assert the objective of the club is to educate dalits in conjunction with Buddhism, and Buddhist philosophy, as he says, "*Our objective is to impart education for better understanding of Buddhist philosophy*". AICOSCSTO is also an organisation of SC/ST employees headed by Udit Raj. Most of the time, activities are seen collectively because their head is same i.e. Udit Raj. Apart from these two non-political offshoots, Udit Raj founded a political wing also named as Indian Justice Party in 2002. Overall, it can be said that Udit Raj's activities are not limited to non political means as he has launched IJP, but it seems that he wants to carry the religious and political activities jointly. The non political activities have given him an electoral base in UP.²⁰ His main non-political and political activities are following...

Non-Political Activities

¹⁶Personal interview 14 April, 2009, New Delhi.

¹⁷See the Lord Buddha Club's website <http://www.lordbuddhaclub.com>

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Jaoul, 2007, p. 198.

Thousands of Dalits, from all over the country, embraced Buddhism at the 'Diksha Ceremony' organised by the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations and the Lord Buddha Club in 4th November 2000 in Ambedkar Bhawan in new Delhi.²¹ Udit Raj also converted in the same ceremony. The national media covered the news widely.

More than 400 dalits converted to Buddhism in Mayawati's backyard on 6th January, 2003 under the same banner.²² On 5th November 2002, the conversion ceremony was reportedly held on Monday at Ravi Das Temple, 30 kms from Rohtak, at Meham sub-divisional town of Rohtak district. The incidents came to close the Jhajjar incident in which some dalits were lynched by caste Hindus. The local leader of All India Federation of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Classes Organisations and the Lord Buddha Club, Jage Ram organised the conversion ceremony.²³

On 27th October, 2002 in the name of 'cow-politics' five dalit youths were murdered. In that response, the families of the Dalit martyrs and 80 other families of Jhajjar abandoned Hinduism and convert to Buddhism in presence of Udit Raj and Satya Prakash Jrawta, an active leader of LBC.²⁴

Apart from conversion activities, a bilingual fortnightly 'Voice of Buddha' (Hindi and English) is also published from its office in New Delhi.²⁵ Udit Raj has written himself many booklets on Buddhism such as 'Essence of Buddhism' and 'dalit and religious freedom 2005' published by the club and All India Confederation of SC/ST Organizations (AICOSCSTO).

Apart from above activities, Udit Raj has been attending many conversion ceremonies

²¹ See. Mass Conversion by Dalits, *Frontline*, Vol. 18, Issue 23.

²² See Dalit Atrocities-2006. Compiled by K. Samu Human Rights Documentation. ISI. New Delhi. India.

²³ PTI 5/11/2002.

²⁴ Personal Interview with Satya Prakash Jrawta on 14 October, 2007. Satya Prakash Jrawta also tells that the ceremony was in protest of murder of dalit youth by caste Hindus. In addition, the statement of Giriraj Kishor that "cow is more sacred for me than a dalit" made us more furious".

²⁵ Udit Raj claims that the fortnightly is published to impart Buddhist philosophy in masses, for this purpose many article are also have been published. The content of the paper is most of time full of Udit Raj's article and his political and socio-cultural activities.

across the country organized by other groups also such as mass conversion rally in Mumbai 2007, in which according to media one lakh people of dalit and *adivasi* background adopted Buddhism.²⁶ He was also present in 2006 'Diksha' ceremony in Nagpur.

Political Activities

Before jumping into mainstream politics, Udit Raj denied any political motive behind his conversion ceremony, as he said to one correspondent before ceremony that "*it had nothing to do with politics as is being alleged by a large section of media and some front-line Sangh organisations*".²⁷ Despite of such negations his political motive flashes out when he resigned from his job as an IRS officer and launched the political party IJP in 2002 just after two years of his conversion. Among the various objectives of his party 'freedom of faith', which has the constitutional sanction, has one of the core attentions. Various objectives of IJP could be read as:

The Party is committed to build up India as a strong and prosperous nation, which is modern, casteless, ensuring to all citizens freedom of conscience and faith, compulsory and equal education, justice and participation of all sections in overall progress particularly to extend reservation to dalits in private sectors and progressive and enlightened in outlook, based on equality, fraternity, justice, secularism and such culture and values and thus is able to emerge as a great world power. The Party aims at establishing a democratic state, which guarantees to all citizens irrespective of their caste, creed or sex, political, social and economic justice, equality of opportunity and liberty of faith and expression. The Party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.²⁸

The above declaration clearly brings our attention that the activities of Udit Raj concerning to dalits and neo-Buddhism got reflected in the party objective. Since then his party has been contesting the elections in UP. Till now his party failed to gather a significant vote bank that could have moulded the politics of UP especially utilizing the Dalit faction in the state.

²⁶See The Hindu, and Indian Express 28/05/2007.

²⁷See The Milli Gazette, an Indian Muslims' Fortnightly English Newspaper Vol. 2 No. 22.

²⁸See Website of Indian Justice Party. <http://www.ijp.co.in/aim.htm>

After immature breaking off from BSP in 1995, Udit Raj has been very much critique of BSP movement. His main argument behind bitterness is that BSP is not sincere about cultural and religious change, while his main activities are centered on religious conversion of dalits. He gave many times ideological challenge to BSP leader Mayawati to convert to Buddhism, alleging that if she is sincere towards Ambedkar ideology. In support of Raj many neo-Buddhist leader of Maharashtra came up. Before one BSP rally in Maharashtra on 25 November 2007, Athawale commented on Mayawati in front of media, he says, "*Mayawati invokes the name of Ambedkar and professes faith in Buddhist tenets but has so far avoided taking the 'diksha' (ritual signifying acceptance of Buddhist religion), which she should do tomorrow (Nov 25) if her professed allegiance is true*".²⁹

The other dalit leader of Maharashtra also joined hands with Raj to challenge BSP ideology, in allegation of not heeding towards her conversion. In November 2007, Mayawati in her speech referred the neo-Buddhists of Maharashtra as Mahars, cautioning against congress' possible next political move to appoint Mahar as a Chief Minister of the Maharashtra. The neo-Buddhists political and non-political leader took it as an 'insult' of Babasaheb Ambedkar's conversion by which 'Mahars' converted to Buddhism³⁰. For this comment, Founder-president of Dalit Panthers and noted poet Namdeo Dhasal demanded an apology from her and also ask a similar apology for not visiting Chaityabhoomi during her recent visit. In addition, RPI (A) president Ramdas Athawale also warned Mayawati in this regard and asked for her conversion to Buddhism.³¹

²⁹ http://www.twocircles.net/2007nov24/athavale_exhorts_mayawati_embrace_buddhism.html

³⁰ Kanshi Ram also usually called neo-Buddhist of Maharashtra as Mahars, because as he alleged, are Hindus in official documents. According to the official document, the erstwhile Scheduled Caste people converted to Buddhism are the neo-Buddhists. This definition was prepared keeping in view the reservation facility for the 'dalit' Buddhists. This definition of government has linked Buddhism with a caste tag, which is contrary to the anti casteist spirit of Buddhism (see. Ajnat, 2000 ed. Neo-Buddhism: A Quest for Identity). The other reason of Kanshi Ram to say neo-Buddhists as 'Mahar' is because many Buddhists still use their caste certificates for reservation facilities.

³¹ See. Indian Express, Mumbai 01/12/2007.

4.3 Neo-Buddhism, Dalit Politics and Ideology of BSP

Since BSP claims to follow Ambedkarite ideology, it is pressured by other political groups led by Dalits to elaborate the agenda about Buddhism, which is one of the core of ideological power of Ambedkar, according to them. The BSP has no clear cut ideology regarding Buddhism in its objectives as mentioned in its manifesto papers but there are many practical works of BSP government in UP and speeches and writings of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati to understand the matter deeply. The core arguments of BSP leadership about Buddhism could be seen as below:

Buddhism should be away from caste: On 7th May, 2001, on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti in Bhopal, Kanshi Ram addressed a rally and commented critically on the current neo-Buddhist movement. He argued that extension of the same facilities, which SC Hindus had; to neo-Buddhists since 1990 is a deliberate move to bring caste into Buddhism, which is actually against the Ambedkar's ideology. He emphasised on the elimination of 'caste' to ensure the spreading of Buddhism, in his own words, "*if you want to spread Buddhism, then it is must to keep away caste from it*".³² In his another speech on 15th March 2003 in Mumbai, Kanshi Ram critically attacked on neo-Buddhist movement of Maharashtra arguing that they are Buddhist merely in verbal sense and not in the records as to utilise the reservation facilities available to the dalits following Hinduism.³³ He always emphasised on removing caste or *manuvad* primarily, which will make 'humanity' to prevail, and therefore conversion is not a solution.³⁴ Thus the religion should be based on humanity (*manavtavadi*).³⁵

Prabudh Bharat only Possible after Achieving Political Power: Kanshi Ram in many of his speeches has invoked Ambedkar's conversion and his ideology behind this move. He sees the ideology of Ambedkar in his two wishes. First, to make its people i.e. dalits as ruling class, and second was to make India as a Buddhist nation. Kanshi Ram sees these wishes as distinct yet connected where the fulfillment of the second

³²Bahujan Sanghthak, New Delhi, No. 15- 28 may – 3 June 2001.

³³Ibid, No. 09.

³⁴This view is given in one of his interview in *Chauthi Duniya*, 2-8 April, 1989.

³⁵Interview published in *Sarita March* (second), 1990. See Satnam Singh (2008), *Manyavar Kanshi Ram and Baudh Dhram*, Samyak Publication, New Delhi. p. 25.

depends on the achievement of the first.³⁶ In another speech in Nagpur on 6th may 2002, he reiterated his argument by providing many examples as he says, in Punjab Sikhism spread in complementary with political power, and the same case is with Asoka, and Kaniskha who spread Buddhism. Therefore, he says that to spread Buddhism it is necessary to become rulers then these rulers will spread Buddhism all over country.³⁷ He kept on repeating his words that '*I want to establish Asoka's rule in India*' several times in his speeches. He alleged that the Buddhist movement (second wish of Babasaheb Ambedkar) could not materialise because the Mahars (neo-Buddhists) of Maharashtra abandoned the ideology of Ambedkar in 1966.³⁸ Kanshi Ram usually said that we can make India '*Baudhmay*' (imbued Buddhism) only when we are in power, as happened in UP. He argued, "As Mayawati came into power, Buddhism spread far and wide".³⁹ The elaborate picture of ideology of BSP towards religious conversion reflects in the speech of Mayawati in a huge rally on 14 October, 2006, on the occasion of 50th anniversary of conversion of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Expressing her views on Kanshi Ram's conversion to Buddhism, she said that Kanshi Ram in his whole life has carried forward the message of and ideas of Ambedkar, but could not convert like Ambedkar in 1956 because of certain reasons. She says,

Manyavar Kanshi Ram ji carried forward the message and ideas of "Ambedkarvad" – the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar, to such great heights that it became a symbol of dalit aspirations, so much so, that it started giving a formidable challenge to "Gandhivad"- the Gandhian ideology, through which the "Bahujan Samaj" But we must remember one thing that in the process of strengthening the movement for Self-Respect and fighting the forces of Manuvad- exploitative forces, Manyavar Kanshi Ram ji did not take recourse to conversion to Buddhism immediately, as Babasaheb had done in 1956. Manyavar Kanshi Ram ji attacked manuvadi social system continuously and incessantly, but in this process, he did not resort to Religious conversion immediately. Rather, instead of simply abandoning the Hindu religion and converting to Buddhism, he continued with his struggle against the Manuvadi social order, superstitious etc. At every level and efforts were made to build up a new social order based on Equality-Liberty-Fraternity. One reason for not immediately adopting the path of Religious conversion was that in the given political

³⁶Bahujan Sanghthak, New Delhi, No. 15.

³⁷Bahujan Nayak Nagpur, No.21-22.

³⁸His attack was on RPI fractions leaders who in 1966 declared that it is not possible to be M.P/M.L.A by Ambedkar's ideology. Therefore RPI began to make alliances with congress and other party for political gain. Kanshi Ram was very critic to this and declared it as an ideological slippery of Maharashtra's Ambedkarite movement.

³⁹Singh 2008, p. 27.

circumstances, there were more chances of harm than good coming to the “Bahujan Samaj” by taking up such a stand. Besides, it is a universal truth that only that religion prospers and grows whose followers are in the seat of Power. That’s why mere conversion to Buddhism is not the route to salvation. Instead, the solution is to gain political power and become the Rulers of the Country so that Buddhism becomes a religion of the ruling class.⁴⁰

On 18th August 2002 in his rally in Rajkot (Gujarat), Kanshi Ram declared that our first mission is to be ruling class in country’s largest state (U.P), second mission is to make *bahujan samaj* as a ruling class in all over country and third mission is to make this country as a *Prabudh Bharat* (awakened India).

Bahujan Samaj to neo-Buddhism: Apart from capturing political power to spread neo-Buddhism, there is one more reason which BSP leadership seems to be concerned. That is the confinement of neo-Buddhism only to dalit, due to which as Mayawati believe that it could not spread so much. She said,

The first reason for the Buddhist religion not spreading in India, even after the conversion of Dr. Ambedkar to it, appears to be that we have confined Buddhism only to dalits and we have not tried to take the other communities into its fold, like the OBCs (Other Backward Classes), who constitute nearly 52% of the population of this country and they also have been socially downtrodden and victimised and are the victims of “Manuvad”. Probably this appears to be one reason for why Buddhism did not spread in this country, even though this is the land of its birth.⁴¹

Bahujan Movement is Buddhist Movement: On 6th may, 2002 in Nagpur, Kanshi Ram asserted that bahujan movement is in the direction of Ambedkar’s wish to make India awakened, ‘Prabudh Bharat’ and declared his wish to be Buddhist with his crores of followers of Chamar community of UP and Bihar. The same expression was expressed in Mumbai on 15 March 2003 which was placed as,

On the occasion of the golden jubilee of Babasaheb Ambedkar’s embracing of Buddhism, ‘I will become Buddhist’, ‘Mayawati will

⁴⁰See Booklet, 2007, Parliament House; The Temple of Power at the Centre. New Delhi, BSP, Central Unit.

⁴¹Ibid.

become Buddhist' along with at least three crore people of Uttar Pradesh. This will send a strong message to Maharashtra and other states of the country, the embracing of Buddhism at such a large level even if fails to, send a message, the number of three crore Buddhist will speak for itself in the country where the present Buddhist population is less than one crore.⁴²

Kanshi Ram's declaration to embrace Buddhism in 2006 was welcomed by Mayawati also. In one of her rally in Lucknow on 14 April, 2003, she asked the present audience, would they embrace Buddhism with me and Kanshi Ram? She wished that lakhs of people belonging to backward and upper caste also will follow me and Kanshi Ram. The all the present masses are reported to be agreed for her. Her address was similar to that of Dr. Ambedkar when he embraced Buddhism on 14 October 1956. She said that,

Today, in this huge BSP rally when lakhs of people along with media is present, I appeal to religious gurus (*dhammacharya*) to remove religious evils prevailed in Hinduism otherwise I would be compelled to refuge Buddhism, a religion devoid of any wrong practices. With me and Manyavar Kanshi Ram lakhs of people from backward and upper castes also follow (asking the public in the rally with appeal), would you also agree? If you are agreed then raise your hands (all the present public raised hands in sense of agreement).⁴³

4.3.1 Important Works of BSP Government in UP Regarding Buddhism: 1995-2009

Unlike Udit Raj's conversion campaign, BSP government in all its tenure has taken some remarkable decisions to revive Buddhism in UP. First time BSP leader Mayawati became CM in 1995, secondly in 1997, in 2002 for the third time, and is holding this post for the fourth time whose period begun in 2007. Meanwhile, she has named many districts, buildings, hostels, parks etc with the names having resemblance with Buddha or Buddhism. This got a wide coverage in the media. The list of those initiatives by Mayawati to spread Buddhism is following

⁴²Bahujan Sanghthak, New Delhi, No. 09 and Bahujan Nayak, Nagpur, No. 12-13.

⁴³See Mankar, V. (Ed.) (2006). What Way Emancipation. Nagpur: TBSI.

Programmes	Year/Date
Founding of <i>Mahamaya Nagar</i> District	May 3,1997
Founding of Shravasti District	May 22, 1997
Kausambhi District Crafted	April 4, 1997
Gautam Buddha Nagar District Announced	July 31,1997
Gautam Buddha Park, Kanpur	September7, 1997
Gautam Buddha Garden, Etawa	June 19, 1997
Decision to establish Gautam Buddha Park in Gautam Buddha Nagar	July 27, 1997
Buddha Dwar, Kushinagar	September 1, 1997
Guatam Buddha University and Hostel	July 27,1997
Decision to have Gautam Buddha student Hostel in each District of Uttar Pradesh	May 1, 1997
Gautam Buddha Student Hostel, Mukundpur (Aligarh)	May 1, 1997
Gautam Buddha Degree College	July 3, 1997
Yashodhara Women College, Kushinagar	July 3, 1997
Mahamaya University- Inter College & Kanya Junior High School	July 12, 1997
Mahamaya Women's College residential area	May 22, 1997
District of Gautam Buddha Nagar	May 6, 1997
Mahamaya Nagar Janapada	May 6, 1997
Shravasti Janapada	May 25, 1997
Kausambhi Janapada	April 4, 1997
Gautam Buddha Sports Stadium, Ghaziabad	August 28,1997
Padrauna district renamed as Kushinagar	May 22, 1997
Gautam Buddha Sports Stadium, Kushinagar	September 1, 1997
Council for highest Buddhist learning Kapilavastu	September 1, 1997
Organisation of three days Buddhist festival at Sarnath & Varanasi	May 20-22,1997
New airport runway, Dormitory, Buddhist art exhibition, Buddhist collection and Heritage Park, Sarnath	May 22, 1997
Visit to South Korea, Thailand and Japan to increase Buddhist Tourism in India	October 3-10, 1995
Bus Depot at Sarsol , Gautam Buddha depot at Aligarh	May1, 1997
Inauguration of Gautam Buddha Statue at Kanpur	July 26, 1997
Gautam Buddha Museum and Statue at Gorakhpur	September 1, 1997
Gautam Buddha Statues for Gautam Buddha park and Nagar	July 27, 1997
Inauguration of Gautam Buddha Statue at Delhi-Gautam Buddha Nagar	July 27,1997
Inauguration of Gautam Buddha Statue at Ambedkar Park,Lucknow	June 1, 1997
Inauguration of Gautam Buddha Terminal at	July 22,1997

Apart from this, Uttar Pradesh government is also a partner in 'Global Maitri Project' in Kushinagar where a 152-metre-tall bronze statue of Lord Buddha⁴⁴ along with a giant meditation centre, an international university, a state-of-art world-class hospital and a museum etc. are under construction. Mayawati government has acquired 600 acres of land for the purpose. Also, her government has decided to develop an International Airport in Kushi Nagar to promote Buddhist tourists in Uttar Pradesh. The project is also expected to add income to the state.⁴⁵

4.4 IJP, BSP and Neo-Buddhism: A Critical Reflection

The above works done on extensive scale by the UP government to popularise Buddhism raises some critical political queries as, does BSP has a sincere ideological plan for Buddhism? Or BSP is compelled to follow this to downsize its rival such as IJP. By seeing above ideological and practical works of both the parties it indicates some hints to respond these queries. First of all it is very clear from the behaviour of both the parties that the Buddhism is a great matter of political use in the politics. Udit Raj's conversion campaign and BSP's works are linked to politics. Initially Udit Raj's conversion movement was perceived by dalits as a non political activity. But as he launched IJP, his strategy became clearer that he is no more willing in conversion activities as a non-political means. He was very critique to BJP (and other Hindutva forces) and lambasted many times on conversion laws while at the same time he is willing to give an alternative of BSP to the dalits.

Both the parties are in ideological contest over the issue of Buddhism. Whereas, Udit Raj is in favour of conversion of dalits, BSP has no favour for this at present. In 2006 Mayawati has clearly made a condition before conversion i.e. to capture political power at the centre. She has declared, "*Before I become Buddhist, it is*

⁴⁴This statue of Gautam Buddha would be world's highest statue.

⁴⁵<http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/mayawati-to-push-for-two-new-international-airports-in-state/343255/>

essential that the Bahujan Samaj Party becomes the ruling party at the centre".⁴⁶ This statement shows the willingness of Mayawati to embrace Buddhism conditionally. Is it reliable? The same type of willingness she had expressed in April 2003 in a public rally at Lucknow but that time it was without any political condition and could not materialise. Although, she is not ready to convert herself publically now, but has a regard for Ambedkar's conversion. In the preface of her autobiography '*Mere Sangharshmay Jeevan Aur Bahujan Movement Ka Safarnama*' (A travelogue of my struggle-ridden life and Bahujan Samaj Movement), she has expressed her regard to the conversion of Ambedkar. She writes,

Whenever true history will be written in India, 14th October would be celebrated as real Independence Day of Indian dalits. The reason behind this is—on the same day in 1956, Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism with his lakhs of followers in protest of Hindu society's 'manuvadi mentality'. On my 50th birthday on 15th January 2006, on the 55th anniversary of the enforcement of Indian constitution, on the 50th death anniversary of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar, on the occasion of Gautam Buddha's 2550th Mahaparinirvan day, I am giving an invaluable gift to the 85% of bahujan population. (gift here is referred to her conversion to Buddhism, which is not fulfilled).

Was her declaration to conversion just to overcome Udit Raj's conversion movement, when he had given an ideological challenge by arranging a conversion ceremony in UP particularly in Mayawati's constituency in January 2003. It might be that somewhere a political pressure on Mayawati to respond neo-Buddhist conversion movement has a say. It is to note down that earlier her party was against conversion 'as an immediate move'. Udit Raj critically welcomed her decision to conversion. From Maharashtra some concerned neo-Buddhists also send an open letter to Mayawati, expressing hope that she would convert to Buddhism along with Kanshi Ram as per her declaration⁴⁷. But, it is seen that she did not convert and later on in 2006 put the condition before her conversion. This unstable behaviour of Mayawati may be an immediate political reaction for neo-Buddhist conversion movement. The argument in this favour can be like this, if capturing political power was the first condition before conversion, so what was so dire need to declare date of conversion even before

⁴⁶ See Booklet, 2007, Parliament House; The Temple of Power at the Centre, New Delhi, BSP, Central Unit.

⁴⁷ See Mankar, V. (Ed.) (2006). What Way Emancipation. Nagpur: TBSI.

occupying political power in centre. That's why it is to be said that Buddhism has played a great role in the dalit politics in Uttar Pradesh.

After Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra has been a main target for BSP to establish itself there especially by invoking issue of neo-Buddhism because Maharashtra is the heartland of neo-Buddhist population in India. Kanshi Ram has been very critique of neo-Buddhist movement of Maharashtra because of its political spirit among the followers and caste practices within. The demand of neo-Buddhist for reservation was seen by him as a political defeat. He believed that reservation is contradictory to the spirit of Buddhism. So, he emphasised to acquire political power first in order to be 'giver of reservation' for other castes/classes. On the issue of conversion he maintained distances ideologically as he believed that political power is must before conversion.

He had declared to be converted on 14 October 2006, but it could not become possible because of some reasons. First, general reason or excuse for BSP can be that Kanshi Ram could not live till the date and demised one week before. Second, Mayawati may not convince for that until she acquire political power in centre as she declared later. Anyway, Mayawati performed the last rituals of Kanshi Ram's death according to Buddhist rituals.⁴⁸ Apart from that, since then she has been performing Buddhist rituals publically such as '*Tri Sharan*', '*Panch-Sheels*' and '*Astangh Marg*'.⁴⁹ After winning UP state legislative assembly election in 2007, Chief Minister Mayawati has launched many more symbolic projects of neo-Buddhism across U.P The so much closeness to Buddhism by Mayawati is ideological compulsion as well as the emerging trends of increasing neo-Buddhist numbers also point towards the compelling forces acting on BSP to reformulate its agenda and keep politics and neo-Buddhism on equal footage in order to downsize its political rivals. There is one BSP mouthpiece magazine '*Ambedkar Today*' published from Jaunpur which started in 2002. It claims as a national magazine based on Buddhism. From Nagpur also a monthly magazine '*Samajik Samikaran*' is published which flashes mainly on neo-Buddhism linking with BSP.

⁴⁸The Hindu October 16, 2006

⁴⁹Telephone Interview with Ambedth Rajan (M.P. Rajya Sabha), National Treasurer of BSP 07 July, 2009

Conclusion

As we know the ideology of neo-Buddhism has been significantly adopted by dalit community in UP since the origin of the movement. The neo-Buddhism has been closely linked with the dalit movement from the beginning to till date. There are basically three phases of the movement of neo-Buddhists and dalits in UP. First, in 1960s RPI dominated the whole movement of neo-Buddhists. Secondly, in mid 1960s to mid 1980s dalit political movement was usurped by Congress Party and there came up many non political organisations based on dalits such as BAMCEF, LBC etc. After a long banking on Congress party the dalits including neo-Buddhists became dissatisfied with the Congress party and look forward BSP as a vibrant option. But it is also challenged by some other dalit based group ideologically. Currently, as we have seen in this chapter that neo-Buddhist identity is gradually reaching to the third stage- that is political assertion. The response of the political parties reflects it

Conclusion

As we all know, to understand the identity of any group it is imperative to know its numerical capacity. This has gained much importance especially after the beginning of the identity politics in India. Multiple identity groups have begun to assert their presence in the social, cultural, political and economic fields. They are adopting the political means as one of the crucial tools for their emancipation. In the dominant affairs of the state these groups have a say and also have a significant participation in political utility. Apart from these dominant identity groups, there have been some socio-cultural cum political churnings in other smaller groups also, who have come up posing a strong challenge to the dominant political structure. These ethnic or caste based groups are the examples of the identity politics in India. This research is an inquiry of political vibrancy of neo-Buddhist group.

This study demonstrates that the neo-Buddhist community has emerged as an identity group in the politics of Uttar Pradesh and it has gradually started raising its voice in the domain of dalit politics of the state. A survey of literature on Dalit politics in the state, surprisingly, shows that this assertion has broadly been ignored. In absence of current academic writings on this issue, it was difficult to capture the phenomenon without any fieldwork. I have resolved this problem for this study by exploring the writings and speeches of the Dalit leaders, both Neo-Buddhist and Hindu Dalits, available in different magazines and journals published by their organizations. The main source used in this dissertation for studying this phenomenon is the literature produced by the neo-Buddhist community. To understand the political response of neo-Buddhist movement, it was mandatory to go through the publications produced by political parties and hold a few interviews for the first hand information. Apart from these specific sources, some earlier studies done on neo-Buddhist and dalit movement were helpful in conceptualizing the issue. The contemporary academic literature on Dalit politics gives very fragmented, scattered and fuzzy descriptions on the neo-Buddhist identity and its dynamics which instigated me to choose this particular research project.

The dissertation in its first chapter has demonstrated that the number of neo-Buddhists in Uttar Pradesh is not so large that it can mould the politics of the day, but its remarkable growth rate certainly points towards something of import. The trend of its growth rate suggests that it is strengthening its numerical capacity in a very rapid manner. The census reports between 1951 and 2001 have given some insightful clues about this.

The census of 1951 recorded only 2517 Buddhists in Uttar Pradesh, the 12 out of 51 districts had not even a single number as a Buddhist, 13 districts were reported having no double digit numbers. The census of 1961 boosts up the Buddhist population across the state. The conversion of Ambedkar has been a prime motivating factor in this phenomenon. Since then, it is continuously touching new heights. According to the census of 2001, there are 302031 Buddhists in the state. The number is not greatly convincing but the growth rate in the phenomenon is noticeable. Some unofficial sources say that even though the dalits are not mentioning their religion in the data but are following neo-Buddhism in their day to day life. Before 1990 there was a fear of losing the constitutional benefits conferred to Scheduled Castes but now as the reservation facility has been extended to neo-Buddhists also, it can add an another mark of conviction. In 2006, there was golden jubilee celebration of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Dhamma Diksha ceremony and on this occasion many conversion ceremonies were held all over the country. The census of 2011 is supposed to give a better understanding of the changing equations.

The socio-economic indicators of neo-Buddhist group suggest that it has an upper hand in social fields, like literacy and sex ratio, compared to the Scheduled Castes but are economically lagging behind. Whereas the SCs have a greater share in economic activity like government services, mining, construction, politics and social work, teaching, trade and commerce, neo-Buddhists are still struggling to become a part of it. In comparison with the religious communities of the state neo-Buddhists are still far behind. In the social field, the neo-Buddhist group has a promising future in the fields of literacy and sex ratios but economic activities are not up to the mark. The main concentration of neo-Buddhist workers activity is still in cultivation and agricultural labouring. They comprise the

largest share in landless agricultural labourers of all the religious communities in Uttar Pradesh, which is not a healthy sign in Indian economy. The important economic sector i.e. service sector has lowest share of neo-Buddhist religious group, which is also not a good sign in terms of economic status of this community. One attractive finding on social status of neo-Buddhist community implies that this particular religious community has the potential of being the religious community with minimum sex disparity in future. Therefore, it is to say that though social indicators have some promises but economic empowerment deserves a focus.

The neo-Buddhists are basically from dalit background and still they comprise of the main part in dalit movement for emancipation. But here it should be remembered that their identity as neo-Buddhist have some unavoidable facts, which differ from the Hindu or sanskritised dalits. In a society where a person has multiple identities, neo-Buddhist identity exists as one of the identities. But it is more important to know the dynamics of identity rather than its mere existence. A small vibrant group can be more dynamic than a passive group having a large crowd. The case of neo-Buddhists suits it well who are less in crowd but are more influential. As 'ideology' is the distinctive aspect of any identity, the neo-Buddhists, in the same manner possess Ambedkar's ideology of the *Dhamma* (a religion to reconstruct the world) as a watermark. While this (*Dhamma*) aspect is supposed to be missing amongst the other dalits, who are not neo-Buddhists, they possess a great value for other aspects, like political or constitutional change, of Ambedkar's ideology. Thus it is clear that both the groups (dalit and neo-Buddhist) claim to follow 'same ideology of Ambedkar' having two distinct directions. Whereas the neo-Buddhists emphasize on *Dhamma* as a primary tool for social change with the help of constitutional and political philosophy of Ambedkar, the political frenzied dalits lingers around in counting the heads for political utility. In addition to this both the groups observe different values and myths. This difference in the properties of ideology though having same essence has a distinct sense in reality. Therefore, the neo-Buddhist identity must be studied as a distinct entity with keeping in view a specific context.

I have used a theoretical framework informed by theories of identity by Leibniz and Althusser to make sense of this phenomenon. The third chapter details on the theoretical framework of these theories. The weak version of Leibniz law suggested to look neo-Buddhist identity as a distinct entity. Althusser's theory of ideology is used to find out the ideological apparatuses and their mechanism in neo-Buddhist identity group. The theory of Althusser brings us to consider the consolidation and assertion of neo-Buddhist identity. The third chapter establishes that the neo-Buddhist identity is in the crucial phases of consolidation and has begun to move to the phase of assertion in politics simultaneously. To understand this phenomenon in broader way, the fourth chapter captured the political discourse on neo-Buddhism in contemporary dalit politics.

The influence of neo-Buddhists' ideology on dalit politics is quite mentioning. As they are consolidating their identity through propagation of their ideology and imagining politics of different nature, the political parties or their leaders are quite aware of this fact. There is a discourse among the dalit led political parties as to who represents this neo-Buddhist group. A dialogue between the BSP and the IJP, in the state, hints towards this fact. Both the parties are extending a greater helping hand for the neo-Buddhists. As it is found in the study that neo-Buddhists are in the process of propagating their ideology and becoming assertive sometimes in cultural and political field, it is giving an ideological challenge to the contemporary dalit politics. The main argument in their unhappiness about mainstream dalit politics is that the political leaders are just using them and have no concern to spread social philosophy of Buddhism. They have their own modes of propagation of their ideology like publishing materials, training camps, and rituals etc.

Today, in the contemporary dalit politics of U.P there are many political wings such as the RPI, the IJP and the BSP. BSP is the most influential party, which has a strong base with dalit vote bank. Its political leadership has been cognizant about neo-Buddhism since beginning and is very critical about the neo-Buddhist movement of Maharashtra. The reason for their difference of opinion is that the movement in Maharashtra has no political spirit in it. They also argue that the neo-Buddhists in Maharashtra, even after adopting new egalitarian religion, follow caste which is against

the spirit of neo-Buddhism, in order to avail the reservation facilities. For these reasons Kanshiram and Mayawati have been criticizing the neo-Buddhist movement of Maharashtra and have given some reinterpretations in Ambedkar's ideology. They prefer political change to socio-cultural revolution. The other new political outfit IJP also has come up in the fray of electoral politics of Uttar Pradesh. Its leader is a neo-Buddhist, who has begun his political career in the background of emerging neo-Buddhist movement in the state. He has been greatly involved in organising the conversion ceremonies of the dalits all over India so as to project himself in political sphere. Historically, RPI was the backbone of the neo-Buddhist movement of Uttar Pradesh, but now their influence in electoral politics is minuscule. The socio-cultural activities of RPI also are not visible in the state any longer. Therefore, the BSP has been the most influential political wing of dalits.

Udit Raj, who converted into neo-Buddhism with thousands of followers have been instigating the idea of conversion. He has been very critical to the BSP's reformulation of Ambedkar's ideology and challenged BSP leadership to convert into Buddhism. As a matter of fact BSP which has been critical to the aspect of dalits' conversion has publically announced many times to initiate conversion to Buddhism but always slipped the promise. Recently, BSP government has taken many steps to popularise Buddha in the state. The strategy behind this move can be two fold. First as BSP has been claimed to make Buddhism a popular religion across the communities, and second there is to a response to the emerging trends of neo-Buddhists identity.

After studying the political behaviour of party leaderships of both the parties it is clear that neo-Buddhism has been a matter of debate in dalit politics of Uttar Pradesh. Both the parties are trying their best to accommodate this identity group within themselves. Their leadership behaviour and the programmes they are pursuing are evident of this. IJP has clearly mentioned in its party programme to believe in Buddha's philosophy and to work in that way, on the other hand BSP, which is in power now, is pursuing many crucial projects to downsize its rival.

In short, the dissertation suggests that neo-Buddhist group is emerging as an identity group in the politics of the state and gradually consolidating its position to make assertions for its share in the dalit politics. They are not big in number but their level of consciousness is raised enough to conceive itself as a politically significant class. It is not difficult to accept that the emerging trend of their enhanced participation may decide the future of dalit politics in the State. The point to be noted is that despite being less in number they carry great legitimacy among the dalits as they link themselves directly with the hero of their community that is Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar. Ignoring the presence of this group may not give us correct picture of the possibilities of the dalit movement in the state.

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Annexure I

Uttar Pradesh Administrative Division in Different Census

<i>Name of Division</i>	<i>Districts in 1951 Census. (Total 51)</i>	<i>Districts added in 1961 Census. (Total 51+3=54)</i>	<i>Districts added in 1971-1981 Census. (Total 54+2=56)</i>	<i>Districts added in 1991 Census. (Total 56+7=63)</i>	<i>Districts dropped in 2001 Census because Uttarakhand was carved out as a separate state. (Total 63-9=54)</i>	<i>Districts added in 2001 Census. (Total 54+16=70)</i>
MEERUT	1. Dehra Dun 2. Saharanpur 3. Muzaffarnagar 4. Merrut 5. Bulandshahr		1. Ghaziabad	1. Hardwar	1. Dehra Dun 2. Haridwar	1. Baghpat 2. Gautam Buddha Nagar
AGRA	1. Aligarh 2. Mathura 3. Agra 4. Mainpuri 5. Etah			2. Firozabad		3. Hatras
ROHILKHAND	1. Bareilly 2. Bijnor 3. Buadun 4. Moradabad 5. Sahajanpur 6. Pilibhit 7. Rampur					4. Jyotiba Phule. Nagar
ALLAHABAD	1. Ferrukhabad 2. Etawah 3. Kanpur 4. Fatehpur 5. Allahabad			3. Kanpur Dehat		5. Aurayia 6. Kannauj 7. Kausambi

JHANSI	1. Jhansi 2. Jalaun 3. Hamirpur 4. Banda		2. Lalitpur			8. Mahoba 9. Chitrakoot
BANARAS	1. Varansi 2. Mirzapur 3. Jaunpur 4. Ghazipur 5. Ballia			4. Sonbhadra		10. St. Ravidas Nagar, 11. Chandauli
GORAKHPUR	1. Gorakhpur 2. Deoria 3. Basti 4. Azamgarh			5. Maharajganj 6. Mau 7. Siddharthnagar 12. Kusi Nagar 13. St. Kabir Nagar		
KUMAON	1. Nainital 2. Almora 3. Garhwal 4. Tehri Garhwal	1. Uttar Kashi, 2. Chamoli, 3. Pithoragarh			3. Nainital 4. Almora 5. Garwal 6. T. Garwal 7. Uttar Kashi 8. Chamoli 9. Pithoragarh	
LUCKNOW	1. Lucknow 2. Unnao 3. Rae Bareli 4. Sitapur 5. Hardoi 6. Kheri					
FIZABADAD	1. Faizabad 2. Gonda. 3. Bahraich 4. Sultanpur 5. Pratapgarh 6. Bara Banki					14. Balrampur 15. Ambedkar Nagar 16. Shrawasti

BUDDHISM IN UTTAR PRADESH 1951-2001

YEAR OF CENSUS	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Total Population of UP	60693755	70640045	84519184	106016306	132061753	166197921
Decadal Growth Rate Total		16.38%	19.64%	25.43%	24.56%	25.84%
Total Buddhists of UP	2517	10478	35056	47373	208583	302031
Decadal Growth Rate Buddhists		316.28%	235.42%	35.14%	340.29%	44.80%
DIVISION / AREA						
AGRA	1493	4576	11343	17109	43044	60624
Agra / Mainpuri / Firozabad	92+23=115	2306+1=2307	9215+447=9622	11440+2713=14153	27541+3922+1709=33172	12737+19078+3021=34836
Aligarh / Mathura / Hathras (Mahamaya Nagar)	948+201=1149	2085+10=2095	906+70=976	700+79=779	3198+293=3491	5093+865+1015=6973
Etah	229	174	705	2177	6381	18815
ALLAHABAD	198	860	5130	4822	11915	23924
Allahabad / Kaushambi	75	119	263	138	566	2150+242=2392
Etawah / Aurayia	1	37	1175	1681	5659	3303+2820=6123
Farrukhabad / Kannauj	23	59	2593	1821	1888	4983+2234=7217
Fatehpur	8	---	21	1	632	493
Kanpur Nagar / Kanpur Dehat	91	645	1078	1181	1252+1918=3170	4576+3123=7699
BANARAS	135	553	580	1816	20358	34988
Ballia	7	11	1	22	30	816
Ghazipur	2	6	12	16	185	9828
Jaunpur	43	9	329	1278	15821	17378
Mirzapur / Sonbhadra	----	274	51	199	677+287=964	674+3037=3711
Varansi / St. Ravidasnagar / Chandauli	83	253	187	301	3358	985+1726+544=3255
FAIZABAD	5	111	103	404	12594	23570
Bahraich / Shrivasti	1	10	21	84	3228	3296+596=3892
Bara Banki	----	50	3	74	792	2277
Faizabad / Ambedkar Nagar	3	36	21	21	530	1123+1266=2389
Gonda / Balrampur	----	15	2	----	3303	1472+2950=4422
Pratapgarh	1	----	56	184	2285	5806
Sultanpur	----	----	----	41	2456	4784

BUDDHISM IN UTTAR PRADESH 1951-2001

Shiv Shankar Das 10/09/2007

YEAR OF CENSUS	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	
DIVISION / AREA							
GORAKHPUR	19	202	289	1302	37768	58724	
Azamgarh / Mau	----		2	185	345	5346+4947=10293	3894+3398=7292
Basti / Siddharth Nagar / St. Kabir Nagar	----		29	47	457	9590+4044=13634	10610+7930+3775=22315
Deoria / Kushinagar	4		27	23	102	4488	878+6880=7758
Gorakhpur / Maharajganj	15		144	34	398	3689+5664=9353	5321+16038=21359
JHANSI	58	188	1847	1919	12327	7568	
Banda / Chitrkoot	7		3	133	6	39	435+69=504
Hamirpur / Mahoba	15		15	9	99	110	115+102=217
Jalaun	4		45	1433	1752	10899	5452
Jhansi / Lalitpur	32		125	131+141=272	61+1=62	1203+76=1279	1228+167=1395
LUCKNOW	106	350	1708	10139	37422	48512	
Hardoi	32		5	308	7003	20599	12353
Kheri	----		114	917	2447	8611	21164
Lucknow	73		216	322	347	2816	4327
Rae Bareli	1		3	28	44	178	330
Sitapur	----		10	125	48	3986	8450
Unnao	----		2	8	250	1232	1888
MERRUT	426	2464	11739	7335	17664	16448	
Bulandsahar	141		182	365	708	2808	2097
Merrut / Gaziabad / Baghpat / Gautam Buddh Nagar	100		2061	5393+5266=10659	4241+1253=5494	8103+4159=12262	2769+3298+322+1961=8350
Muzaffarnagar	98		63	615	565	1768	2356
Saharanpur	87		158	90	568	826	3645
ROHILKHAND	77	1174	2327	2697	15491	27673	
Badaun	5		4	43	72	2748	5022
Bareilly	34		253	131	84	1986	7333
Bijnor	33		495	1103	751	2755	3376
Moradabad / Jyotiba Phule Nagar	5		79	517	1324	2127	2436+248=2684
Pilibhit	----		283	8	1	1584	1828
Rampur	----		48	119	120	350	2227
Sahajahanpur	----		12	406	345	3941	5203

Annexure III

The descriptions given by Dr. Angney Lal regarding modern Buddhist sites in Bundalkhand (U.P) is given district wise, which as follows.

JALAUN DISTRICT		
<u>Name of sites</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Built by</u>
Ambedkar Buddha Vihar	Bhukar Village	Anand Dev
Alampur Vihar	Alampur Village	Anand Dev & Satanand
Nizampur Buddha Vihar	Nizampur Village	Sukhlal
Konch Buddha Vihar	Konch (Kasva)	Jwala Prasad Ahirvar
Akniva Buddha Vihar	Akniva Village	-----
Ajad Buddha Vihar (1999)	Kalpi	Bhagwan Das Ahirvar
Alapipura Buddha Vihar (1995)	Jalaun City	Ramdas
Et Buddha Vihar (1992)	Et (Kasva)	-----
Chiravali Buddha Vihar (1983)	Jalaun City	Pragyasheel
Marakpura Buddha Vihar (1992)	Marakpura Vill.	-----
Sahjadpur Buddha Vihar (1990)	Jalun City	-----
Buddha Vihar	Jarahala	-----
Buddha Vihar	Kukar Vill.	
JHANSI DISTRICT		
Pariksha Buddha Vihar	Jhansi City	Sugtanand
Gujjara Buddha Vihar	Magra Mohalla	-----
Simravari Buddha Vihar	Simravari Village	Kalideen Gautam
Kador Buddha Vihar	-----	Lalta Prasad

Bhetkhar Buddha Vihar	-----	-----
Takuden Buddha Vihar	-----	-----
Indora Buddha Vihar	-----	-----
Masihganj Buddha Vihar	-----	-----
HAMIRPUR DISTRICT		
Dhanpur Vihar (1986)	-----	-----
Khandpur Buddha Vihar (1990)	-----	-----
Kurara Buddha Vihar	-----	-----
Badhur Buddha Vihar	Badhur Modhan Vill	-----
BANDA DISTRICT		
Vanbaba Buddha Vihar	Vanbaba Purva	Somkeerti
Atarra Buddha Vihar	Attarra Kasva	Jamunadas
Chitrakoot Buddha Vihar	Chitrakoot	Veer Shivdas
Bagehta Buddha Vihar	-----	Mool Chandra Gautam
Buddha Vihar Lodhanpura	-----	-----
Sidharht Buddha Vihar	Baba Ki Madyiya V.	-----