

**IDENTITY POLITICS IN KARNATAKA:
A STUDY OF DALIT SANGHARSH SAMITI**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**IDENTITY POLITICS IN KARNATAKA: A STUDY OF DALIT SANGHARSH SAMITI**", submitted by **G. SANTHOSH KUMAR**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is his own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

Abbreviations

Map

Chapter I	Introduction	1 – 32
Chapter II	Dalit Movement in Karnataka: A Historical Background	33-66
Chapter III	Emergence of Dalit Consciousness After Independence in Karnataka	67-94
Chapter IV	Dalit Movement and Politics of Dalit Sangharsh Samiti	95-121
	Conclusion	122 – 127
	Bibliography	128 - 137

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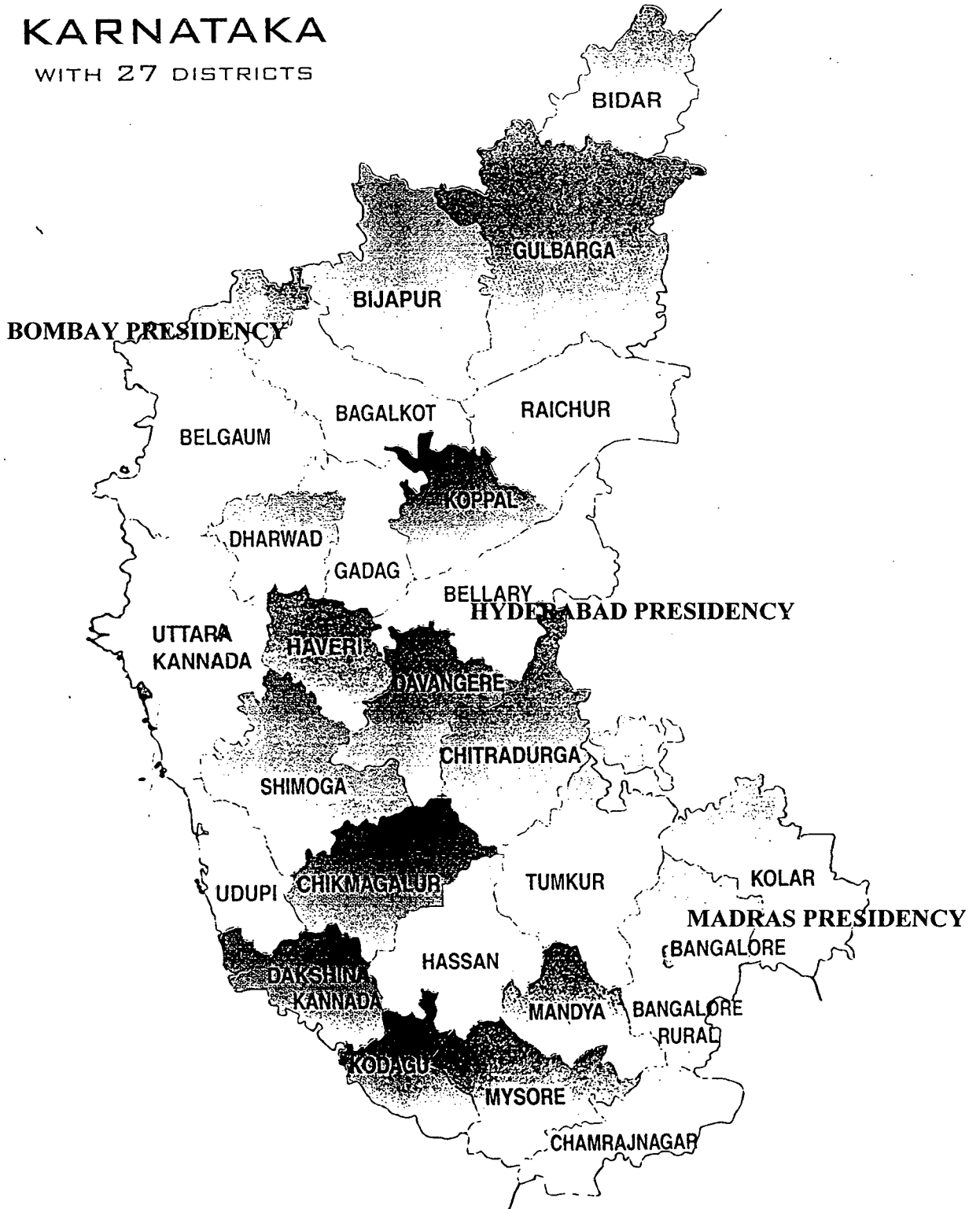
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ABBREVIATIONS

BSP	-	Bahujan Samaj Party.
DEF	-	Dalit Employees Federation.
DMCWF	-	Dalit Municipal Corporation Workers.
DSF	-	Dalit Students Federation.
DSS	-	Dalit Sangarash Samiti.
DWAF	-	Dalit writers and Artists Federation.
DWF	-	Dalit Women Federation.
HAL	-	Hindustan Aeronautical Limited.
HMT	-	Hindustan Machine Tools.
IPF	-	Indian People Front.
ITI	-	Indian Technical Institution.
KBCC	-	Karnataka Backward Classes Commission.
OBC	-	Other Backward Classes.
PWG	-	People War Group.
SC	-	Scheduled Castes.
ST	-	Scheduled Tribes.

KARNATAKA

WITH 27 DISTRICTS



Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

To begin with, there is no generic name of common acceptance that actually describes the so called Untouchable people. The phrase 'Scheduled Castes' came into vogue during British rule to refer to the former untouchable castes which were called by different names in different states as Antyajias, Panchamas, Holeya, Chandala, etc.,. Through this appellation in Mysore state, they not only rejected the identity imposed by the upper castes on them to be which they found dehumanising or Harijan and Depressed Classes that they consider patronising, but also assume the identity of an oppressed people who are reasserting their humanity against those who have for centuries treated them as sub-human. However, the British in course of time discarded the use of such names as they evoked a sense of humiliation. It was substituted by names like the suppressed, the depressed and exterior castes¹.

The 'Scheduled Castes', are found at the bottom line of the caste hierarchy. The 'Untouchables' have the lowest ritual standing and usually the lowest economic position and traditionally subject to onerous social and civic disabilities. The depressed classes constitute not only a socio-cultural group but often an economic class too. It has been established that 90% of those who die of starvation and attendant diseases, belong to the Depressed Classes. Their Untouchability and

¹ At the meeting of the Legislative Council held on the 11-9-1925, the following resolution was passed and accepted by the Govt.. "That this Council recommends to the Govt. that the term Holeya or Panchama used to designate the ancient Dravidians or Carnatics in Mysore State should be deleted in future from the Govt. Records and other Panchamas" (Usha Rao, 1981: Deprived Castes in India: A Profile of Karnataka, Allahabad, pp,40.

Poverty support each other: the former status accentuates their economic exploitation and the later economic conditions strengthen their polluting status. They are not a homogenous category. They differ from one another in their language, manners and customs. There are gradation and caste taboos among the 'Untouchables' themselves. They share in common certain features of poverty and degradation due to the humiliating treatment meted to them by the caste Hindus.

Furthermore, untouchability as a social institution was kept alive by use of brutal force. The 'Caste Hindus' insisted on enforcing the inferiority of the Depressed Classes in many ways, and if the Depressed Classes tried to improve their standard of living they were cruelly punished. The most effective weapon which helped in the perpetuation of the untouchability was the denial of the right to education to the masses. Brahmins alone were allowed to learn Sanskrit, the language in which the sacred books were written and rituals were performed. But Untouchables was worse, they were completely secluded and were not allowed to the schools. The conditions enter inhuman punishment were inflicted on the Depressed Classes if they tried to assert their rights.

Scheduled Castes in different parts of Karnataka were the worst victims of the caste system during 18th and 19th Centuries. The Caste Hindus were so orthodox in their thoughts and actions that they never allowed untouchables to rise to higher positions. The Scheduled Castes were mainly engaged in their traditional and unhygienic jobs like scavenging and cleaning the villages, tanning of leather, shoe-making, village messengers, sweepers and other works that the touchables asked them to do. It was perceived as sin for any Caste Hindu to look at these people, to talk to them. Neither their utensils could be used by

anybody else, nor they could eat from utensils belonging to the 'pure' caste. They had no right to possess cattle, horses, sheeps or goats and could possess only dogs and mules. 'Untouchables' living outside the village limits could enter the villages only during the day time and that too only on displaying some external symbol of their untouchability. These castes were under the dominations and mercy of the upper castes.

As Buchanan writes about the position of Brahmins,
"Much of the land is rented by them, they seldom put their hand to actual labour and on no account will they hold the plough. Their farms are chiefly cultivated by slaves of the inferior castes called shudras and panchamas"².

Pursuit of traditional occupations, rural dwelling, lack of education and their utter poverty dropped the 'Untouchables' to the slave status. Their huts were always built on the outskirts of the villages and social contact was debarred to 'Untouchables' and were virtually kept away from modern life. Their social status perpetuated their low economic positions and thus there was 'deculturisation' among these castes.

In the 1881 Census, of the Princely State of Mysore had incorporated Holeys and Manga castes as 'Out-Castes'. They were also known as Balagai or 'Right-Hand' and Yadagai or 'Left-Hand' respectively. Caste system was very much rigid and the notion of purity and pollution was very strong. These two caste were treated as 'unclean' and 'impure'. They were debarred from contact with upper castes and 'Untouchable' Caste were to keep a long distance while

² Buchanan, Francis.,1807: "*Journey From Madras: Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malbar*", London. Bulmer and Co. p.217.

walking on the streets. No Caste Hindu teacher admitted the 'Untouchable' children to the schools because of the fear of pollution. As a result, percentage of illiteracy among these two castes were extremely high, with their social disabilities.

In 1920s, there were major changes and challenges to the Dalits with a new set of self-conscious identities, with greater assertiveness by Dalit radicals, with a claim that they were the original inhabitants of the lands and the 'sons of the soil'. This culminated with a word 'Adi' (means original) ideology that came to be prefixed to their regional identity 'Adi'. Those from Telugu speaking areas of Madras Presidency, claimed themselves as Adi-Andhras, Tamil speaking Dalits claimed themselves as Adi-Dravidas and those from Karnataka as Adi-Karnataka.

During 1930s, a new set emerged with British official euphemism for Dalits, such as 'Depressed Classes', 'Exterior Classes', 'Scheduled Classes', etc. In 1930, the Indian Statutory Commission defined that in origin, these castes seem to be purely functional comprising those who followed occupations held to be unclean or degrading, such as scavenging, leather working and partly tribal i.e., aboriginal tribes absorbed into Hindu fold and transformed into an impose caste³. The Government of India decided to make an estimate of the number of such castes in 1930, for providing certain legislative and executive benefits.

J.H.Hutton, a noted Sociologists and Census Commissioner, in 1931, (to identify the 'Untouchable' Castes for listing as Scheduled Castes) with other expert bodies such as the Starte Committtee and the Indian Franchise Committee to go into the problems. Notwithstanding

³ Indian Statutory Commission Report, Vol.I, (Calcutta, 1930), p.37.

the listing of only 'Untouchables' as Scheduled Castes, but used broader bases for its list of Scheduled Castes in 1935, which covered not only the 'Untouchables' but also some Non-Untouchables, as in certain places, certain backward and tribal groups were treated as 'Untouchables'. However, such a definition of the term Scheduled Castes was not without political undertones.

At this Census, the Hindus are divided into three classes:

1. Brahmins, as it recognised in the South India.
2. Depressed Classes, consisted of Adi-Karnataka (including Adi-Dravida) Korma, Koracha, Vodda, Banjara, Hill-Tribe and Animist.
3. Other Castes amongs Hindus

The 1921 and 1931 Census included, 33 superior castes were also included among the Depressed Classes on the basis of their professions. Hence these reports are considered inconsistent. At present a few castes have been added viz., Arya, Hallikar, Rajput and Others.

There are 402 aryas found in the State. Government ordered that the Hallikars, who were hitherto included among Vokkaligas should be shown separately as they had more in common with Yadavas than Vokkaligas and that the Rajputs should be separated from local Kshatriyas like the Ursus. Some castes are found in larger numbers in some parts of the State than in others. While Vokkaligas, Adi-Karnataka, Lingayat, Kuruba and Beda form the first five castes in the State in the order of numerical strength, their order changes in different districts. Taking the muslims into consideration, which takes its place

numerically between Lingayat and Kuruba, the Adi-Karnataka ranks in all the districts and cities.

Many of the castes had their origin not so because of their social differences, but differences in languages, place of origin, occupation and place of settlement. The caste of Vokkaligas, for instance, in reference to its original economic status, 'Vokkalu' meaning a 'tenant farmer'. But Vokkaligas now pursue several other occupations and many of them are owners of land in their own right. The division amongst them into Reddy, Morasu, Nonaba, Gangadikar, etc., are in reference, to their tongue. In the case of Reddy who speaks Telugu while others speak Kannada. Some of the castes are occupational one, but the economic conditions have compelled many of the members of the castes to change their occupations.

The 1951 Census of Mysore State included six castes as Scheduled Castes, according to the Constitution of India and by the Order of the President of India, 1950.

The six Castes were:

1. Adi-Karnataka.
2. Adi-Dravida.
3. Banjara or Lambani.
4. Bhovi or Vodda.
5. Korma.
6. Koracha.

But the 1950 President's Order had many inconsistencies. The Lambani, Vodda, Bhovi, Korama and Koracha castes were treated as Scheduled Castes in Old Mysore area, whereas the same castes were treated as Non-Scheduled Castes in the North Karnataka until 1976.

This type of regional difference and barriers created many problems in the administrative and educational fields. Hence the Government of Karnataka removed the area restriction⁴.

With the State re-organisation in 1956, the Karnataka State, which was earlier known as Mysore State, came into being. In Karnataka region, there were variations in the identification of Scheduled Castes, in different districts and taluks of State, as it was divided into five main sub-regions, namely Old Mysore, North Karnataka, Hyderabad Karnataka, Madras Karnataka and Coorg.

The people living in these sub-regions not only share similar socio-cultural traits, but also seek identification in terms of the sub-region. In each region there are a few castes which have come to dominate the social, political and economic life of the region. In the initial stage, it was very difficult to identify a caste or class to be listed as 'Scheduled Castes'

There are historical reasons as to why the Scheduled Castes even today remain the weakest of Hindu social system and struggle hard to achieve the social, economic and educational status in India. The Hindu social order, particularly its main pillar, the caste system and untouchability presents a unique case. As a system of social, economic and religious governance, it is found not on the principle of the liberty (or freedom), equality and fraternity, the values which formed the basis of universal human rights, but on the principle of inequality in every sphere of life.

⁴ *Government Notification (The Scheduled Tribes Order Castes/ Amendment Act), 1976.*

Basically, there are three features which are essential to understand in the sphere of caste system in Karnataka State. They are, (a) Social status, (b) Economic status and (c) Political status.

Social Status of Scheduled Castes:

The social, religious, cultural and economic rights of members of the caste are predetermined by birth and are hereditary an unequal distribution of these rights across caste groups. Provision of a mechanism of social and economic ostracism, calculated to ensure rigid adherence of the system and justification of the Hindu social system by philosophy. In Karnataka, the Scheduled Castes, were divided into number of castes and sub-castes.

(A)HOLEYAS.

The Holeyas in Karnataka are known by different names in various regions of the state, as Chalwadi, Kulavadis, Holers, Mahars(in northern part) and Adi-Karnataka.

The Holey caste lived at the outskirts of every village and 'settlements' and 'ghettos'. Such places are even today recognised by their castes names such as 'Holageri' or 'Maharwads'. Their settlements were situated in slums and they are clamped by poverty and ignorance.

As Lewis Rice states,

“The Kulavadi had a recognised position in the village and he has always been regarded as an ultimate reference in case of boundary disputes”⁵.

⁵ Rice, B.Lewis.,1897, “*Mysore Gazetteer*”, Vol.I. Westminster:Archibald Constable and Co., p.215.

Even Iyer points out that,

“The men of this caste are some times styled by their official designation as ‘Chalwadi’ who is a convenor of meeting of the 18 Phana party, carrying brass cup and chain as insignia.

‘Kulawadi’ is one who calls the villagers before the Patel and Revenue Officers generally”⁶.

Even now in most parts of Karnataka the ‘Holeya’ caste continues the same occupation in villages. The ‘Walikar’ or ‘Sanadi’ herald the arrival of the Government Officers and assemble the villagers for the village meetings. Holers, Chenne Holers and Chennayanavaru are also synonymous with Chalwadis in Mundgod taluk of North Canara district, while Holer, Chennaya are different castes in predominantly Marathi speaking talukas of Khanapur and Chikkodi in Belgaum district. They are identified with Mahars equivalent to Chalwadis⁷. Besides, they were also known by certain functional names like Bhutalya Aagashya or Gate-Keepers, Mhetri or Mhetrayya (Headman of the village level). These names may have come to this caste on the basis of their occupations.

(B) Madiga or Manga.

Madiga caste is known as ‘Left-Hand’ group among Untouchables in Karnataka. Mangs of Maharashtra are synonymous with the ‘Madigas’ of Mysore.

The main occupation of Mangs in Northern Karnataka i.e., Bijapur, Belgaum and Dharwar is to make ropes and sell them to Caste Hindus for agricultural purposes. There have been many endogamous

⁶ Ibid.,p.215.

⁷ *Census of India, 1961, Vol.XI, Mysore Part-B, Ethnographic Notes on Scheduled Castes/Tribes, 1974.*

division among Madigas or Mangs like Assal Mangs, Dhakwalar or Vajantri Mangs, Ghadashi Jirait, Kakar, Mang Garudi, Mochi, Nade, Shivate, Telangi, etc,. The names are derived namely on the basis of their occupation. The Assal Mangs are to be considered highest among Madigas.

As L.K.A. Iyer writes,

“The meaning of Madiga is not clear. It is supposed to be a corruption of Matanga, the caste known as Mangs in Maharashtra be connected with each other”⁸.

As Buchanan writes,

“The leather is tanned here by a class of people esteemed of very low caste and called Madigas”⁹.

In Karnataka the Madigas follow the religion of Virashaivism, because ‘Chennayya’ or ‘Machidev’ was the contemporary of Basaveshwar who launched social movement in the 12th century A.D., to emancipate the ‘Untouchables’. Chennayya became a great saint and wrote many (sermons) Vachanas in Kannada, Madigas worship Machidev. Madigas eat carrions, avowedly drink spirituous liquor, they dress hides, make shoes and some of them cultivate land. The religious head of Madigas is Jambu and many associations of Madigas are name after their religious head.

(C)Samagars.

Samagar caste is also known as Machigar, Chambar, Morchi, etc,. In Northern Karnataka districts like Bijapur, Belgaum, Gulbarga and Bidar. Samagars and Madigas are two different groups. Madigas are inferior to Samagars and Holeyas in social hierarchy. Samagars never

⁸ Iyer, L.K.A.: “*The Mysore Tribes and Castes*”, Vol..IV, p.126.

⁹ Buchanan, Francis: “*Journey from Madras: Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malbar*”, p.218.

admit Madigas to their house and the touch of Madigas pollutes Samagars. Samagars have many gradations among themselves because, they mainly depended upon Caste Hindus, they are to live on the mercy of their masters.

Since most of the Samagars live in countryside, the upper caste dominate them. As Briggs opines,

“They have been so conquered and broken by centuries of oppression that they have but little self-respect left and no ambition. Their condition in reality is of serfdom and at time they are sore oppressed. They live on the lands of others and must bear without complaint, oppression, injustice and fraud”¹⁰.

Chamara feel that they are superior to all other ‘Untouchables’. They profess the religion of ‘Lingayats’ because they are also very much influenced by the Basava movement. Haralayya was the great saint who came from Samagar caste and Lord Basaveshwar arranged inter-caste marriage between the son of Haralayya and daughter of Madhuvarsa.

At present the economic life of Samagars has changed because of the flourishing leather business, the city dwelling Samagars are no more ‘Untouchables’. They are the ‘lords’ among the ‘Untouchables’, who by their profession are making progress in the social, economic, educational and administrative fields.

(D) Dhors.

The word ‘Dhor’, have been derived from the Marathi term ‘Dhor’ which means ‘cattle’. People started to call this caste by the name of ‘Dhor’ because the Dhor community always hangs the skin of the cattle in front of their house for tanning purpose.

¹⁰ Briggs, G.W., 1920 : “*The Chamars*”, London, Oxford Univeristy Press, p.224.

Enthovon writes,

“ ‘Dhor’, as an endogamous group among Kanarese ‘Mang’ or ‘Madiga’ are found mainly in Deccan and Karnataka. The ‘Dhor’ caste is one of the ‘Untouchable’ Caste which differs from Samagars and Madigas though all these castes are engaged in leather work. The Dhor caste is mainly engaged in ‘Tanning of Leather’”¹¹.

As Sunanda Patwardhan argues that Dhors are the tanners found in Satara, Kolhapur, Solapur, Ahemadnagar, Khandesh, Belgaum and Bijapur. The Dhors are divided into five endogamous groups:

1. Range.
2. Kakkayya.
3. Bhudale.
4. Chambar Shadu Dhor.
5. Hindustan Dhor¹².

The most important among Dhors are Kakkayya. The Dhors in Karnataka are the followers of Kakkayya and Basavanna. They are also known as ‘Lingayat Dhors’.

As Usha Rao states,

“That the Dhors exist among Lingayats, because most of the Dhors in Karnataka villagers profess Lingayat religion, apply vibhuti and perform all the feasts of Lingayats. The Dhors do it in of the ‘memory of Kakkayya’ who was a ‘Saint’ during the 12th Century

¹¹ Enthavon, R.E., 1924 : “*The Tribes and Castes of Bombay Presidency*”, Vol.II, Bombay, Government Central Press, p.116.

¹² Patwardhan, Sunanada, 1973 : “*A Change Among India’s Harijans Maharashtra: A Case Study*”, New Delhi, Orient Longman, p.31.

and contemporary of Basavanna and who came from the Dhor community”¹³.

Above discussion throws some light upon the social conditions of the ‘Untouchables’ in Karnataka. That the ‘Untouchables’ led their life as slaves under the upper castes and have suffered silently for ages. They are reduced to the position of wretched creatures of the earth who neither have physical nor mental and moral strength to rise above their wretchedness.

Physical punishment meted out to the ‘Untouchables’ by Brahmins was very severe and crude. The ‘Untouchables’ were never allowed to mix and mingle with upper castes. Brahminism created a separate world for the ‘Untouchables’ where suffering, starvation, humiliation, fear and prohibition prevailed in it. The Brahmins were the sole masters of the Non-Brahmins and the ‘Untouchables’ as well, where they were empowered to punish the Non-Brahmins.

Economic Status of Scheduled Castes:

The exploitation of the Scheduled Castes have their roots in the religious and social system. In the sphere of economic rights, the concept of social order, lays down a scheme of distribution, namely,

1. It fixes the occupations for each caste by birth and its hereditary continuation.
2. Unequal distribution of these economic rights related to property, trade, employment, wages, education, etc., among the caste groups.
3. Imposing a hierarchy of occupation.

¹³ Usha, Rao.,1981 : “*Deprived Castes in India*”, Allahabad, Chugh Publications, p.83

In Karnataka serfdom was in existence during the medieval period. The Brahmin being the religious head was the land lord who lived in Agraharas, Gowdas were the village headmen, and the Scheduled Castes remained as working class. Inscriptions belonging to Chalukya period clearly indicate that in ancient Karnataka there existed two types of labours, (a) Hired Labourers (b) Serfs and the Land Lords were who owned the land was not the actual cultivator, but the land cultivated by the lower class which was known as 'Kammata'¹⁴.

The Inscriptions of medieval Karnataka refer to the situation as follows:

"Hired labourers almost all come from the Shudra Caste. They provided the material basis for the non-cultivating classes and institutions of ancient and medieval Karnataka. Inscriptions clearly refer to Shudras cultivating land in village"¹⁵.

In this context K.S. Shivanna writes:

"The upper castes were debarred from touching the plough. They might be engaged in agriculture, but must like gentlemen farmers, employ labourers comes from the lowest varna of Hindu social structure"¹⁶.

In addition to hired labourers, serfs were also employed in agriculture by the absentee landlords. They were known as 'Kolikas' in sanskrit and 'Holeyalu' and 'Mannalu' in Kannada. The term 'Kolika' has been derived from 'Coolie' which means work and the same name is given to a sub-caste of Holeya known as 'Kolkar' which is the corrupted form of 'Koolikar' or 'worker'. The term 'Holeyalu' is also

¹⁴ Ambedkar, B.R., 1943 : "*Mr. Gandhi and Emancipation of the Untouchables*", Bombay, Thacker, p.12.

¹⁵ Ec, IV, G-V, 32, 1372, A.D.

¹⁶ Shivanna, K.S., 1978: "*Farm Labourer of Karnataka (Ancient and Medieval Period)* Indian History Mysore Congress Journal, Vol.I., Hyderabad, Osmania University, p.143.

derived from kananda term 'Hola' means 'fields' and 'Aalu' means servants, both terms connote 'workers on the field'. Similarly the word 'Muladalu' connote their serfdom.

The landlords of Malenadu or hilly tracts of Karnataka regarded Holeyalus as hereditary serfs who were doing agricultural work. There were two types of serfs, (a) Hutallu, a hereditary serf or family born in servitude. (b) Mannalu, a serf attached to the soil, who worked on the basis of daily wages and thus he was not bonded labour to the land lord¹⁷.

The land lords played a contemporary role against Scheduled Castes and took undue advantage of their weak economic position. The loans given by land lords to the Scheduled Castes were never finally settled. The loan taken by a father for his marriage was paid by his sons and grandsons in the form of physical labour. Thus serfdom perpetuated the poverty of the Scheduled Castes for many generations.

Political Status of Scheduled Castes:

Brahmins were the most important section who by virtue of their 'social-status' controlled the administrative, social, economic and political system in Karnataka. Hinduism in the South was orthodox and Brahmins were the elevated class. Brahmins being the dominating caste suppressed all other non-Brahmins through their religious dogma. The 12th century in Karnataka witnessed a social movement or revolution under the leadership of Basaveshwar who himself was a Brahmin but opposed Brahmin's supremacy and opted for 'Shaivism' whose followers came to be called Lingayats. This protest movement was against the 'Dominant Culture' of the Brahmins. At present,

¹⁷ Mysore Census Report, 1891, Mysore Government Press, p.251.

'Lingayats' and 'Vokkaligas' play the dominant role in socio-economic field and it is a 'struggle for power' between Brahmins and Lingayats.

The years 1881 and 1905 are the land marks in the history of Karnataka, because of the "Representative Assembly and Legislative Council" were established by the princely government. Two important factors helped Brahmins and Lingayats to make their mark in the politics of Karnataka, (a) Western education helped Brahmins.

(b)The Palegar system helped the Lingayats.

Bjorn Hettne writes,

“ The expanded education was the crucial factor behind the development of a 'modern elite' which in Mysore as in most other parts of India was recruited from the Brahmins caste. Thus the Brahmins who already after 1799 had begun to replace the Muslims as ruling class, were able to consolidate their position. They developed a near monopoly on the access to English languages and Western culture, which was almost as effective as their old monopoly on Sanskrit scripture”¹⁸.

Brahmins occupied the highest positions in political fields such as 'Dewans' during 1881-1918. And these advantageous positions helped 'Brahmins' to influence the 'King' and appoint their own caste people in various positions. It is only from 1922 to 1949 that the Non-Brahmins occupied the positions of 'Dewans' because of the Non-Brahmins movement, started by them to replace the Brahmins from key positions.

¹⁸ Hettne, Bjorn., 1978 : "*Political Economy of Indirect Rule*", New Delhi, Ambika Publications, p.34.

Secondly, Palegar system helped Lingayats to come into political scene of Karnataka.

P.B.R. Chandra Rao writes thus on the Palegar system:

“ The local foundations of this political super-structure was what we may call ‘ the Palegar system’. Palegars were the local power holders nominally incharge of a group of twenty villages (a political unit known as Pollam)”¹⁹

These Polegars mostly came from Lingayat and Vokkaligas communities. They were also called ‘Village Headmen’ or ‘Gowdas’ whose main duty to collect the taxes. Their position helped them to build a good rapport between the king and the public which ultimately gave them political power

Even the colonial rule also reduced the Scheduled Castes to a ‘non-governing’ class, because the Britishers never respected the political aspirations and claims of these people. It is only the 1950 Constitution that has helped Scheduled Castes to emerge as the ‘New Political-Elite’ by providing them political representation in ‘National Parliament’ and ‘State Assemblies’. But still the position of the Scheduled Castes is not very powerful in the present political system because of ‘Joint Electorate’ which is creating ‘Structural Constraints’ and thus they are known as ‘Token Elite’ or ‘Submissive Elite’ or ‘System Supporting Elite’. The Scheduled Caste elite in the present political set up never oppose the system.

The above factors which implies that the social order is mainly based on the three interrelated elements firstly, predetermination of social, religious and economic rights of each caste based on birth,

¹⁹ Chandra Rao, P.B.R., 1950 : “*Polegars of Mysore and Their Civilization*”, Quarterly Journal of Mystic Society, Vol.XXIX, p.162.

secondly, the unequal and hierarchical (graded) division of these rights among castes and thirdly, provision of strong social, religious and economic ostracism supported by social and religious ideology to maintain the order.

In Ambedkar's view,

“the doctrine of inequality is the core and heart of this order”.

In this framework castes are interlinked with each other in a manner such that the right and privileges of higher castes, become the disabilities of the lower castes, particularly 'Untouchables'. In this particular order of hierarchy, the Brahmins are not only placed at the top but are also considered to be 'superior social beings' worthy of all special rights and privileges. 'Untouchables' are considered as inferior social beings and therefore are not entitled to any individual rights, i.e, civic, religious, political and economic. Infact, the disabilities they suffer are so severe that they are physically and socially isolated and excluded from the rest of the society. Isolation and exclusion of 'Untouchables' has become a unique features of Hindu social order.

Main Objectives:

The objective of the Dalit movement in Karnataka was to liberate the 'Untouchable', from the oppressive practice of untouchability observed by the Caste Hindus and to bring the former on par with socio-cultural level of privileged, so that they could be brought to the national main-stream. The basic idea involved in the process was of reconstruction of the society on the basis of new values. However, the ideologies, strategies and means have varied overtime,

replacing 'Dalit Consciousness', came to the force in different forms and shades.

Historically speaking, the Brahminical orthodoxy and legitimacy of caste in India was first challenged in the 6th century B.C., by Buddhism. It preached equality, justice and fraternity of all human beings. In the present century, the 'Untouchables' have been drawn towards Buddhism ever since Dr. Ambedkar revived it as a emancipatory religion for the oppressed.

In Karnataka, at the first, their response to untouchability came to the fore in the form of Bhakti Cult or Bhakti Movement, generally which attracted Dalits were led by Kabir, Ravidas, Shivnarayan, Chaitanya, Chokhamela, Basaveshwara and others who attacked the caste system and stressed equality of status. But the origin of the Dalit Movement in Karnataka lies in the convergence of these following three inputs:

1. The transcendental aspect of fighting the caste-ego.
2. The mundane reality of fighting for real opportunities in education and jobs.
3. The Land issues.

Present day Karnataka State which was a part of Princely Mysore State and other parts were under colonial rule, has experienced Dalit Movement differently in different parts or areas. Though, earlier there was Virashaiva Movement, but the Dalit concern received very little attention in the context of the Non-Brahmin Movement in the Princely Mysore State, which has emerged, due to the overwhelming proportion of the working class was Tamil and from 1930s onwards, there was a 'Harijan Movement', in Bombay-Karnataka Presidency, which took shape after 'Poona Pact'.

The Dalit movement in Karnataka is characterised by a long and gradual social progression. Apart from modern historical processes a few medieval upheavals were also responsible for bringing about a change in the sublime and sensitive attitude of the Dalits in the State.

This thesis focusses on the Dalit movement in Karnataka in the colonial period, post-independence period and emergence of the Dalit Sangarsh Samiti. In the pre-independence period there were a number of movements such as, the Non-Brahmin movement, in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu as well as the Ad-Dharm movement in Punjab, the Adi-Hindu movement in Uttar Pradesh, Namashudras in Bengal, Narayan Swami Guru's movement in Kerala, Adi-Dravidas in Tamil Nadu, Adi-Andhras in Coastal Andhra and Adi-Hindus movement in Hyderabad. In addition, there were Non-Brahmin ideological trends elsewhere and weaker or unorganised Dalit assertion in areas of Mysore State.

Independent India saw two decades of quiescence for anti-caste struggle, then a renewed upsurge from the early 1970's marked by the founding of the Dalit Panther's in 1972. The main objectives of the work:

1. To understand the Dalit movement in Karnataka, particularly the formation of Dalit Sangarash Samiti.
2. To study the historical roots of the emergence of the Dalit movement in Karnataka.
3. What were the factors leading to the formation of the Dalit Sangarash Samiti.
4. To study the organizational structure, identity and political dynamic of D.S.S., in Karnataka, in its fight for social justice.
5. Examines whether it is a strong organization. If not why?

Theoretical Framework:

Many Indian and Western scholars has conducted studies on the Dalit movement. Comparatively, the 'Dalit Movement', in India is 'Social Movement', due to the social problems faced by Dalits in India. Deprivation, discrimination, inequalities and social unrest are the conducive factors for the emergence of a social movements. Social movements are human responses to prevalent conditions of inequality and stratification in any given society.

In the words of Herber Blumer, Social Movements may be defined as,

“A collective attempt to bring about a change in a certain social institutions or to create entirely a new social order”.

According to Gusfield, Social Movements means,

“Socially shared demands for a change in some aspects of social order”.

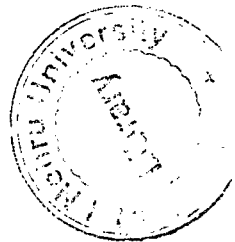
According to M.S.A. Rao,

“A social movement, is an organized attempt on the part of a section of society to bring about either partial or total change in society through collective mobilisation based on an ideology”²⁰.

Movements in India can be identified mainly at two levels, viz, one is structural and another is cultural. At the former level, there are political and economic movements, whereas, at the later level, there are movements which are both revivalistic and modernizing in nature. All these various movements in different parts of India in general and Karnataka in particular, are characterised by the following:

²⁰ M.S.A. Rao, 2000: “Social Movements in India”, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, p.13.

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1. The development of a system of ideas, programmes of doctrines and actions which may be called the ideology of movement.
2. Some form of organisation.
3. Role of leadership as a particular kind of change agent.
4. Elements of discontent and thereby protest potential.
5. Factors of social change and social mobility.

Among Sociologists, it is possible to discern a dominant ideological current that has bearings on the study of Dalit Movement. There is a 'liberal' trend among a group of scholars, who believe that it is the ancient Hindu reactionary traditions and the deep-rooted prejudice against Dalit by the upper castes that has led to the protest from the dalits. Dalit protest as a necessary outcome of an obscurantists Hindu tradition. This liberal view also has a strong tendency to assume that the Dalit movement is limited to achieving the partial advance that it has in the socio-economic, civic and political fields within the existing social order, without any thought regarding its radical transformation in other respects. It is due to this ideological position, that concepts like 'Social Mobility', 'Relative Deprivation' and 'Reference Group' figure so prominently in their writings on the Dalit Movement. These can be seen as major frame of reference for studying Dalit Movement in Karnataka.

According to M.S.A. Rao, there are three main theories concerning the emergence of Social movements, namely:

1. The Relative Deprivation Theory.
2. The Strain Theory.
3. The Theory of Revitalisation

To analyse, Dalit movement in Karnataka, the Relative Deprivation Theory is more acceptable than the other various models. In this respect, T.K. Oommen's model is quite relevant, he states, the sources of deprivation of Dalits are based on:

1. Low ritual status (socio-cultural depression).
2. Appalling poverty (economic exploitation).
3. Powerlessness (political disenfranchisement):

In Karnataka, Dalit groups or individuals try to adopt the rituals followed by higher groups or individuals in order to achieve a similar social position or to adopt the values that promote the aspirations of an atomised individual in a civil society. Dalits in Karnataka suffered from Relative Deprivation because at social level their attempt to overcome Relative Deprivation is restricted by the upper caste group whom they cite as a Reference Group existing mostly in pre-civil society situation which is still dominant in some parts of the country. At another level, the articulation of Relative Deprivation among the Dalits might take place with reference to those westernised middle class Dalits from within the same social situation. Thus, in the Indian case, as Oommen has pointed out deprivation is multi-faceted²¹.

Other scholars have also tried to link the emergence of the Dalit movement with the issue of Relative Deprivation, Reference Group and Social Mobility. These include,

“ Barbara Joshi²², Harold Issac²³, Owen Lynch²⁴, James

²¹ Oommen, T.K., 1990: '*Protest and Change: Studies in Social Movements*', Sage Publications, Delhi, p.255.

²² Joshi, Barbara, 1987: '*Recent Developments Inter-Regional Mobilisation of Dalit Protest in India*', South Asia Bulletin, Vol.I.

²³ Issac, Harold, 1964: '*India's Ex-Untouchables*', Asia Publishing House, Bombay

²⁴ Lynch, Owen, 1974: '*The Politics of Untouchability*', National publication, (Indian edition), Delhi.

Silverberg²⁵, Sachidanand²⁶, Anil Bhatt²⁷, Singer and Cohen²⁸, Nanduram²⁹ and Patwardhan³⁰”.

It is obvious from the works of these scholars that terms like Social Mobility and Relative Deprivation form the major frame of reference for discussion, of the emergence of reform, protest and movement among the Dalits.

The studies establishing a link between the emergence of the Dalit movement and Relative Deprivation, Social Mobility and Reference Group theory though inadequate to understand Dalit movement in Karnataka need to be supported on the following theoretical and strategical grounds. Both historically and dialectically, this concept of Relative Deprivation could capture the social reality at a particular historical juncture when the Indian society was trying to release itself from the feudal ethos which was facing ever increasing threat of the advancing civil society in India. In this transitional process, Dalits who were aspiring for the mobility of various kinds but were unable to achieve it due to the restrictions imposed by the feudal as well as colonial vested interest seem to have deprivation which time and again prompted the Dalit movement.

There were reformist trends in the movement in Karnataka as in the other Social Movements in various parts of Indian society. A

²⁵ S.S.Silverberg, James,(ed),*Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, the Haus Mouneten, 1968.

²⁶ Sachidanand,1978: '*Harijan Elite*', Thomson Press, Faridabad.

²⁷ Bhatt. Anil, 1971: '*Politics and Social Mobility in India*', Contribution to Indian Sociology, Vol.5, p.105.

²⁸ Singer & Cohen, (ed), '*Structure at Change in Indian Society*', Aldine, Chicago, 1968.

²⁹ Ram Nandu, 1988: '*The Mobile Scheduled Caste Rise of a New Middle Class*', Hindustan Publishing House, Delhi

³⁰ Patwardhan, Sunanda, 1973: '*Change among India's Harijan*', Orient Longman, Asian, Delhi.

favourable environment for the emergence of protest of the Dalits was created by Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Gopal Baba Walangkar and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and many other Dalit leaders in different parts of the country. Similarly, the Non-Brahmin Movement and attempts of the 'Untouchables' masses to get organized for social and political purposes, have been witnessed in Bombay Presidency which represented the conservative trends in contrast to the more radical Satyashodhak Samaj and Self-Respect Movement. Reformists (incorporative, 'norm oriented'), trends were also embodied in Gandhi's 'Harijan' movement, which stood in tradition of broad upper caste social reform tradition which sought to cleanse Hinduism of its impurities.

Although the usual tendency is to view Sanskritisation as a cultural process aimed at bringing about change in the life style of Dalits, it had important structural ramifications in that protest, orientation and counter-mobilization were necessary attributes of Sanskritisation movements as the Dalits often did so in a spirit of recalcitrance and the upper caste invariably opposed such attempts.

To adopt the values that promote the aspirations of an atomised individual in a civil society, 'Dalit Mobility', has been used in the process of Sanskritization, as a model. If Dalits in Karnataka fail in their achievement of imitation of the Sanskritization model of upper mobility, they then suffer from Relative Deprivation, because at social levels their attempt to overcome this Relative Deprivation is restricted by upper-caste group, whom they cite as a Reference Group existing mostly in a pre-civil social situation. At another level, the articulation of Relative Deprivation among the educated Dalits might take place when compared to westernised high caste.

Taking a cue from Gramsci, Ranjit Guha, tries to understand this consciousness of the insurgent peasantry in colonial India. He says,

“ Sanskritising movements among the lower castes to upgrade themselves by adopting the rituals and religious idioms of their higher castes were resisted by the latter and generated much social tension and even some times have led to violence”³¹.

This process involves new dilemmas and possibilities for the Dalit or anti-caste movement itself, the necessity of formulating new ways forward in regard to economic strategy, political structures and cultural interpretation. The argument that, the Dalit movement in particular and anti-caste movement in general should be seen as ‘value-oriented’ or ‘anti-systemic movement’. These movement have been seen basically as reformist by the dominant left intellectual trends in India, while academic social sciences in general have focussed their efforts on understanding caste as a structure without dealing with the movement in Karnataka. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a framework for the analysis of all Social Movement in the colonial period as well as recent movements in Karnataka.

The studies understanding Dalit movement in Karnataka in terms of Relative Deprivation and Social Mobility helped to reveal the role of castes and inherited status that have for long influenced the monopolising of the available jobs by the upper castes which viewed caste mobility as dangerous and disruptive of the social fabric. These studies establishing a connection between the Dalit movement in Karnataka and the above concepts are in bringing out the latent

³¹ This is borne out by Ambedkar’s Chowdary Tank Movement at Mahad in 1927 and temple entry movement in 1929 at Nashik.

contradiction of socio-economic and political nature. Moreover, such studies also reveal that Relative Deprivation leading to socio-economic and political mobility has a democratising impact on the socio-economic, political and bureaucratic structure of India.

Studies linking Relative Deprivation and Social Mobility with the Dalit movement in Karnataka assume importance at least for tactical and strategical reason, especially when the studies of these movements are denied their legitimate place in the academic world and are considered to be the deviations from the mainstream and irrelevant in the Indian context. T.K. Oommen, while criticising this approach as historical, argued that,

“The study of social movements should take into account the historicity, the elements of social structure and the future vision of the society in which they originate and operate and it is the dialects between these which provide the focal point for the analysis of social movements”.

However, in the present scenario, there are three major developments:

1. The marginalisation of the rural Dalits.
2. Hinduisation of Dalit masses.
3. The growing crisis of the Indian welfare state.

It's to be questioning the theoretical validity of Relative Deprivation both as a conceptualisation and as a form of consciousness. Concepts of Relative Deprivation and also Social Mobility are quite inadequate to capture the reality at the theoretical level.

In the rural areas where the upper castes/class forces are committing brutal atrocities on the Dalits and when the State's

response is either callous or repressive, Dalits do not feel the sense of Relative Deprivation but of total alienation and exclusion. They feel the threat of physical liquidation. Moreover, it is this perception of total exclusion from the developmental processes that forces Dalits to protest in the most militant way ranging from radical reaction to physical retaliation in self-defence³².

Review of the Literature:

There are a few books dealing with the Dalit movement in Karnataka. In the recent years some scholars have taken interest in the subject. This is also due to the failure of the Dalit Sangarash Samiti, to establish itself as a strong organization.

Some of the books on the social status such as, "Challenging Untouchability – Dalit Initiative and experience from Karnataka", eds., Simon R. Charsley and G.K. Karanath. It is the first comprehensive work on the social status of the Dalits in Karnataka. In this book, the authors, describe the status of rural 'Untouchable' castes and study their effort to challenge the humiliations they face. It reveals the vitality of Dalit movements and the contribution made to reshape the Indian society. By focussing, within a theoretical and comparative framework, on a series of contrasting communities drawn from different regions of Karnataka.

"Social Movements in India", eds., by M.S.A.Rao,. This book evaluates the various Social Movements in different parts of the country, like Peasant, Backward Classes, Tribal and women's. It provides the theoretical and conceptual framework for analysing diverse social movements in India.

³² Runciman, 1966: *The Relative Deprivation*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, p.9.

“Caste, Class and Education; Politics of the competition Fee phenomenon in Karnataka”, by Rekha Kaul. It consist with the major phenomenas of the society and struggle of weaker sections for education and competition for political and social identity.

In the book, entitled, “The Flaming Feet: A Study of Dalit Movement in India”. D.R.Nagaraj, is essentially a work on the Dalit Movement in Karnataka, since the Dalit movements all over the country have engaged themselves with a great deal of common themes and issues. This explains the method of placing Dalit works of art and cultural problems of Dalit writings and the idea of a common humanity.

In “Dalit and the Democratic Revolution: Ambedkar and Dalit movement in Colonial India”, by Gail Omvedt, describes the history of Dalit movements in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra in the colonial period. It mainly focusses on the anti-caste movements which has been the central democratic movement in Indian society and comprised with strong Non-Brahmin movements in various parts of these states.

There are a very few books in Kannada. They are the works of the DSS activists. Some of the books are, “Chaluvaligalu-Barahagalu”, Collection of article by Prof.B. Krishnappa,.

In this book, the author edited various articles by the Dalit activists, which helps in understanding the emergence of Dalit movement, depicting the exploitation on Dalit women and Dalit leadership in the Movements.

The book entitled, “Hindulida vargagalu Mattu Dalita Chaluvaligalu- A study of Backward Classes and Dalit Movements”

by Prof.Lakshman Telagavi, is concerned with the movements of Backward Class and Dalits. It deals with caste as become obstacle of the nation for its development, and it talks about those exploited class, which is separated economically, educationally, differentiated and depressed. And their movements in India and especially the struggle in various districts in Karnataka.

Muttisikondavaru-A Collection of Article on Dr.B.M.Tippeswamy and Dalit Culture”, eds ,by B.V.Veerabhadrappe and B.T.Jahnavi. Here the authors, introduce the life of Backward Class people who were socially, economically, and culturally suppressed. And also it contains various articles on Dalit Movement.

“Janakala Mela 1991”,eds.Prof.B.K. Krishnappa.

This Janakala Mela 1991 which has been published by Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti in Bangalore on the occassion of the birth anniversary of Dr.Ambedkar. It consist of the movements led by the D.S.S., against the atrocities on Dalits in various parts of Karnataka and also contains reports and articles on Ambedkar and D.S.S.

“Dalit Movement-An Overview” Published by Latha Munivenkatappa, The author, gives an overview of Dalit movement in Karnataka, which includes Dalit associations, the exploitations on Dalits, political stand of Dalit Sangharsh Samiti and various leadership role in Dalit movement.

In the book, R.Gopal Swamy Iyer, “A Life History”, by Dr.G.Gopal, gives a brief history of social, economic, cultural, educational and political life of the ‘Untouchables’ in the Princely Mysore State.

Hypothesis:

The study shows that the D.S.S., has not been able to establish itself as a strong organization and capable of leading an anti-caste movement in Karnataka State. The reasons lie in lack of proper organization, poor leadership and clear-cut goals. It also reflects a lack of clear self-identity among Dalits in Karnataka.

Methodology:

The study is of analytical nature. This study is mainly based on secondary sources available about the Dalit movement in Karnataka. Effort have been made to use primary materials on 'DSS', available in its organizational headquarters. It includes Articles from Journals, News Papers and some electronic sources.

Chapterisation:

In the first chapter, Introduction, explains the historical reasons as to why the Scheduled Castes even today remain the weakest of Hindu social system and struggle hard to achieve the social, economic and educational status in India.

The Second chapter, Dalit movement in Karnataka: A Historical Background, deals with the various movements such as, Veerashiava movement, Non-Brahmin movement and Harijan movement led in different parts of the Mysore Princely State in colonial period.

The Third chapter, Emergence of Dalit Consciousness: After Independence in Karnataka, it witness many movement led by Dalit leaders. This chapter analyses the factors underlying the rise of the Dalit movement in post-independence period in Karnataka State, which led to the emergence of the Dalit Sangarash Samiti.

In the Fourth chapter, explains the D.S.S., as the representative organizations of the Depressed Classes of Karnataka and also analyses the its organizational structure, identity and political dynamics in Karnataka, in its fight for social justice.

At the last part of the thesis, Conclusion explains the reasons for the failure of the Dalit movement in Karnataka.

CHAPTER- 2

DALIT MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Dalit movement in Karnataka is characterised by a long and gradual social progression. Some modern historical processes and a few medieval upheavals were responsible for bringing about a change in the sublime and sensitive attitude of the Dalits in the Karnataka State.

The Dalit movement in Karnataka was concerned about the spiritual and cultural equality advocated by the Hindu and Muslim saints like Kabir, Ravidas, Chokamela, Chaitnaya, Basaveswara and others during the Bhakti (devotion) movement of the medieval period. Under the British colonial era, the Dalit movement focussed on the question of separate identity and the political rights for the Dalit. In this period the Dalit and Non-Brahman movement was mainly centred around the solidarity and the visions of their liberation. There were various organisations, in South India, viz., Adi-Dravida Mahajan Sabha (1890), Adi-Andhra Mahajan Sabha (1917), Adi-Keralatharan Sangham (1927) and Adi-Karnataka Sangha (1930), which influenced the Dalit movement in Karnataka in various part of the state.

The Dalit movement brought about awareness, this consciousness helped them in realising two facts. The Dalits understood they were the original inhabitant dwellers of the land, and that the Hindu hierachical social order established on the basis of the caste system was responsible for their low status. So, it became important for the Dalits in Karnataka, to regain their original status.

For this they not only rejected caste, but also the Hindu religion as well. The Karnataka state came into existence with the linguistic re-organisation of the state in 1956. The some areas form the earlier Bombay Presidency, Mysore State, Hyderabad State and Madras Presidency were fused to form the Karnataka state. The Dalit movement in Karnataka during the colonial period is the sum of different movements at various stages in those different regions.

The Dalit movement in Karnataka has to be studied in the backdrop of:

1. Virasaiva Movement of the 12th century A.D.; This movement led by Basaveswara, who revolted against caste untouchability and Brahmanical domination. This led to an separate caste identity, which still exist even today as Lingayats and established a religious identity as 'Virasaiva Dharma'.
2. Non-Brahmin movement: 1860-1930: This period which mainly deals with the Non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka, which emerged due to the overwhelming proportion of Tamil in the working class in the regions and the dominant status of Non-Brahmin caste like Lingayats and Vokkaligas
3. Harijan movement: 1930-1947: During this period, there was a 'Harijan movement' in Bombay-Karnataka presidency, led by Gandhi which took shape after the Poona Pact. The influence of Dr. Ambedkar was also felt in some parts of this region.

VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT:

Like Guru Nanak in the North, Basava in the South followed the path of universal humanism, based on harmonious human relations and social progress. But it is most important to note the basic

differences between the historical reasons to lead their socio-religious movement.

During the medieval period, North India was ridden by Hindu-Muslim conflict, South India witnessed equally sharp conflict between the Divjas and the Shudras. The Dvijas in North India looked down upon the Muslims as melechhas (obnoxious aliens), while the twice-born in the South kept the Shudras at a distance as the polluted. The common thread in the practice of Dvijas in North India and South India was the spirit of exclusivism they tried to maintain.

As a consequence of this development, in the 11th century A.D., South India was a deeply divided and polarized society between the twice-born and the Shudras. One far reaching social consequence of this was that they could continue with impunity and perpetuated a social order under which the Dvijas stressed on physical distance from shudras to preserve their ritual purity as well as for their material advantages. The Dalits in Karnataka, were the silent sufferers, confident that they were equal in the eyes of God, the impetus of this belief was drawn from what is known as 'Kalyan Kranti' or 'Kalayan Revolution' led by Basaveshwara in the 12th century A.D., who revolted against caste, untouchability and Brahminical domination. It was, of course, a second trenchant attack after Buddha and Mahaveera.

Basically, Basaveshwara was a Brahmin by caste, but did not behave in caste dimensions. He was a founder of Virasaiva movement and was mainly instrumental in popularising it in the Kannada region of South India. Under Basava's leadership Virasaiva movement became articulate and assumed a definite shape by 1141 A.D. and gathered strength and momentum at Kalyana after 1162 A.D. Its adherents are

variously called as Virasaivas¹, Lingayats², Lingavatas, Lingangis, and Sivabhakatas or Sivachars.

Today, Lingayats or Virasaivas are found throughout the state of Karnataka, where they form the largest single ethnic group and also in some of the districts or neighbouring States of, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Lingayats are concentrated in the Bombay-Karnataka area, Hyderabad-Karnataka area and the border district of the old Princely Mysore State. But more concentration is found in the district of Dharwar, Bijapur and Belagum.

In assessing the dynamics and structure of the Virasaiva movement, there are two aspects which shall explain the various facets of this movement:

1. The organisational frame work and the integrating forces which have sustained the movement.
2. The changing nature of the organisational framework³.

The Virasaiva movement, emerged in opposition to the social ethos of Brahmin prior to its emergence, Brahmanic Hinduism came to be hemmed in by the caste and ritual systems. Social intercourse among the castes and classes were highly restricted. It was against these blatant evils that Basaveswara reacted vehemently. Basaveswara protested and waged a relentless crusade against the social evils perpetuated by the Brahmins. The preamble of the movement was dominated by the ideology of egalitarianism and democracy, which aimed at establishing a society devoid of caste or class.

¹ Interpretations of the term 'Virasaiva' are to be found in religious works like Siddhanat Sikahmani and Kriyasara.

² The term 'Lingayat', is an anglicized form of Lingavant. The Lingayats derive their name from the Sanskrit word 'Linga' (the Phallic emblem) with the suffix 'Ayat' which means the people who bear the 'Linga' habitually.

³ Arun.P.Bali: "*Organization of the Virasaiva Movement: An analysis in the sect-church framework*", New Delhi, Manohar Publications, 2000, edit., by M.S.A.Rao, 'Social Movements in India', p.234.

Basaveshwara ridiculed the discrimination based on caste and untouchability. The main objective of his movement was to establish a new relationship amongst men and also with that of God and religion. It was to be based on the universal values of love, compassion and brotherhood. Thus he wanted to achieve through a new moral order of his own, which later on came to be known as 'Virashaiva Dharma'.

Basaveshwara's main concern was with social and religious reforms. After a long thought out enlightenment he declared a spiritual war against every aspect of Hinduism, that was oppressive in nature. He strongly advocated social integration and the total mobilisation of the caste system, in the process through which by his writings. He proclaimed an egalitarian ideology based on path of devotion and on equal access to spiritual goods by using the vernacular language, rather than Sanskrit in establishing communication with God, decried the excess of rituals and accorded equal rights of worship to men and women, he abolished all notions of pollution and emphasized works as the means of liberation.

Basaveshwara's becoming the chief-minister and treasurer of King Bijjala II, the Kalachuri king accelerated the Virashaiva movement. He proclaimed that all those who submitted to Kudalasangama are equal, irrespective of sex, caste and class, they are called as Shivasaranas. Basava and his followers worked again within the broad framework of Hinduism, Shiva, one of the Hindu Trinity, was given an exalted place. Jangamas replaced the Brahmin priests. The movement had considerable appeal and impact, on large number of people drawn from different social strata, particularly low castes, embraced Virashaivism. The royal patronage and political positions which Basava enjoyed under Bijjala, the Jain king, was more than

helpful in spreading the faith.

Basaveswara, established the Anubhava Mantappa (the house of learned), at Kalyana, a colloquim to discuss the various theological mystics and philosophical aspects of Virasaivism. The deliberations and discussions at the Anubhava Mantappa were conducted under the spiritual guidance of Allama Prabhu and carried on in Kannada, the idiom of the common man, which is the essence of these deliberations and spiritual encounters are contained in the “Sunyasampadane”⁴.

In his Anubhavamantappa (the house of learned), Basaveshwara gave representation to lower castes, viz., Madivala Machayya, Ambigara Choudayya, Medar Ketayya, Madara Chennayya, Samagare Haralayya. Even the women from the oppressed castes also participated in the movement viz., Kottanada Somavva, Amuge Rayamma and Adyakki Laxmavva. He strongly believed that Untouchability can be abolished only through inter-caste marriages, having this ideology, Basava arranged an marriage between a son of Samagare Haralayya (an Untouchable) and the daughter of Madhuvayya (a Brahmin). This orthodox element poisoned the ears of Bijjala (king) against Basaveshwara, Haralayya and Madhuvayya. Bijjala ordered that the eyes of Haralayya and Madhuvayya be plucked out and were then tied to the legs of an elephant and paraded in a broad day light through the town. The incident created a great social tension in Kalyana, where Basava became annoyed with the atrocious administration and with disgust ended his life by jumping into a tributary of river Krishna, now known as ‘Kudala Sangama’.

Following his death, there was a major set back to the movement, as it was now deprived of its guiding force. Under the

⁴ This is a book, contains the deliberations and debates held in Anubhavamantappa.

leadership, of Chennabasava⁵, a disciple of Basaveswara, the movement was able to consolidate its position to a great extent, which enriched the philosophy and theology of the movement is credited with having systematized the metaphysics of Virasaivism. Basaveswara's movement was truly great with its simple virtues of secular humanism. Indeed, it was the bed-rock for subsequent social reform movements in Karnataka, where the Virasaivism spread throughout the North-West Mysore and within sixty years after the death of Basaveswara, i.e., between 1168 A.D. to 1228 A.D., it was embraced from Ulavi (near Goa) to Sholapur and from Balehalli or Balehonnur (Koppa Taluka) to Sivaganga (Nelamangala Taluka).

The Virasaiva movement exhibited tendencies of change and moved away from its original programmatic aims towards eventual denominational status and manifested into a dominant social order which it had originally repudiated. This movement has not only brought an reformatory changes in the religious sphere and social ethics, but also transformatory changes. The new social ethic led to a diversification of occupation and modernisation. Today, Virasaivas or Lingayats occupy first place in terms of preponderant numbers in Karantaka. There are several occupational groups which occupy distinct place in the hierarchy. For though Basava was upright in condemning caste difference, untouchability and so forth, the various groups which converted to Virsaivism succeeded in retaining occupational and caste consciousness for all social intercourse. Infact, the Virasiava movement was amorphous and poorly organized at first, but ultimately it evolved to a sustaining ideology, a sense of *esprit de*

⁵ Lingayat traditions represent Basaveswara as having first designated his sister's son, Chennabasava, as his spiritual heir.

corps and a high degree of dedication.

But, unfortunately, his legacy is fulfilled neither by Dalits nor the 'Virashaiva movement'. In this phase the movement was small, spontaneous and anti-establishment (anti-Brahminical) in its orientation. As a result, the movement lost its spirit, with the death of Basaveshwara the great social reformer and a revolutionary. In the process, the 'Untouchables' were put into the periphery of the Virashaiva movement.

NON- BRAHMAN MOVEMENT, 1860-1930:

As earlier mentioned, the Dalit movement in Karnataka, was concerned much about removing the evils of the caste system that existed. Though, earlier there was Virashaiva movement, but the Dalits received more attention in the course of Non-Brahmin movement than during the Veerashaiva movement in the Princely Mysore State.

In the decade of the 1920s, the Dalits emerged as a consciously, organized force in the Bombay presidency, Madras presidency and even in some parts of regions of the Mysore State. Though much of the ground for Dalit advancement had been laid earlier in terms of educational and social activities, where the Dalit consciousness took the real roots among the Dalits in general and in particular the dominant castes like Lingayats and Vokkaligas.

The social movement which took place among Dalits can be treated as a part of the broader part of the Backward Classes movement in Karnataka which began during British colonial administration in 19th century. It was during the British rule that India became a single political entity. British rule set in motion economic forces which upset the traditional hierarchy and increased economic mobility and led to

increased social mobility. The policy pursued by the British government in India by giving preferences to low caste was in accord with imperial interests. Though, the Dalits did not perceive the British ruler, to be exploitative by their colonial policies. For them upper castes and land lords in South India were their direct exploiters, hence freedom for India had no meaning for them. Generally, the upper castes were land lords and the Dalits were landless in colonial South India. No doubt, the colonial state was coercive, but the state also had to accommodate the opposition. The upper caste at first entered into the British revenue administration and later made a place for themselves in politics.

Under the broader scope of the term 'Modernisation' Karnataka did not escape the ambivalent changes sweeping across the country during the closing years of the 19th century and the early 20th century, where the process of modernisation was very slow and sluggish in Karnataka⁶. In Karnataka, there were other significant movements like, Backward Classes movement, which coincided with the beginning of the 'Non-Brahmin Movement', which was started in the then Princely State of Mysore from 1917. It also marked the decline of Brahmin power in the erstwhile Princely Mysore State, with the resignation of Sir.M. Viveshwarya from the 'Diwanship'.

In 1918, a delgation of Non-Brahmin leaders met His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore State to protest against the discrimination practised against Non-Brahman. In 1919, a committee headed by Sir Leslie Miller, appointed by Maharaja of Mysore to go in to the problems of the Non-Brahmin in the same year, the report was

⁶ Manhor Yadav, 1998: "*Career of Dalit Movement in Karnataka*", Journal of Social and Economic Development, Vol.I, No.I, Jan-June, P.109.

presented for discussion in the Representative Assembly. On the basis of this report, the Government passed an order on the recommendation of the Miller Committee Report for equitable 'communal representation', in the public services. This had further effect of encouraging the Non-Brahmin movement.

The Non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka was spearheaded by the Vokkaligas and Lingayats which were the two dominant caste in the princely Mysore state. Infact, the Vokkaligas and Lingayats constituted a number of distinct castes before 1900. But the 1901 census, listed them as single caste without subdivision where as in the social context the different cultivating castes forming the Vokkaligas category had little in common and the Lingayats had a common religious background of Virasaivism. However, this categorization provided the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement with a significant base for collective mobilization. The emergence of this category led to the begining of caste association for effective mobilization. Thus, the Lingayats established the Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association in 1905 and in 1906, the Vokkaligas formed the Vokkaligara Sangha. The Non-Brahmin, connection provided them with a common platform and held this group together as long as the Brahmin dominance existed.

Anti-caste movements, in particular the broad Non-Brahmins of South India, were generally anti-feudal. Just as the 'Kisan Movement' could generate a 'United Front' allying both peasants and labourers against the land lords, so the more radical Non-Brahmin movement could emerge as an alliance of Shudras and Ati-Shudras against the high castes. For the large sections of peasants and artisan masses, their oppression was in terms of caste as well as class, and as some educated

sections began to develop within each jati took leadership both in more conservative forms of organisations (caste associations which essentially accepted the caste hierarchy but sought to use caste identity to compete for high position with it) as well as in more radical challenges to the system itself.

Muslims, Brahmins, Lingayats and Vokkaligas have enjoyed considerable political power in Mysore State, where all these castes have been able to secure socio-economic, educational and political status for themselves.

After the British victory over Tippu Sultan, the state had been restored to its earlier Hindu rulers, the 'Wodeyars' who had originated from the low castes which claimed 'Urasu' descent. From 1761 to 1799, Muslims were in power, whereas, the Brahmins wielded it from 1799 up to the second decade of the 20th century.

In 1830's, there was a revolt in the northern part of the State by its turbulent feudatories, the Poligars. After 1861, a reformist governor used state funds for restoring irrigation works, repairing tanks, giving incentives to coffee production and building of a railway station. Even so, the exploitation of the peasantry through commercial agriculture and high revenue demands in cash resulted in one million dead in a famine in 1876-78⁷.

On May 31st, 1893, Khetri Maharaj Rudra Guddi, who went to Chicago Conference, wrote a letter from America to Ala Singh Permual,

“ Let all Dalits, Backwards and Untouchable gather together and build an institution,----- then certainly, Mysore will become

⁷ Nadkarni, M.V., 1987 : “*Farmer's Movements in India*”, Ahmedabad, Allied Publishers, pp. 19-22.

an central place for the upliftment of Untouchables”⁸.

Swami Vivekananda, the revolutionary saint of India, appealed in his letter to Maharaja Chamaraj Wodeyar of Mysore on 23rd June 1894,

“ The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education to develop their individuality. That is the great task between our people and princes. Priest and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries and at last the poor in India, have forgotten that they are human beings. They are to be given ideas, their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them and then they will work out their own salvation”⁹.

On the one hand a smothering paternalism while on the other was an economic development which managed to avoid danger or major social turmoil. A certain amount of industrialization took place in Mysore, with some spectacular schemes after 1900, including electricity, the railways, textile mills and a major iron and steel works. Most of this was centered in Bangalore, with only three other towns involved, in K.G.F., Bhadravathi and Mandya. The overwhelming proportion of the working class was Tamil and though many of these were Dalits and formed a base for a radical movement, there was a glaring social gap between them and the Kannada Dalits, little linkages with the Karnataka rural areas.

As a result of this movement the dominant Non-Brahmin caste like Lingayats and Vokkaligas derived substantial benefits. Though, the untouchables were part of the Non-Brahmin Movement

⁸ R.Gopal Swamy Iyer, 1994: “*A Life History*”, writtern and published by Dr.G.Gopal, Bangalore, p.2. (All Kannada Literature translated by ‘Me’).

⁹ Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, New Delhi, 1950, p. 363.

they were kept away from power and resultant by these two castes or groups. However, without resorting to a direct attack against the Brahmins, each Non-Brahmins caste in its own way was trying to mobilise itself towards achieving a higher stature in socio-cultural life. The Non-Brahmin castes like Lingayats, rejected the Hindu framework and attempted to attain social prestige and status within the Lingayats framework. It was not, sanskritization, but a secessionist process through which they were trying to mobilise respect for themselves and prove that they were superior and distinct. On the other hand, the Brahmins by taking to English education were already dominating the administration of the Princely Mysore State, whereas Lingayats and Vokkaligas were lagging behind in education, particularly in english education. The following table shows the literacy percentage among Brahmins, Lingayats and Vokkaligas, the three dominant groups of the Mysore State:

Table: 2.1

Year	Brahmins		Lingayats		Vokkaligas	
	Literacy	English Literacy	Literacy	English Literacy	Literacy	English Literacy
1901	68.8%	12.2%	14.1%	0.13%	4.0%	0.07%
1911	70.5%	15.6%	77.7%	0.22%	6.2%	0.12%
1921	70.7%	24.0%	20.3%	0.63%	7.4%	0.24%
1931	78.3%	33.9%	30.1%	1.43%	12.2%	0.53%
1941	87.1%	36.2%	32.6%	2.34%	15.2%	1.09%

Source: James Manor, "Political Change in an Indian State", Mysore, 1917-1955, p.32.

In 1905, there was an emergence of caste associations such as, the Virasaiva Mahasabha, the Vokkaligas Association, the Adi-Dravida

Abhi-Vruddhi Sangha, the Kuruba Association and Central Muslim Association, where these associations began to contest Brahmin dominance in the Mysore administration¹⁰. In 1918, the Miller Commission, submitted a report to the Government of Mysore on the problem of the Non-Brahmin and the in the year 1919, the Mysore Government accepted and issued a report which gave representation to the 'Backward Castes', but generally ignored the Dalits. In a related development, a Praja Mitra Mandal, inspired by the Madras Non-Brahmin movement, represented the interests of an alliance of Non-Brahmin (primarily Lingayats and Vokkaligas) and Muslims. The decade of the 1920s, was dominated politically by the Brahmin and Non-Brahmin conflict in Mysore State, but this was elite based with no rural connection, no effort at mass organization, only with little articulation of a broad ideology.

In each linguistic region there were a few castes which dominated the social, political and economic life of the region. The Lingayats were dominant in the North Karnataka, Hyderabad Karnataka. Vokkaligas and Brahmins were dominant in the old Mysore region. However, there is no reason to assume that this Brahmin activity had only symbolic political significance. A forward looking strategy were could easily see that, against the Lingayats and Vokkaligas (who were to be 20% and 13-14% respectively in the united Karnataka state), the Dalits who were 17-18% and other low castes was a natural strategic option¹¹.

The educational opportunities have been used more by these

¹⁰ D.S.Chandra Shekar, : "*Social Background of Mysore Politics: Some Insights*" (Kannada), angalore, Ankara, 1980, cited by V.Lakshminarayana report.

¹¹ Bjorn, Hettne, 1978: "*The Political Economy of Indirect Rule: Mysore 1881-1947*", New Delhi, Ambika Publications, p. 336.

dominant groups. The mere creation of an infrastructure contributes little towards the utilization of educational opportunities of all castes and sub-castes. Whatever, the little advancement in the field that has been achieved, it is shared by the dominant groups. Knowledge of English was the only criterion by which 'forward' castes were distinguished from 'backward' castes by the Miller Committee. The major advantage which Lingayats and Vokkaligas in political field enjoyed was the result of the Brahmins leaving villages in mid-19th century and migrating to urban areas for education and employment.

In 1904-1905, educationally some progress was made, there were 76 schools for Depressed Classes, 37 Government Schools, 36 Government Aided Mission Schools and three were Unaided¹². In 1915, there was a famous test case, in which the government ordered a school teacher in the Sringeri Jahagir to admit Untouchables, there was a protest from both caste Hindus and Muslims who withdrew their students, but C.R.Reddy, the then Inspector General of Education, prevailed upon the Maharaja to declare that education was everyone's right.

The social situation was so exploitative, that the Untouchables were not allowed to enter the schools. But the royal family was, sympathetic towards Untouchables, since they belonged to a backward castes 'Urasu'. The royal household, hence declared that,

“ No one shall be excluded from the public schools on the ground of caste”¹³,

As a result of this as many as 65 Panchama schools and

¹² Chitra, Shivkumar, 1982 : “*Education, Social Inequality and Social Change in Karnataka*”, New Delhi.

¹³ C.R. Reddy, 1922: “*Progress of Education in Mysore State: 1916-17 to 1921-22*”, Bangalore, pp. 70-71.

hostels were opened for the 'Untouchables'. The liberal Dewans like Seshadri Iyer helped the king to take up schemes for the Panchamas. But when the Princely State, took the initiative to integrate these schools with the general schools a storm of protest arose. The orthodox Hindus and the Muslims agitated and withdrew their children from the schools.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Non-Brahmins mustered enough strength to influence the Princely authorities of Mysore state. Even the family members of Maharaja of Mysore came forward to support persons like M.Basavaiah, K.H.Ramaiah and Yajaman Veerabasappa, to organize the Non-Brahmin Movement. It was C.R.Reddy, an ardent follower of Phule gave a real momentum to the movement by attempting to bring various Non-Brahmin interests under a single banner and founded the 'Praja Mitra Mandali', in the year 1917. Though the movement began with the genuine objective of developing the backward castes, it hardly worked for that goals. On the contrary, in practice its goals were more opportunistic and directed towards acquiring positions in the Princely State of Mysore.

“ one could describe it as a rat race to join the ranks of clerkdom”¹⁴.

The Praja Mitra Mandali, kept the Panchama problems out of its concern. But C.R.Reddy, did not budge, he stood by the legitimate rights of the Panchamas. The Panchamas, organized and established the 'Adi-Dravid Abhivruddhi Sangh', as early as 1906, to represent their problems to the Princely State, it was led by a Bangalore based Dalit representative for over three decades.

A committee conducted by Maharaja Wodeyar, established an

¹⁴ Nagraj, D.R. : "Flaming Feet: A Study of the Dalit Movement in Karnataka", Bangalore, p.5.

“Civil and Social Progress”, in Mysore, 1916. Chairman Shri. K.V.Puttanna Chett and members like M.Chennagaiah Chett, V.N. Narasamaiah Iyengar and others implemented various programmes for the development of education and social welfare among the Panchamas.

According to the Dewan of Mysore Sri.M.Viveshwaraya in his speech, "education should reach especially for these Depressed Classes and also institution should be established for them"¹⁵.

After this conference, “Depressed Classes Mission”, was established in Mysore. Panchamas, were allowed into schools by 1919, when order was generalized, it recieved protests, inspite of protests the Maharaja stood firm in his decision. By 1920’s a small educated section, of the Panchamas made was making a limited entry into government services and jobs. Below the following table shows the communal representation in the government services and jobs:

Table: 2.2

Caste/ Community	Population		Total Literate		Literate in English		Persons Employed in Govt. Services	
	Actual	Percent	Actual	Percent	Actual	percent	Actual	percent
Brahmins	295.466	4.03	174.838	18.31	66.285	38.45	11.689	43.75
Beda	329.551	4.50	15.283	1.60	871	0.57	168	0.63
Kuruba	466.051	6.36	24.017	2.51	1.716	0.99	395	1.48
Lingyat	835.557	11.40	156.718	16.40	10.923	6.33	2.481	9.28
Vokkaliga	1,474.498	20.12	124,273	13.01	9.175	5.32	1.622	6.07
Other Caste Hindus	1,373.119	18.73	151,359	15.85	13,883	8.05	2,501	9.36
Depressed Classes	1,405.067	19.17	40.462	4.24	5.297	3.07	844	3.16
Muslims	485.230	6.62	114.099	11.95	14.453	8.38	3.041	11.40
Other Community	11.569	0.16	1.220	0.13	676	0.39	14	0.05

Source: Mysore Representative Assembly Proceedings of the Year, 1920.

¹⁵ Mysore Representative Assembly Proceedings, 1920.

On 12th June, 1905, at Poona, "The Servants of India Society and Scheduled Castes", was unique in its mission and in its spirit of dedication, was founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. It was founded to render service to Scheduled Castes, the tribals on the plains and on the hills. It had a galaxy of distinguished people rendering dedicated service. The society took up the elevation of the Scheduled Castes as one of its aims as explained by its founder at the Dharwar Social Conference¹⁶. It brought out Periodical Magazines, viz., (a) Servants of India. (b) Social Reformer.

In the editorials and articles of the magazines, it appealed to the Government of Madras, to render the social reforms concerning the Scheduled Castes more effectively. The society also conducted lectures and educated the poor people through slides about public health, temperance and helped them to form co-operative societies for housing purposes, especially in Madras Presidency areas of the present Karnataka state.

The Madras branch of the Mangalore Depressed Class Mission Society, started by K.Ranga Rao, maintained schools in Madras city with the support of the Servants of India Society, Madras. In 1909, seeing their progress in Mangalore, V.Subramaniya Iyer of Hosur village appealed to Government to grant 41 cents of land for the Scheduled Castes school in Nammaneri village in North Arcot district. Thus the activities of the Depressed Class Mission Society of Mangalore were extended to Madras.

During the British period, of the socio-economic, political and educational conditions of the 'Untouchables' living in the Bombay-

¹⁶ Servants of India Society, Annual Report, 1912.

Karnataka Presidency, of were the same as the Panchamas in the Old Mysore area, these Depressed Classes live like slaves and serfs. The Bombay Gazetteer clearly indicated that,

“They are village servants, watchmen, boundary markers,escritoires, removers of dead animals and drummers, their houses are small either tilled or thatched and with wattle and daub halls. The Untouchables were reduced to the lowest level of existence by the affluent classes under whom they continuously lived”¹⁷.

The, Director of Public Instruction of Bombay stated that,

“ Low caste boys as a general rule are dirty and offensive in their persons. It would not be fair to other children to compel them to receive such people by their side”¹⁸.

The British regime too, in its own manner, contributed to their awakening, in the immediate past, beginning from the twenties, it can be divided into:

1. Era of struggle for socio-political rights. (1860-1920).
2. Era of fractured communities through social mobility and political participation.(1920-1947).

Only during the freedom movement these castes were taught and they learnt to think in terms of socio-political awakening based on social mobility.

The Scheduled Castes in India were not recognized politically either by Indians or by Britishers until Dr. Ambedkar took active part in politics. For the first time in Indian history Dr. Ambedkar, the highly learned and determined champion of the Depressed Classes,

¹⁷ Belgaum Gazetteer, Government of Bombay Publications, 1884, p.193.

¹⁸ Quoted in A.G.Mudbidri,1980: “Dharwad: A Study in Urban History”, Ph.D Thesis, Karnataka niversity, p.232.

represented the Scheduled Castes at the First Round Table Conference in England, where he upheld and demanded political rights for the 'Untouchables' and pressed the British Government to give adequate representation to 'Untouchables' in the field of education, administration and politics. A new era dawned in the life of millions of Untouchables under the bold leadership of Dr. Ambedkar in Indian politics. In 1932, again he attended the Second Round Table Conference in England along with Rao Bahadur R. Srinivas and others, to put forth the grievances of the 'Untouchables' before the British Government. Ambedkar demanded separate electorates for the 'Untouchables', Gandhiji opposed it and went on fast, claiming that Harijan are a part and parcel of the Hindu population and hence they, must not be given separate electorates as given to Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, etc. Gandhiji's fast and Ambedkar's reaction to it created political consciousness among all other castes, particularly the 'Untouchable' in India, particularly in Karnataka, who became more conscious about their political rights.

Mr. Chennigaramaiah, a member of the Depressed Class in Mysore State, strongly criticized the joint electorate system as well as the fast of Gandhiji and said,

"It is very difficult for a Harijan candidate to get returned by election through joint electorate, unless he sacrificed the interests of his own community and joined some other party which was likely to catch the votes of the majority of the electorates and in such an electorate and that it was, moreover, quite impossible for 'an Untouchable', to approach others,

especially the Caste Hindu and canvas for their votes”¹⁹.

And Mr. Chennigaramaiah demanded that, ‘Separate Electorates’ be created for Untouchables at least for two terms. The Committee consisting of caste Hindus appreciated the points raised by R. Chennigaramaiah, but opposed the ‘Separate Electorate’. They argued,

“There was no reason whatever for adopting such electorates in the case of Depressed Classes who are neither different nor distinct from the Hindu stock, also that a system of electorates would not, in the circumstances be conducive to the interests of the Depressed Classes themselves, as it would tend a further widening of the cleavage between those classes and Caste Hindus, instead of bringing the two together into closer union”.

This was a widespread ferment of the name and image of Ambedkar, the great leader of ‘Untouchables’, who is capable of taking his community to the awakening, in the era of nationalist struggle and of independence itself are everywhere. The new socio-economic and political opportunities encouraged a movement upwards from their inferior positions. Different regions of the country have mobilized politically and through this, they have united in their attempt to better their conditions in each of these castes, however, is not at all cohesive.

Ambedkar's, influence was felt in the villages and towns of the bordering districts of Northern Karnataka. He held important meetings in Nippani, Chikkodi, Bedkihal, Bagalkot, Bidar and Gulbarga. His efforts were supported by leaders such as, Ingale, Varale, Karale and Suryavanshi who were in the forefront to support

19 D.S.Chandra Shekhar, 1983: “*Social Background of Mysore Politics:Some Insights*” (Kannada), Ankaara Bangalore, P.67.

and organise meetings for him.

The Non-Brahmin movement broadened the representation in government employment and politics and many Backward Castes entered into government services. Their representation in the gazetteer and non-gazetteer was nil. The Brahmins exploited this situation and mobilized the 'Untouchables' as a counter veiling force to the dominant Non-Brahmins in order to consolidate their own political position and not out any sympathy for 'Untouchables'.

Until 1916 there was no representation for the 'Untouchables' in the Assembly. But the Scheduled Castes during the 18th and until mid-19th century were like serfs whose main struggle was for survival. The stigma of Untouchability lack of urbanization and education made them to be the ruled or subject class. Politically they were unrecognized since education was the main avenue to enter politics. The political career was not open for the Untouchables because the representatives to the Assembly were elected or nominated on the basis of their occupation and possession of property. Table: 2.3, shows the occupational composition of the Representative Assembly 1896-1920, in Princely Mysore state:

Table: 2.3

Year	Merchants	Sahukars	Village Officers	Land Lords	Lawyers	Other Occupation	Total
1896	38	6	----	169	-----	90	303
1900	25	10	----	170	-----	61	226
1905	46	24	-----	134	-----	62	266
1910	35	10	71	112	17	25	270
1915	58	12	66	108	30	7	281
1920	51	13	47	103	28	29	271

Source: Mysore Representative Assembly Proceedings for respective years.

However, a committee was appointed in the year 1921 to recommend measures to give representation to various castes and people of different occupations. The Committee on Constitutional reforms suggested as follows:

“The strength of Representative Assembly will be raised from 274 to 300. Out of which 165 seats will be allotted to urban constituencies, 82 to rural constituencies, interests such as the University, Agriculture etc., including 11 seats for women and remaining 62 seats will be reserved for certain communities viz., Muslims 26, Depressed Classes 30, Indian Christians 5 and Europeans 1”²⁰.

The committee also recommended :

“All these seats will be filled by direct election from territorial constituencies”.

The 1921 Committee on Constitutional reforms also recommended that:

“The strength of the Council will be raised from 50 to 68 and 4 seats will be reserved for Depressed Classes”²¹.

Chikkahanumanthaiah and Cheenigaramiaah, were among the Kannada Dalits associated with the Adi-Jambava Sangha, with the support from Murgesh Pillai and Gopalswamy Iyer a Tamil Brahmin reformer, organised a ‘Political Conferences of Panchamas’ in 1920, where Ambedkar was invited. But Ambedkar could not attend the conference due to a State ban on his entry. Conferences were organised in 1923 and 1925 by the same group with M.C.Rajah attending. These

20 Abstract from the Recommendation of the Committee on Constitutional Reforms in Mysore, 1939, p.23.

21 Ibid., p.23.

conferences passed a resolution on using the Adi-Karnataka and Adi-Dravida terminology. In 1921, an Adi-Karnataka Sangha was registered with Gopalswamy Iyer as President and majority of their executives members demanded educational institutions, access to public tanks and temple entry²².

For the educational advancement of people of Bombay-Karnataka, Dr.Ambedkar had a great concern, by pressuring the Bombay Government to take steps for the 'Untouchables' of the region by summarizing the educational development of various classes of people and he had also inaugurated the 'Machagar Mahasang' at Dharwad in the year 1923.

On 10th and 11th April 1925, Dr.Ambedkar presided at the provincial Depressed Classes Conference held at Nippani (Belgaum district) and called upon the 'Untouchables', " to be ready for social reform". By 29th May 1928, a memorandum was submitted on behalf of the "Bahiskrita Hitakarni Sabha" and pressed for the political representation of the 'Untouchables' and the Non-Brahmins of Bombay-Karnataka²³. This movement got a tremendous social and political awareness among the Marathi speaking 'Untouchables' living in the border areas of Belgaum district. But the non-awakened Dalits of Mysore did not know who Ambedkar was.

HARIJAN MOVEMENT, 1930-1947:

The old Mysore State had the same broad trends of political organizations and development as other areas. In addition it also

²² Chandra Shekar, D.S.,1983 : "*Social Background of Mysore Politics: Some Insights*", Bangalore, Ankara, p.67.

²³ Ambedkar, B.R., Writings and Speeches, Vol. II, Government of Maharashtra Publications, Bombay, 1982, p.339.

witnessed a lower level of turbulence, organizations and ideological activity. Above all, the Non-Brahmin movement in the state was not a movement at all, but more a lobbying efforts of the Non-Brahmin castes which ignored Dalits interests and did not take up mass based issues or provide any ideology or any broad level sponsorship for Dalits organizational activity. The only Non-Brahmans who played vital roles in Dalit organizing were C.R.Reddy and Muruges Pillai, who were Non-Kannadigas.

From the 'Adi-Karnataka' movement of 1920s, to the Harijan activity of 1930s, the role of Brahman patronage was clear by providing leadership to the Dalit organizations as a strategic reaction to the threat of Non-Brahmin political domination. The Dalit got little from the limited Mysore type of Non-Brahmin movement, whereas Brahmans moved to fill the gap by offering a guided form of 'Harijan uplift' and ideology of integration.

As James Manor, describes,

“ Brahmans could not hope for power in competition with the numerous Non-Brahmin castes, so they contented themselves with, ‘ the theatre of politics’ in the satisfaction of being associated with a high castes of reformism”²⁴.

The ideological theme here did not go beyond the 'Panchama' identity, it was when 'anti-untouchability', issues defined as 'social issues', began to taken up from the end of the 1920s, by caste Hindu organizations, primarily Brahmin dominated ones like Mysore League²⁵ against untouchability and the Harijan Sevak Sangh. These

²⁴ Manor, James, : *“Political Change in an Indian State: Mysore 1917-1935”*, Delhi, p.13.

²⁵ A Joint organization of the Praja Paksh and Congressmen which pressed for an Anti-Untouchability Bill, between 1930 and 1935.

called for the rights of Dalit to use all temples, roads, public places and tanks, joined with support for limited economic demands and stressed internal reforms such cleanliness, giving up meat eating, drinking of alcohol and the propagation of a Brahmanical Hinduism.

In September 1932, when Gandhiji, started the All India Anti-Untouchability League, Ambedkar suggested that there should be a majority of 'Untouchables' in the League on its different committees. Further, Ambedkar viewed that the activities of the Anti-Untouchability League should be mainly directed to the economic, educational and social improvement of the Depressed Classes rather than to the problem of temple-entry and inter-dining. He urged, the League to launch a campaign for civil rights. Later on, the Anti-Untouchability League was renamed as 'Harijan Sevak Sangh', and Gandhiji started a weekly called 'Harijan'. The new name was intended, to give new identity to Untouchables and to impress on caste Hindus the need to give them a status and bring about their social amelioration.

The Harijan leadership under Gandhiji, created the politico-psychological factors that gave birth to a new kind of nationalist, i.e., political articulation, but there was a great deal of silence on social-cultural questions. Gandhiji's started from the problem of Untouchability which was a problem of the self, in this case the collective Hindu self. He saw the movement to eradicate Untouchability as a sacred ritual of self-purification. He wrote in 'Harijan' on 15th April, 1933,

“ The movement for the removal of Untouchability is one of self- purification”²⁶.

²⁶ Harijan, Vol.I, 1933.

The 'Harijan Movement', took shape immediately after the 'Poona Pact' and became a major national campaign from 1932-1936²⁷. The movement had basically three strands:

1. It was 'moral and spiritual uplift' through the Harijan Sevak Sangh.
2. It was legal reform.
3. Lastly, less noted in literature was the encouragement of 'nationalist' organization, most notably the All-India Depressed Class League or Akhil Bharatiya Dalit Jati Sangha founded in Kanpur on 16th -17th March, 1935.

Ambedkar opposed the League or Sangh on two points:

1. The goal of any organization working on the problems of the Dalits should not simply be the 'removal of Untouchability', but the eradication of Chaturvarna, the caste system itself.
2. Leadership, should be in the hands of Untouchables.

Dr. Ambedkar defined the problems in terms of building an independent political identity for Dalits in the structures of social, economic and political powers, whereas for Gandhiji it was purely a religious question, that too an internal one of Hinduism.

Gandhi's nation wide 'Harjan tour' between 7th Nov, 1933 to 2nd Aug, 1934, gave birth to widespread activity, in which Karnataka, especially Kannada speaking districts were in the forefront and soon branches were opened in Bijapur, Belgaum, Karwar, Coorg, Mangalore and Bellary with Hubli as the Headquarters²⁸. During his tour Gandhiji visited many Harijan colonies and appealed to the people to put an end to the practice of untouchability and to improve the lot of the

²⁷ Pradhan, A.C., : "*The Emergence of the Depressed Classes*", Bookland International, Delhi.
²⁸ Malappa, G.S., : "*History of the Freedom Movement in Karnataka*", Vol. II, Mysore, Government of Mysore.

Depressed Classes. A branch of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was started in Karnataka soon after his tour and Sardar Veerannagowda Patil became the State President²⁹.

A 'Mysore Report', given by T. Ramachandra in Gandhi's weekly 'Harijan' gives a picture of its typical activities:

1. Religious: 123 Harijan Bhajans were conducted by the workers of League. After the bhajans, talks were given on moral and spiritual upliftment.
2. Temperance and Sanitation: Bangalore Temperance Federation and Mysore State Red Cross Society, who supplied chairs, lantern slide and literatures, 49 lecturers were delivered. In the village of Tagadur, the workers of the Khadi centre and the Satyagraha Ashrama organized the sweeping of villagers and Harijan quarters.
3. Medical Relief: 950 Harijans were treated during the month in the Deena Seva Auryvedic Dispensary, which is grant of Rs.30, per month, by the League.

During 1930s, T. Ramachandra Rao, had started the movement for eradication of untouchability in Mysore district by strongly opposing the restriction on the 'Untouchables' in utilizing public tanks and wells, taking out processions in streets, securing the admissions to schools and entry into temples. He also established Satyagraha Ashrama at Tagadur during 1931 to bring about social equality.

The thrust is clear. On the one hand, bhajans, harikathas and exhortations against drinking alcohol, meat-eating, animal sacrifice, extravagant expenditure, the whole realm of a sanskritizing moral uplift. An important part of this was the adoption of the campaign

²⁹ A Hand Book of Karnataka, Gazetteer Department, Government of Karnataka, 2001, p.225.

against the 'Basavi' a form of 'prostitution', as Caste Hindu ladies, visited Harijan quarters in Bangalore and Mysore to lecture on the issue and two big village conferences were held in April-June 1936, in which the 'Harijans' resolved to give up the customs and appealed to the government to make it a penal offence. On the other hand, there was lobbying with the state government to provide some minimal services. Education was focussed upon where by in 1940, 14 day schools and 17 night schools with a total strength of 667 pupils were conducted by the Harijan Sevak Sangh³⁰.

Appeals for the education which includes pious sentiments about the uplift of the Depressed Classes, the exhortations of Swami Vivekananda to the Mysore ruler and the Maharaja's own exhortation that,

“ ‘Sincere workers should act to link the government to the people’ and ‘interpret the one to the other’ and that ‘the long silence of the Depressed and the humble will be broken and the full responsibilities for their well-being shouldered by the educated and well-to-do classes’”³¹.

Legal reform was also an important effort. The Poona Pact provoked a vigorous attempt at the national level to do something about temple-entry, at a time when militants such as Ambedkar were losing interest in it. The model was provided by a bill proposed by C.S.Ranga Iyer in the Central Legislative Council, backed by prominent liberals and Mahasabhaites. In Mysore the Anti-Untouchability League under the leadership of T.Ramachandra, drafted a bill in March 1933, arguing for the respectable antecedents of

³⁰ Harijan, 4th January, 1936.

³¹ Harijan, 13th May, 1933.

the legislation, providing for temples to be thrown open on a non-compulsory basis to Dalits.

In 1935, an Advisory Committee for the welfare of the Depressed Classes, consisting of members of the Depressed Classes and others were constituted under the chairmanship of the Director of Public Instruction in Mysore, whereas in Gulbarga area, the Mysore Government made it a policy to all the private agencies to open special primary schools for the children of the Depressed Classes with the financial aid from Nizam's Government. Another effort to uplift the untouchables was the opening of a 'Sarvajanika' hostel at Mysore, for all communities including the untouchables by T.S.Subbanna.

Murugesaram Pillai, the most radical Dalit spokesman of the time, injected a warning note;

“ If the temples were not thrown open, ‘the Hindus in Mysore will be totally alienating the sympathies of 10 lakhs of people who might have to break away from the Hindu fold and get converted to another religion’ ”³².

The Government simply declared that it could not take any action regarding temple entry. No legislation was passed. In 1936 the Dalits were invited for the first time by the Maharaja to take part in the Dussera Darbar. In 1938, an order was given for the entry of 'Untouchables' to the Jain temple of Shravanabellagola at Bellur and withdrawn after vigorous protest by the Jains. And this was the sum total of administrative action by the State on religious rights of the Dalits during the 1930s.

The Harijan Sevak Sangha, which was working for the welfare of the Harijans of Mysore during 1935, did not challenge the

³² Proceedings of the Mysore Assembly, June, 1933.

Non-Brahmins harassing the Dalits for refusing to work for them nor did it stop traditional occupations involving menial services such as carrying filth, dead animals, etc.. Without an industrial base or a vigorous political life, Dalits had no access to an independent political organization. They remained powerless and relatively voiceless.

On 16th June, 1935, in Mysore, a 'Conference of Workers in the Harijan Cause', was held it was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru:

“ Resolutions appealed to the government to give land for agricultural colonies in the Irwin Canal area, sites of hostels, provision of drinking water facilities, increased grants for hostels, scholarships and other school fees, and preferential appointments in government services”³³.

A similar stress on welfare services could be seen in the Deena Seva Sangha, led by L.N.Gutil Sundersam, which emphasized in non-caste terms the 'moral and material uplift of the masses', working among slum dwellers, cotton mill workers and scavengers, starting morning and evening schools, providing medical services and employing four full-time workers to toil the state.

Gandhi had described the Mysore State as a model of 'Ram-Raj' during a 'nation wide Harijan tour', in 1953. But the Ram-Raj, that Mysore was, finally meant, stalling Dalit advance, perhaps a symbolic killing of shambuk. The Mysore Maharaja's ban on Ambedkar's entry into the State, in contrast to the honoured guest treatment given to Gandhi, shows the nature of reformism and constraints on politics in the state.

In spite of these limitations, the Gandhian efforts were, until perhaps the 1970s, practically the only forum where some kind of

³³ Harijan, 6th July, 1935.

philosophy of egalitarianism and social mobility could reach any significant number of rural Dalits.

Edward Harper, reports for the Malnad area of Shimoga district in the late 1960s,

“ Discontent among Holarus is sometimes fostered by Government officials or Congress party workers who hold ‘Harijan uplift’ meetings in which speakers promuglate a philosophy of egalitarianism, exhorting ‘Untouchables’ to assert their newly acquired legal rights, to improve themselves by acquiring land, to refuse to become indentured, to hold their heads high, and to bathe more frequently”³⁴.

The dominant Gandhian-Brahmanic reform effort was thus focused on religiously defined moral upliftment coupled with appeals to a paternalistic state. Gandhians never targeted the system as ‘exploitative’ and never spoke against caste as a system or campaigned against traditional caste duties within the Jajmani system, the entire mobilizing effort of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and similar bodies was from the top down, mobilizing the middle classes and upper castes to act for the downtrodden and conspicuously avoiding scope for the Dalits to organize themselves.

During the colonial rule was more under the influence of Dr.Ambedkar than that of Gandhi. The conversion to Buddhism took place at ‘Kolar Gold Fields’ in 1930’s, even before the historic mass conversion to Buddhism at Nagpur, in 1956. Pandit Iyodhi Das was the pioneering leader in converting the Depressed Classes to Buddhism, Marikuppam, Bangalore and Hubli were centers of South Indian

³⁴ Edward, Harper,: “*Social Consequences of an Unsuccessful Low Caste Movement*”, in James Silverberg (ed.), ‘*Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*’, (The Hague: Mounton, 1968), p.56.

Buddhist Association founded by Pandit Iyodhi Dass at Madras.

Dalits were partly rewarded for their loyalty when the Government of Mysore Act of 1940 reserved 67 of 310 seats. The Removal of Civil Disabilities Act 1943 and the Mysore Temple Entry Authorization Act 1948 were implemented before the P.C.R. Act, 1955.

Conculsion:

In contrast to dramatic events in the Marathi and Telugu speaking areas, Mysore State represented a kind of backwater in the last decades of colonial rule. There was neither Ambedkarite (as in Maharashtra) nor a Marxist (as in Andhra) challenge to Congress hegemony among the Dalits or among the masses in general.

During 1930s and 1940s, the Non-Brahmin movements in Mysore State began to loose their cohesion and lacked the revolutionary social ideology of pioneers such as Phule and Periyar. It took instead the shape of a caste movement and began to demand separate representation for itself both in the Representative Assembly and in the Government Service. From the 1940s onwards, the two dominant groups of castes namely, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas began to fight between themselves for a share of political power in the newly emerging representative political system. Both Vokkaligas and Lingayats enjoyed constitutional benefits as Backward Classes and thus began to develop a vested interest in their 'Backwardness'. These benefits have, in turn, facilitated reforms in their rituals and enabled them to gain a better status in society.

The Scheduled Caste formed one of the important sections among the Backward Classes. But, when the communal issue gained

importance and generated the Non-Brahmin movement, there was no reference to Scheduled Castes.

As Hettne describes,

“ In terms of mobilization, the Harijans on the whole were as backward as in other respects. The Harijan movement had not been a movement of the Harijans, but a movement against Caste Hindus, primarily Brahmins, with Gandhian leanings, who devoted themselves to the ‘uplift’ of the Depressed Classes. The movement brought Harijans within the Congress fold”³⁵.

It was easy enough for Dalits to be inserted in this process as a very unprivileged interest group, but one that was still given access to some meager share of wealth and status, enough to keep it quiet and also to arouse resentment among other poor sections. In this way Mysore did become a model of ‘Ram-Raj’, but one with a modern Ram, a flourish of technology and an effort of assimilate and ignore shambuk rather than openly punish him for demanding equality.

³⁵ Bjorne, Hettne, 1978: “*The Political Economy of Indirect Rule Mysore, 1881-1947*”, New Delhi, Ankara Publications, p.302.

Chapter-3

Emergence of Dalit Consciousness After Independence in Karnataka

Karnataka during the colonial period witnessed many movements led by Dalit leaders. These movements initiated awareness of a distinct identity and social status among Dalits. This chapter analyses the factors underlying the rise of the Dalit movement in the post-independence period in Karnataka State. The Dalit concern received very little attention in the context of the Non-Brahmin movement in the princely Mysore State. The real Dalit movement in Karnataka started with the Bhusa Uproar of B.Basavalingappa and Bheem Sena, and finally led to the emergence of a Dalit Sangharsh Samiti. The process of development was very slow and it faced many difficulties. Untouchability and atrocities against Dalits continued in the post-colonial period. Low literacy level, poverty among the vast mass of the Dalits were some important problems besetting them. Moreover, the Dalit movement in Karnataka, was uneven and not united. The Karnataka State was created out of areas carved out of the old Mysore State, the Bombay and Madras Presidencies. A major impediment to the Dalit movement was the existence of the two dominant caste groups in Karnataka, i.e., Lingayats and Vokkaliga.

Before, the emergence of any Dalit movement in Karnataka, there were various organisations like the 'Dalit Welfare Association', 'Dr.Ambedkar's Youth Association', which worked for the welfare of the Dalits in a peripheral manner, without the benefit of broad organisational cadres and therefore Dalit movement in

Karnataka, could not emerge as a mass movement until 1970's. In Karnataka State, the Dalit Movement, was led by various Dalit leaders in various parts of Karnataka State¹, viz, in Bangalore, M. Jayaseelan; Belgaum, Rao Saheb, T.J. Papanna, B.H.Varale, Datta Appa Katti, B. Shankaranand; Bidar, Ramchandra Veerappa, Shankar Deo Vedalankar; Bijapur, Revappa Somappa Kale; Dharwad Yellappa Awappa Hongal; Hubli, D.Y. Sambrani, M.D. Ghodke, Gabbur Mallappa Shettappa; K.G.F., R.C. Umpathi, G. Appadurarya, P.M. Swamidurai, C.M. Arumugham; Mandya, M. Machaiah, M. Chikkalingaiah, G.S. Ramakrishnaiah; Marikuppam-M.Y. Murugesan; and in Mysore, S.M. Siddiayya and many others from various places of Karnataka State.

In the Old Mysore, the Vokkaligas were the largest single caste group, but the situation altered in favour of the Lingayats after the re-organisation of States in 1956. From 1948 to 1956 there were three Chief-Minister, viz, K.C. Reddy, K. Hanumanthaiah and Kadidal Manjappa, all Vokkaligas. From 1956 to 1972, there were four, viz, S. Nijalingappa, B.D. Jatti, S.B. kanthi, and Veerendra Patil, all Lingayats. The domination of the Vokkaligas and Lingayats during the 1956-72 period is not surprising considering their relative economic and numerical strength and their pioneering role in espousing the Non-Brahmin cause in the earlier decades.

There was thus a common interest in political change emerging among the Backward Castes and the smaller Vokkaligas farmers of Old Mysore and the tenants of the coastal region. This threw up a new political coalition which came to be led by Devaraj Urs in 1972. He

¹ R.K.Kshirsagar, 1994: "*Dalit Movement in India and Its Leaders, (1857-1956)*", M.D., Publications, New Delhi, p.370.

recognised that if the Backward Castes united they would no longer be an insignificant force. In addition, Devaraj Urs, saw a natural ally in the less dominant Vokkaligas. In order to extend his coalition beyond Old Mysore to absorb the tenancy movements into the Congress, in Shimoga, Urs, succeeded in getting major Socialist leaders to shift to the Congress while in the coastal districts the Communist supporters moved to the Congress. This still left him without a base in Northern Karnataka².

TABLE: 3.1

SELECTED CASTES AND COMMUNITIES OF KARNATAKA:

Caste/Community	Percentage of State's Population
Brahmin	4.23
Vokkaliga	11.82
Lingayat	14.64
Kuruba	6.77
Beda	5.06
Arasu (Urs)	0.07
Scheduled Castes	13.14
Scheduled Tribes	0.79
Idiga	2.25
Muslim	10.63
Christian	2.09

Source: Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, 1975, Volume II.

² Manor, James (1980), 'Pragmatic Progressive in Regional Politics: The case of Devaraj Urs', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15 (5-7): 201-214.

In December 1972, Chief-Minister, Devaraj Urs, appointed the Karnataka Backward Class Commission (KBCC), with the L.G. Havanur as Chairman. Havanur resented the two-caste domination in the State's politics and shared with Urs, a more broad based approach to the Backward Classes issue not one confined to mere anti-Brahminism. The KBCC, whose seven members belonged to numerically minority communities (Beda, Kuruba, Balija, Devanga, Uppara, Rajput/Maratha, Darzi) collected enormous quantities of data and came out with its report in 1975³. The report divided the Other Backward Classes (OBC), into three categories, (a) Backward Communities (b) Backward Castes and (c) Backward Tribes.

Politically the most significant part of the report was its exclusion of the Lingayat community from the list of Backward Classes thereby denying it a privileged status which it had enjoyed for well over five decades. Naturally this recommendation led to furious controversy which continues to this day.

BHEEM SENA:

Political and social workers found it difficult to organize the people belonging to Scheduled Castes because of their utter poverty, lack of education and their age old beliefs. Shyam Sunder of Gulbarga in Karnataka was the first leader to establish 'Bheem Sena', consisting of young, militant, dedicated Dalits in three states viz., Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Shyam Sunder was the

³ The Karnataka Backward Classes Commission comprised the following members (caste in brackets): L.G. Havanur, Chairman (Beda); Y. Ramachandra (Kuruba); K.M. Naganna (Devanga); M. Masana Setty (Uppara); P.T. Habib (Darzi); Dharm Singh (Rajput); and K.M.S. Naidu (Balija).

first to start a vehement struggle in Karnataka for awakening the Dalits. Shyam Sunder had some strategic differences with Dr. Ambedkar. Sunder, was basically an atheist, lacking faith in any religion. As V.T. Rajasekhar, says,

“To him religion as such had no answer to the problems of exploitation. He opposed the conversion of Scheduled Castes either to Islam or Christianity or even to Buddhism”⁴.

Further, he referred and writes about Shyam Sunder,

“ Shyam Sunder was a man of sterling qualities, a true friend and devoted follower of Dr. Ambedkar. He gave Dr. Bhima Rao Ambedkar name to his Bheem Sena which unlike many other Senas that sprang up at that time, stood for noble and upright causes. Indeed Bheem Sena could be considered to be the father of Dalit Panther Movement of Maharashtra and for that matter of entire Dalit movement in India”⁵.

Yet, most of Sunder’s thinking was based on Ambedkar’s philosophy. Though an All-India Organisation founded by Ambedkar known as ‘Samata Sainik Dal’ was already in existence. Shyam Sunder wanted a new and militant form of organisation named after Ambedkar himself. He first used the name of Ambedkar ‘Bhimrao’, while founding his Bheem Sena in April 1968.

Bheem Sena began its career in Gulbarga township and later spread its wings to all parts of Karnataka. Apart from its strong motive of self-defence, it had a broader ideological perspective. Through Shyam Sunder’s, small book “The Four Immediate Needs”, Shyam Sunder had placed before the country four vital demands, viz.,

⁴ Rajasekhar Shetty, V.T., 1978: ‘Dalit Movement in Karnataka’, Madras, The Christian Literature Society, p.1-2.

⁵ Shyam, Sunder, (1987), ‘They Burn’, Bangalore: Dalit Sahitya Academy, p.13-14.

‘ Surrender of twenty five percent of villages in every taluk, a separate Scheduled Caste university in each state and a strong political organisation for Untouchables’.

These demands were nothing but a similar version of the perspective plan of Babasaheb Ambedkar, which he had built for the Untouchables in his work entitled the ‘Rights of Minorities in a Free India’. Though Ambedkar, had emphasized the demand for a separate settlement for the ‘Untouchables’ because of his own unique reasons, he had never asked for a separate nation for them. Shyam Sunder went to the extent of designing a separate land for ‘Untouchables’ namely ‘Dalitastan’. He also wanted to bring about a strong alliance between the Dalits, the Muslims and the Backward Classes. For this reason his Bheem Sena became so popular that it spread to all the cities of India, ‘ fostering the tradition of militancy’⁶.

Shyam Sundar, who had intimate contact with internationally reputed intellectuals like Harold Laski and Jean Paul Sartre, gave a new interpretation to Indian History from a Dalit-Bahujan perspective. By doing this he instilled a sense of pride among the Untouchables about their glorious past. In his *magnus opus* “They Burn”, he writes,

“Scheduled Caste people do not know that once upon a time they were the rulers of this country. They had their own culture and traditions and had commercial and political relations with several other countries of the world. Writes like Gusta Opper, Ramesh Chander Dutt, Max Muller and others have written authentic treatises about the Pre-Aryan culture in India, which can still be seen in the ruins of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. A

⁶ Omvedt, Gail, 1994 : ‘*Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*’. New Delhi: Sage Publication, p.336.

committee of historians and archaeologists should be appointed to carry out research and investigations into their distant past and to publish their findings, so that the Scheduled Castes might realize their own importance as the original inhabitants of India, who had been suppressed and reduced to their present position by the Aryan invaders who utilized religion as a means of gaining power and wealth”⁷.

Bheem Sena was began to grow all over Karnataka. It fought against the atrocities and injustices being committed against Scheduled Castes. In 1974, a Scheduled Caste maid-servant employed in the house of an Ex-MLA, Shankar Shetty Patil, died under suspicious circumstances. The doctor reported that it was a murder. Thus Bheem Sena acted as the vanguard of Dalits. Shyam Sunder was chosen to represent 90 lakh Untouchables of erstwhile Hyderabad State at the U.N. Security Council.

Bheem Sena tried to educate the Scheduled Castes and appealed to them to give up the Hindu culture and stop worshipping the Hindu Gods which have waged a cruel war against them and killed rational thinking. Bheem Sena got involved in violent activities and burnt the Hindu Code publicly. The Nijalingappa and Veerendra Patil Governments in Karnataka kept close watch on Bheem Sena activities. Even women belonging to Scheduled Castes actively participated in Bheem Sena. The children and women took a procession in Gulbarga under the leadership of Mallikarjuna Kharge (former Revenue Minister and present Home Minister) coined the slogans as,

⁷ M.Chand Peer, 1991: “Cultural Dimension of Dalit Movement in Karnataka”, www.isi-blr.org, p.1.

‘Hindu religion is an embodiment of corruption and is a power drunk demon’.

In an interview to a Bombay Daily, Shyam Sunder said,

“ The total membership in Bheem Sena is put an 2 lakhs, each member paying 10 paise as a monthly subscription. The Bheem Sena was given military training for self-defence by ex-service men. Bheem Sena had its own Constitution and flag. The District Chairman was nominated by the President of Bheem Sena. On the first Sunday of every month the Bheem Sena leaders visited taluka Head quarters. It had its own intelligence service, adult education team and census service”⁸.

Although, Shyam Sunder, toured Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka in order to establish the branches of Bheem Sena. He was a Ambedkarite, worked for the upliftment of ‘Untouchables’ in different States viz., Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. It was Shyam Sunder who for the first time in Karnataka, after the death of Dr. Ambedkar, gave a clarion call to Dalits to unite and break the shackles imposed on them by Caste Hindus for centuries. Though, Shyam Sunder was born in Maharashtra (Aurangabad), lived in Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad) but, worked in Karnataka But unfortunately, after the death of Shyam Sunder at Hyderabad, on May 19, 1975, Bheem Sena became inactive and once again the Scheduled Castes lapsed into a sorry state and the movement could not continue due to lack of a second line of leadership.

Shyam Sunder’s greatest contribution to the movement was the formation of the Bheem Sena, a two lakh strong self-defense force of militant, dedicated Scheduled Castes Youths, which created a

⁸ Ibid.,p.1.

tremendous impact particularly in the States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Whenever caste atrocities occurred, the Bheem Sena provided a self-defense force to the 'Untouchables'. The whole movement a revolution in the minds of 'Untouchables', to whom it gave a new courage and confidence to fight back against caste Hindu fascist tendencies.

BHOOSA EPISODE:

Another significant root of the Dalit movement in Karnataka may be traced to the controversial Bhoosa Uproar. In 1973, the then Minister for Revenue late Shri. Basavalingappa, popularly known as 'Ambedkar of south' and 'Periyar of Karnataka', raised his voice against the atrocities committed against Scheduled Castes. He came under the influence of an Ambedkarite and a rational thinker. He was deeply influenced by Ambedkar's ideas. 'No discussion over Babasaheb's thoughts', he used to tell his followers, 'we must accept him as he is'. He was one of the senior Cabinet Ministers in Devaraj Urs' Congress Ministry in Karnataka. He attacked Hinduism, Hindu Gods, tradition and literature which are based on rationalism. Without fearing the consequences, in one of his public speeches he spoke against the pro-Hindu literature in the State against the Dalits, and termed it as nothing but 'Bhoosa' (cattle feed) that cost him his ministership.

He also held,

"Any literature which cannot represent the sorrows and sufferings of the people is not at all literature but, sheer intellectual dishonesty"⁹.

This triggered off a bitter controversy in the State, ultimately leading to his dismissal from the State Cabinet. A stream of violent

⁹ Manohar, Yadav, 1998: "Carrer of Dalit Movement in Karnataka", Journal of Social and Economic Development, Vol.I, No.1., p.115.

events, a series of strikes and actions, reactions rocked the public life of Karnataka until Basavalingappa was expelled. During this simmering period many factors apart from the Bhoosa theory were responsible for this furore. Basavalingappa was himself a controversial figure with no respect for Hindu priesthood, Hindu Gods and Goddesses and their practices. His extreme stand had become a bitter pill to swallow for the Hindu vested interests. The landed gentry had its own reasons to oppose Basavalingappa's ideas. Dalits, as tillers, were trying to own land with the help of the Land Reforms Act. So all the vested interests including the politicians, the press and the intellectuals joined hands against Basavalingappa in the guise of protecting Kannada language, literature and culture. But the event proved to be favourable and valuable for the Dalits. It stirred the conscience of the Dalits all over the State. They started getting together, thinking together and moving together.

On 7th February, 1973, Mr. Basavalingappa was invited by the Prasanga of Mysore University to deliver a special lecture on the "Sociology of Religion". On this occasion, he appealed to the Dalits Youths,

"To dynamite the static Hindu religion and throw Hindu God and Goddesses into a gutter, since they bear symbolic responsibility for the social slavery of the Dalits"¹⁰.

Further, he appealed to the youth to reform Hindu religion as Islam and Christianity so as to make it dynamic. Pointing out the fundamental difference between Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, Sri. Basavalingappa argued that, Hinduism was a pool of stagnant water, where there was no scope for change. As result, Hindu religion has

¹⁰ Deccan Herald (Bangalore), February 8, 1973.

bred all sorts of germs. Even if any one comes forward to change it or to think of shaking this static condition, strong forces raise their ugly heads. Speaking about the caste feeling and caste consciousness, the Minister said,

“One could go to villages and see the same caste feelings as existed 1000 years ago even today”.

He, appealed to the youth to ‘dynamite’ this static Hindu society and build a new one, further the static Hindu society and the Sanatanists responsible for nurturing and preserving this type of religion for their own end.

Shri. Basavalingappa also pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, for whom he had high regard, did not do anything to break this tradition bound static society. On the contrary Gandhiji supported the Hindu Chaturvarna and caste system, while opposing untouchability, which is a contradiction. According to him,

“If Gandhiji and Nehru had sincerely attempted to remove untouchability the history of India would have been immensely different”¹¹.

The press in Karnataka, generally controlled by the Caste Hindus, misinterpreted the matter to their taste and reported that Basavalingappa had attacked Gandhiji, father of the nation and disrespected the Constitution. One would be surprised to note the stand taken by Caste Hindu politicians and press if one carefully analyzed the speech given by the Minister. The speech was full of facts and meaning, but because it could hurt the Caste Hindus, who uphold the irrational and inhuman caste system and untouchability, they misinterpreted it and started using it against him.

¹¹ Ibid.

The only mistake committed by Basavalingappa, was that he put forth his views very ferociously, boldly and represented the cause of the Scheduled Castes leader, or writer should criticize Hindu religion, literature and leadership and that Dalits should continue to accept the hegemony of Caste Hindus without a grumble, let alone protesting against it. Even the opposition parties of Karnataka created a hue and cry. Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda, the then opposition leader gave a press note and challenged the Government as to whether the recent attacks of Mr. Basavalingappa on Gandhiji had the approval of the members of the State Cabinet. If such a approval had not been given, the minister be dismissed from Cabinet forthwith for his reported derogatory remarks. Mr. Deve Gowda warned that the opposition party in the State would be forced to launch an agitation if the Minister was not restrained from making derogatory remarks on Hindu religion and Gods.

During this period of unrest Mr. Basavalingappa delivered another speech at Shimoga and asked Dalits to 'denigrate' Vedas, Upanishads and Geeta. This speech upset the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha people very much who claim that they are the monopolists of Hindu religion. This issue sparked off a major clash in the Legislative Council on October 21, 1973, between Mallur Ananda Rao and Basavalingappa. In a moving speech Basavalingappa said,

"If Mallur Ananda Rao can become so infuriated when I asked the Dalits to throw their scriptures into gutters, how furious we Untouchables should be for having been exploited by you for thousands of years and being reduced to this position?. Are there not people even today rejoicing over our carrying Mallur Ananda Rao's shit on our heads for thousands years?"¹²

¹² Prajavani (Kannada Daily, Bangalore) Oct 21, 1973.

Students' agitation reached a fierce state when 'Organizer', the news paper from Delhi, which is the mouthpiece of RSS and Jana-sangh, reported the news in such headline:

"Minister Basavalingappa asked Dalits youths not to leave the Brahmin girls unmolested".

But the press in Karnataka never reported this item as reported by the Delhi based Organizer. It is very simple logic that a civilized person being in responsible position would never give such type of statement which will mar his personality. It is only the vested interests who were much hurt by the speech of Mr. Basavalingappa criticizing Hindu religion vehemently that made such allegations. Brahmins were grinding the axe against Basavalingappa because they thought if Basavalingappa continued to organize the Non-Brahmins through his speeches there was danger to their established position. Basavalingappa is a forthright and forceful speaker and a staunch critic of Hinduism. He appealed once,

"Brothers of downtrodden communities, what benefits have you derived from worshipping pictures of Hindu Gods in your homes for the last 5,000 years? Have these photos helped you to get out of your huts and dwell in decent homes?"

Further, he asked them to remove those photos and keep the photo of Dr. Ambedkar who was their messiah or saviour. He said,

"If you don't have space to throw the photos throw them into gutters"¹³.

Basavalingappa, known for his scholarship and sympathy for weaker sections was bitterly criticized by his Caste Hindu colleagues. All the Caste-Hindu writers and the press, without judging the merit of

¹³ Translated from Vidhujala---- A Tamil Daily, April 27, 1973.

the statement, attacked the speech. Schools and colleges in the State were closed down because of the long-drawn agitation against Basavalingappa. The students' agitation against Basavalingappa was the biggest political crisis in Karnataka. Dalit students also started a pro-Basavalingappa agitation and the episode brought all Dalit youngmen together for the first time in Karnataka. The Basavalingappa episode created a new consciousness and a new thinking among the Dalit youth, who participated in the movement were beaten up by the Caste Hindu students. Basavalingappa, rendered his resignation on December 17, 1973, and he said that the movement is more precious and dear to his heart than any position. He considered his exit as,

“The beginning of the real Dalit movement in Karnataka, aimed at liberating the downtrodden from the clutches of the dead past”¹⁴.

This incident opened the eyes of Dalit organizers and youngsters, particularly, Anil Kamble, a Dalit Panther leader from Maharashtra, appealed in his letter written to the Prime Minister as follows,

1. Shri. Devaraj Urs, should be immediately removed for having crippled the freedom of speech of Shri. Basavalingappa.
2. Shri. Basavalingappa, should be immediately taken back into the State Cabinet.
3. Judicial enquiry should be conducted into the atrocities committed against backward communities by appointing a Committee and the guilty should be punished. Otherwise, thousands of Dalit Panthers may rush to Karnataka and they are not responsible for the further consequences”¹⁵.

¹⁴ Rajasekhar Shetty, V.T., '*Dalit Movement in Karnataka*', Op. Cit., p.47.

¹⁵ Based on interview with Basavalingappa in '*Prajavani*' at Bangalore.

Basavalingappa after his exit from the State Cabinet, unfortunately did not work dynamically as he had worked previously. A student leader from Bangalore said,

“Basavalingappa, did not visit any of the Districts to boostup the sagging morale of the Dalit movement. Far from touring the Districts, he did not care to visit Dalit students hostels even within Bangalore”¹⁶.

The Bhoosa Episode also had the effect of instilling a new consciousness among the Dalits. More than anything it exposed them to the shocking reality, that a Dalit Minister, whatever his faults, could be berated and forced to resign for expressing an opinion on the relevance of Kannada literature to his people.

Particularly, Dalit youth were awakened after the Bhoosa Episode which spurred them to form the vanguard of the Dalit movement. The Dalit students who were singled out and beaten up by the Caste Hindu boys during the episode had an opportunity for the first time to think of the reasons for their degradation and deprivation. They held group meetings in hostels, under the trees and in hotels to debate on the caste system, untouchability, the different speeches of Basavalingappa and the thoughts of Ambedkar. They also discussed where the Dalits stood after thirty years of doles given out by the Government. In these group meetings there used to be serious debates on the merits of Marxian philosophy and on what the leftist parties had done for the Dalits. However, the Bhoosa Episode had stirred the Dalit community and gave an impetus to its movement. Though the criticism against Basavalingappa, but he is the first Scheduled Castes leader to start the Dalit movement in Karnataka and thereby create a

¹⁶ Rajasekhar Shetty, V.T., '*Dalit Movement in Karnataka*', Op.Cit, p.53.

sense of literary and organizational movement and its urgency among Dalits.

Influence of Dalit Panthers:

In the 1970's, the term 'Dalit' began to be used in various contexts, but it came into wider currency first in 1972 as the name of a militant organization, the Dalit Panthers, taking inspiration from the contemporary Black Panthers of the U.S.A.¹⁷.

Dalit Panthers was born on 9th July, 1972, at Siddhartha Nagar, which was a part of Bombay. Its founders were J.V.Pawar and Dhasal, who emphasized the need to fight for their basic rights and held that every 'atrocities' must be avenged. The D.S.S. was grounded in another legacy of the Maharashtraian ferment of the 1970's, the Dalit Sahitya (Dalit literature) Movement. It had its deepest grounding and has flourished most extensively in Maharashtra, and with a distinctive development, in Karnataka.

In Karnataka, Bheem Sena had not survived, whereas D.S.S., born out of an eruption in 1973 of rioting after a Dalit minister described conventional Kannada literature as 'Bhoosa' or 'Cattle feed'. In Gujarat, Dalit Panthers were formed after rioting over extending reservation to 'backward castes' focussed attacks on Dalits¹⁸. In many regions Dalit militancy directly led to the emergence of Naxalite Movement, especially in Bihar and Andhra, where they formed the base of organizations such as the 'Indian People Front'(IPF) and the more underground, armed struggle oriented Peoples War Group

¹⁷ Rajshekar, Shetty, V.T., 1987: "*Dalit: The Black Untouchables of India*", Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, p.17.

¹⁸ In Gujarat, there is another organization, which also calls itself as 'Dalit Panthers', attracted attention by its involvement in the defence victims of high-caste agitation against the Untouchable of the State.

(PWG). The Delhi State Dalit Panthers is another movement dominated by young intellectual activists and which seems to privilege ideological weapons¹⁹.

These organizational events, the continuing village tensions and atrocities were the result of a grass roots upsurge and self-assertion among young men and women who gained education and became aware of the democratic values in the twentieth century as well as their tradition. They no longer willing to accept a subordinated status.

The principal figures of this movement were intellectuals, dominated by the Neo-Buddhist Mahars, whose ideology is an aggressive and militant. The wretched Untouchables becomes a proud 'Dalit', because of his rights and strength. It has often taken inspiration from the diverse themes, ancient and modern on which Ambedkar had lectured and written so extensively, trapping resonance in names and images. In Karnataka, however, the influence of Ambedkar had been less strong. It has been accepted as a major creative element in the vigorous literature in Marathi and similarly, though on a smaller scale in Kannada. That the voice was heard by others was life blood for the Maharashtra, but the empowering capacity of the voice achieved, through speaking out, which was its primary motivation and source of its great interest. It was operating in a world of literacy and political journals, conferences, academics and international links.

As a committed commentar, referred in the book, "The Dalit Movement in India", puts it,

"Endemic factionalism, narrow sectarianism, unprincipled alliances with the ruling party and a chronic inability to protect

¹⁹ Joshi.B.,1987: "*Recent Developments in Inter-Regional Mobilization of Dalit Protest in India*", South Asian Bulletin ¹⁵, 7, p.89.

rural Dalit who had to contend with atrocities mounted by the upper castes and Caste Hindu rural elite resulted in the Dalit Panthers movement, losing its thrust and momentum during the 1980's"²⁰.

Dalit Literature:

The third source of inspiration for the Dalit literary form that emerged in Karnataka after the seventies is drawn directly from the Maharastrian Dalit literary spirit. While expressing the painful flood of anguish against their enemies, the Dalit writers in Maharashtra not only used a new rhetoric with strong idiom, phrases and verbs, but also created new rhythm of hope, courage and confidence among the Dalits in their state. It is indeed a *sui generis* phenomenon in the socio-cultural field of post-independence India²¹, that had blown to Karnataka. A parallel literary movement, is launched in Karnataka known as "Bandaya Sahitya" or the "Protest Literature".

It was in the mid 1970's, that the Dalit writing made its powerful presence felt through the fiction of Devanoor Mahadeva and the poetry of Siddalingaiah. The Kannada literary world immediately recognized the arrival of a new world of experience and a novel style. The main feature and goals of Dalit Literature are self-respect, self-defense and refusal to accept suffering and violence. It is a well spring of humanity in an inhuman world, where it rejected shackles of humility and slavery. No wonder its roots go back to the aspirations of saint poets who are intent on quenching of their thirst to the expenses of sounding

21 Suresh, V., 1996: "The Dalit Movement In India", in T.V. Satyamurthy, ed., 'Region, Religion, Caste Gender and Culture in Contemporary India', Oxford University Press, Delhi, p.368-69.

21 Waghmore, J.M.: "Dalit Literature: Revolt or Renaissance", Seminar on Dalit Literature, 18-20, February, 1998, Surat, Centre for Social Studies, p.1.

arrogant. Inspired by such feelings and ideas Dalit Literature has made its presence felt in Karnataka, a site of continued horrors against Dalit and protest by Dalit against castiest violence.

‘Dalit Literature is not merely a cry in the wilderness’²². It is not just a cruel exercise of the words roughly knit to attack an enemy in seething terms. Its approach is direct, openness is its secret, its method is ridiculous, and its interest is genuine. It is a spontaneous outburst of feelings with a concern for oneself, society and its system. It is with this revolutionary zeal the Dalit Literature in Karnataka, grew and spread as far as the village streets.

Dalit Literature, is the product of the new generation who are militant and their rejection of the Hindu society is total. Though Dalit writing often mixed with other leftist traits like Lohia and Marx, a product of the Ambedkar vision of life. Hence a strong sense, of self-respect and dignity informs the style of their writing. The philosophical attitude, is also responsible for the adoption of an interesting aesthetic strategy on the part of the Dalit writer. The Dalit literary movement in Kannada had grown enough to give different categories of writing with mutually conflicting claims to the Dalit psyche. There are two different modes of Dalit writers:

1. The School of Social Rage.
2. The Spiritual Quest²³.

The School of Social Rage mode concentrated basically on the experiences of anger, agony and revolutionary hope. Self-criticism of the community is also an important part of this mode of writing. The important Dalit literary figures of this School of Social Rage are,

²² Ibid.,p.1.

²³ D.R.Nagraj, 1993: “*The Flaming Feet: A Study of the Dalit Movement in India*”, South Forum Press, Bangalore, p.62.

Siddalingaiah, Mulluru Nagraj, Mogalli Ganesh, Aravind Malagatti, Munivenkatappa, Gangaram Chandala, ChinnaSwamy, Indudhara Honnapura, Shudra Srinivas and B.Krishnappa and host of others.

It was Siddalingaiah's poetry which shaped the stylistic contour of the school in the beginning. Siddalingaiah's poems produced strange vibrations in the veins of Dalit activists. They aroused Dalit whether a conference or a symposium, a conclave or a protest movement, they all began and concluded with Siddalingaiah's songs. The fiction by Mogalli Ganesh and Aravind Malagatti assume special significance which are full of irrepressible gusto of Dalit, it is this gusto which became the stuff of protest in his works. They have enriched this school by their significant articulation that gives a new aura to the dominant mode started by Siddalingaiah. But the basic philosophical thrust and emotional attitude remain the same. Even after the deviation, they remain quite securely in the School of Social Rage. Indeed, the works of these literary figures gave the much needed energy to the activists in the movement in Karnataka. But most of them protested silently.

The second School of Spiritual Quest, has found warm reception among the conservatives. The Social Rage of the Siddalingaiah School is effectively transmitted here into the spiritual vision of equality. Social Rage, is not a menacing presence, but a soothing celebration of human dignity.

This mode of writing is in the minority and Devanoor Mahadeva is the most important writer of fiction in this group. In poetry K.D.Siddaiah, is the efficient representative. The second school has been called the School of Spiritual Quest, because it tries to understand the world of poetry and Untouchability in terms of metaphysical

dismay over the nature of human relationship. The ethos of the portrayal of life is not informed by anger and agony, but by a celebration of the joys of life and its possibilities, which includes the will to change. Ordinary people here have in them archetypal material. A quarrelsome and caring old woman, 'Sakavva' in Mahadeva's novel, 'Odalala' reveals the characteristics of mother goddess, an archetype.

Authentic Dalit poetry will not be born until Dalit specific world comes alive in poetry. This process has already started with Dalit Literature has long been the companion of 'Bandaya', the protest literature. Both of them were committed to being a protest against social inequality. Bandaya Literature has underlined the need for commitment in any kind of authentic literature. Bandaya Literature also began with a helpless scream. But poets like Champa, Ramzan Darga and Satyananada Patrota are counter examples to the above. The experiments of poetry which can be related to Kannada poetic tradition are very rare indeed. H.S. Shivaprakash has kept himself away from the protest movement but has really contributed a lot for the furthering of the protest movement. Critics have said that his poetry takes refuge in mysticism but agree that it is poetry of protest and leftist in its attitude. Shivaprakash has done several great experiments in poetic language and poetic forms.

Even in the field of fiction Bandaya Movement has produced remarkable works of art. Besarghalli Ramanna, Kum. Veerabhadrappa, Baragur Ramachandrappa are some of the representative short story writers who have expressed the sorrows and pains of rural India with all its cruelty of feudalism. They have emphasized the dignity of man, self-respect and individual freedom as the most important values of life.

The two Schools have exhibited two conflicting attitudes towards the traditional cultural self of the Dalit. The Social Rage school is more in tune with the temperament of Ambedkar, which believes passionately in the total rejection of the traditional Dalit self which is steeped by and large in the Hindu ethos. The radical Ambedkarite will have nothing to do with the traditional Hindu world. This aspect has created a social problem for poets like Siddalingaiah, who are forced to create imagery only from the concrete experiences of exploitation and violence.

The possibility of exploring the symbolic and religious life of lower castes in the light of positive interpretation is restricted by the Ambedkarite ideology. The Dalit talent of this kind does not have supportive structures of the tradition. In this regard, the second school freely interacts with and borrows from traditional cultural forms. But K.B.Siddaiah's poetry is too often marred by negative ambiguity and obscurity. Mahadeva also breaks the moulds of European realism in his novel, 'Kusumabale', to create a new narrative form, 'Kathakava'.

The Bandaya and the Social Rage School rejected the superstition and irrationality and powerfully transformed into metaphors and stylistic devices by the Spiritual Quest School. But both the schools are facing a major problem in the area of combining the collective experience with the personal world. They have been successful in creating types of collective experiences where the modern individual is yet to emerge in this literature.

Government, Politics and Reservation Policy:

Apart from these movements, the reservation policy had an impact among Dalits. It has led to the rise of a new generation of

educated Dalits who are active in the Dalit movement in Karnataka. Karnataka has long history of protective discrimination policy for uplifting the socially and politically backward sections of the population of the State. In order to understand the significance of the role played by the State Government in improving the socio-economic and educational conditions of SCs/STs, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and minorities in the State, it is necessary to review the history of the reservation policy of the Karnataka.

The present Karnataka was created in 1956 by integrating Kannada speaking areas of the former Hyderabad State and of former Bombay and Madras provinces with the then Princely State of Mysore. Though the reservation policy of the government of Mysore was influenced by the reform movement in the former Madras province, particularly the social revolt sponsored by the Justice Party, Mysore had developed its own rudimentary policy of reservation as far back as 1874²⁴.

After independence and up to the time of the re-organization of the State (1947-1956), the Miller Committee recommendations were implemented. Till Mysore, integrated into independent India, unlikely, the Brahmins had accepted the growing power of the Backward Castes. Because of the Brahmins minority position, the new political system came to depend significantly upon the numerical strength of these castes. During this period the two dominant communities viz., Lingayats and Vokkaligas, along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Muslims, resorted to another interesting strategy of driving the Brahmins out of the rural areas. The dominant communities which

²⁴ Report of the Committee appointed to Consider Necessary Steps for the Adequate Representation of Communities in the Public Service (Chairman: Leslie C. Miller), 1919, p.4.

controlled the elected government, introduced tenancy abolition legislation, under which the Brahmins lost their 'inam' land to the tenants. In the south, particularly, in Mysore State, Brahmins never cultivated the vast lands they owned under the inamdari system. Their tenants belonged to dominant communities in some places and also Scheduled Castes. This political strength was effectively used by the dominant communities to weaken the economic base of the Brahmins in the rural areas.

After the integration of the State in 1956, it became necessary to go through the exercises of reservation once again, in view of the merger of the areas from other states which did not have any consistent reservation policies. The attempts of the Government of Karnataka to prepare a uniform list applicable to the people of all the integrated areas were frustrated by the High Court²⁵. Consequently, the State Government implemented a modified reservation policy between 1963 and 1977, under which the income of the parents and their occupations were taken into account for determining the backwardness of the people.

During 1956-1972, was also marked by the rule of Lingayats in Karnataka under the Chief-Ministerships of S. Nijalingappa and Veerendra Patil, who did not want their own community to be excluded from the list of Backward Classes and lose the benefits of reservation. At the same time, it was alleged that the two dominant communities cornered all the benefits under the earlier as well as modified reservation policies and that a new set of guidelines was required for determining the Backward Classes. At this juncture, the Backward Classes movement took a different turn under the political

²⁵ Report of the First Backward Classes Commission (Chairman: L.G. Havanur), Vol.I, 1975, p.7.

leadership of Devaraj Urs, where all the Non-Brahmin castes and communities were considered as Backward Classes. But a general feeling that Lingayats and Vokkaligas dominated the political, economic, educational and even administrative spheres was exploited by Urs, to divide the Backward Classes. He devised a new political strategy after the 1969 split in the Congress party to wrest political power from the two dominant communities in the State, by uniting the non-dominant minority Backward Castes, the Muslims and SCs/STs. He wanted to formulate a new reservation policy consistent with his new political strategy.

The principle of reservation has been applied in the fields of government employment and in education, where it forms one part of a much more extensive range of provisions. In education, the initial stage of support, was the establishment of special separate schools. When education was only beginning the spread into villages and meetings acute discrimination against Depressed Classes children wanted to learn in ordinary classes. It has been a major achievement of the abolition of Untouchability in the second half of the twentieth century to end such discrimination in schools. The methods have been used by giving financial support, hostels for those needing to live away from home in order to study and the reserving of 'seats' in educational institutions, with the relaxing of entry qualifications for courses.

The basic provision is backed by many particular schemes, though none should be thought of as universally available. In Karnataka, which can be taken as an appropriate schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are run by the Department of Social Welfare. It includes 'Necessary cum Women Welfare Centers', which provide pre-primary education, a meal at mid-day and two sets

of clothes annually for the children. For children of 'those engaged in unclean occupations' such as flaying and tanning leather and scavenging, with priority for a berth in government hostels. The high cost of books for students in engineering and medical colleges is met by a scheme for book sharing and storing. For higher levels there are private hostels supported by Central and State grants made to students living in them. The array is impressive, but in practice, supply is rarely adequate to meet demand and inflation makes a mockery of the levels of financial support.

With the exceptions of the military and the judiciary, reservation of posts for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes applicants has long been applied to all the grades of government employment. Below the following table shows the representation of the various castes in the Gazetted, Non-Gazetted, and the fourth division employees.

Table:3.2

Caste Reserved Government Employees, in the year 1959.

Sl. No	Caste	Population in 1960 (near to 100)	Percentage of Population	Gazetted employees	Non-Gazetted employees	4 th division employees	Total employees	Percentage of Govt. appointed employees	Increased (+) Decreased (-)
1.	Agasa	2.48.000	1.18	5	562	764	1.331	0.90	-0.28
2.	Brahmin	3.32.400	1.57	47	1.920	668	2.635	1.77	+0.20
3.	Kuruba	14.55.800	6.88	56	2.452	2.079	4.587	3.00	-3.79
4.	Lingayat	32.93.000	15.57	488	15.706	2.237	18.431	12.40	-3.17
5.	Vokkaliga	27.44.300	12.98	316	9.457	6.113	15.886	10.68	-2.30
6.	Other Backward Castes	7.03.600	3.30	238	8.070	5.454	13.762	9.26	----
7.	Scheduled Caste	28.15.600	13.31	101	5.050	2.358	7.509	5.05	-8.26
8.	Scheduled Tribes	87.600	0.41	4	34	180	218	0.15	-0.26
9.	Muslims	21.19.900	10.02	313	14.494	7.536	22.343	15.03	+5.01

Sources: Report of the Karnataka Third Backward Classes Commission, Vol.2.

The intention is to give weaker section of population a fair share of the advantages of employment, to ensure that they are represented in the machinery of the Karnataka state itself and in positions. The SCs and STs have a reasonable proportion of government jobs and enjoying a roster system and preference in promotions. The dispute is only over achieving the maximum constitutional percentage share of jobs in each and every government departments. It is surprising that the government of Karnataka has not bothered to make an assessment of the impact of the reservation policy on various castes and communities in the field of education and in the wider socio-economic sphere.

Finally, it looks as though the 'Sociology of Knowledge' is all pervading in formulating policies, recommendations and even implementing reservation policy in this country and particularly in Karnataka State.

Conclusion:

The Dalit movement in Karnataka was very slow in social progression. Apart from modern historical processes a few medieval upheavals were also reasonably responsible for bringing about a change in the sublime and sensitive attitude of the Dalits in the Karnataka State. Though there was Virashaiva movement, but the Dalit concern received very little attention in the context of the Non-Brahmin movement in the Princely Mysore State. But the Dalit movement in Karnataka started with the Bhusa Uproar of B. Basavalingappa and Bheem Sena. These movements initiated awareness of a distinct identity and social status among Dalits. In the process, these movements culminated to the rise of Dalit Sangharash

Samiti, which proved to be a non-parallel event in the history of the Dalit movement in Karnataka.

The Dalit movement in Karnataka in post-independence period, did not base its activities on a definite ideological stance. The lack of ideological commitment in turn did not allow it to emerge as a 'Self-Help' movement. The literary movement preceded any narrow political expression of Dalit radicalism in Karnataka. Without the direct legacy of Ambedkar, the Karnataka Dalits have not sought to establish a Dalit political party. As the Dalit continued to fight for cursory benefits, they locked themselves into the captivity of concessions like, reservations. Besides, they took their 'Dalit world' too much for granted, which ultimately kept them bound by chains of submission to exploitative Hinduism. Strangely, in the process, the Dalit succumbed to the same evils against which they had been fighting. Also, the lack of social cohesion and unity left the various Dalit organizations politically distorted.

Chapter-4

Dalit Movement and Politics of Dalit Sangarsha Samiti

In the post-independence period, the Dalit movement in Karnataka, did not base its activities on the definite ideological stance. Though, there were various movements like, Bheem Sena, Bhusa Uproar and reservation policy, which influenced Dalit movement led to the emergence of the Dalit Sangarash Samiti. This chapter analyses, the DSS, organizational structure, identity and political dynamics in Karnataka, in its fight for social justice.

DSS, is the representative organization of the Depressed Classes in Karnataka. It was started by 'Untouchable youths'. It has 20 districts, 150 talukas and numerous village units in the State. It is the voluntary organizations of the awakened Dalits youths and a self-respect movement of the 'Untouchables' and other humiliated Depressed Classes of Karnataka.

Though there are constitutional guarantees, protective legislations and numerous developmental programmes the vast majority of these communities still continue to be impoverished. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are not the owners of what they produce either in the fields or in the services. The root cause of almost all rural conflict is land and caste attitude. The ruling congress government in Karnataka during 1970's made a beginning towards implementing Land Reforms Act which provides the right to own the land to the tenants. The middle castes of the Karnataka state which own land in most of the areas were not ready to loose their ancestral privilege. Dalit are not willing to accept their traditional position in

society. Conflicts ensue when they assert their right to equality which the upper castes deny to them. Dalits as a group are in turmoil and face humiliation of all kinds. In the name of Kannada language, literature and protecting of Hindu dharma, the upper castes attacked Dalits. Land reforms, abolition of bonded labour and of untouchability, restoration of civil rights, reservations in to free themselves is through organisation.

To overcome the difference among Dalits, the Dalit intellectuals had realised a common need for a State level organization of the Dalits to secure social, economic, educational and political rights for themselves and to ensure the security of their lives and properties. A conclave of Dalit writers, poets and artisans was held at Bhadravathi in 1973 to deal with the situation. To work out the modalities of the movement and with a decision to appoint a committee to draft a manifesto for the proposed Dalit organization, a meeting was called at Siddharth Hostel, in Mysore in October 1975. A further conference of the Dalit Lekhakha Kalavidara Sangha (a literary organisation of the Dalits) was organized at Bhadravathi in 1976, to discuss the future of Dalit organization.

In June 1977, a meeting of different Dalit associations was called at 'Chikmangalur' wherein a decision was taken to work under one organization by merging all the Dalit organizations into one. At first, from 1978 to 1984, the DSS did not have its own Constitution. The Constitution of DSS, was released at Dharwad (Jai Bhim Nagar) on 18th November 1984, by Mr. Devanoor Mahadeva the famous Dalit writer. B.Krishnappa, and K.Narayana Swamy were also present.

Article.1, of the DSS, Constitution gives the name of the organization as “Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti” and Clause (b) of Article 1, defines the word “Dalit”, as follows:

“ ‘Dalits’, are those ‘Untouchable’ who have been insulted and exploited in the name of caste for centuries. And those people who hesitate to tell their castes are called Dalits”.

The members came to the conclusion that ‘The Organization’ hereafter would be called “Dalit Sangharsh Samiti”, a forum to educate, organize and lead the Dalits in their agitation against their oppressors and the exploitative system as a whole. DSS, was taken to every village in the State where a small branch of the Ambedkar Yuvak Mandal, was already functioning. Hundreds of such branches were brought together under the single banner of DSS.

The dream of these young and enthusiast Dalit youth was casteless and classless society. They wanted to struggle, to eradicate untouchability and caste discrimination. They were equally cautious not to develop hatredness towards any particular caste and accepted that anyone irrespective of his or her caste, could be welcomed to the DSS. The organisation had made its efforts to the Caste Hindus to realise the irrationale of caste system as well as to bring their brethren out of the clutches of inferior complex.

Within half a decade of its existence, the DSS was able to muster sufficient strength to fight any atrocity against the Dalits at all levels of the State, the village, the taluka and the district. The branches of DSS at all these levels organized their own determined, devoted and morally committed cadre. The founding fathers of DSS, like B.Krishnappa, Devanoor Mahadev, Siddalingaiah, Devayya Harave,

Yellappa, Mangalore Vijay, Munivenkataswamy and a host of others were working in the State guiding the district and taluka branches in the process of organization and agitation. If B.Krishniappa was the commander-in-chief in the organization, Siddalingaiah was its poet and Devanoor Mahadev its thinker. Each one contributed in his own unique way to the growth and development of DSS. Following in the footsteps of Devanoor Mahadev and Siddalingaiah several other Dalit writers emerged in the State giving rise to what is known as new Dalit literature, a new knowledge and a new form of protest in Karnataka.

Aims & Objectives of DSS:

The goal of the DSS, is to emancipate and free the Dalits from socio-economic and cultural exploitation through non-violent means¹. Further, the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti aims at,

“Nationalising all the private land, industry, wealth of the nation and build a casteless and classless society. Another most important aim of DSS, is to, ‘to support and recognise the national and international ‘Self-Respect’ and ‘Freedom’ movements. The other vital aim of DSS is to ‘establish a just, equal and fraternal society’ ”².

DSS, terms Caste system and Capitalism as its two main enemies and these two must be fought simultaneously. Throughout the State, DSS, has been struggling against the non-implementation of constitutionally promised socio-economic guarantees. Dalit culture is the outcome of the culture of Labour (Kayaka Samskrutho). In this culture, there will be no scope for inequality, where the DSS, had been fighting against the imposition of Brahmin culture and also to bring

¹ Article 2 (a), of DSS Constitution, 1984.

² Article 2, Clause (b), (c), and (d), of DSS Constitution.

about the fraternity with the sub-castes of 'Untouchable' and rationalise their customs, practices, rituals, and art and culture.

DSS, has been following the philosophies professed by Periyar, Jotiba Phule, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Karl Marx and Dr.Ram Manohar Lohia. As a Socio-political organisation, it has accepted the parliamentary democratic process as the means to bring about socio-political change. The Dalit movement stands for the politics of emancipation and struggle. The DSS, has a clear perspective of its allies and enemies. The workers, landless labourers, poor peasants, the left parties and all forces which are fighting against caste and class oppression and who are in favour of parliamentary democracy and non-violence are considered as its allies, whereas, capitalist, feudal, communal fundamental and dictatorial forces are its enemies.

Membership of DSS:

The Constitution of DSS, proclaims:

“One who wants to become the member of DSS, should respect the constitution and activities of the organization. The organization being non-political, membership is denied to such members who belong to any political party. The membership is also banned to those people who preach and profess communalism”³.

Further, the Constitution also prescribes, that Dalits alone can become office-bearers of DSS.

Nature of the Organization:

The DSS, is organized on the principle of 'Democratic Centralism'. The organization aims at having unity and happy co-

³ Article 3, of DSS Constitution, 1984.

ordination from top to bottom. The organization is cadre-based at different levels, i.e., village, panchayats, taluka, city, district and State. Each cadre will have three office bearers viz., convenor, organizing convenor and a treasurer. All the members will elect their office-bearers in their respective places. The State-level, meeting will be convened once in two years and all the DSS members will elect the 'State-Level Office-Bearers'.

Rights & Duties of the Members:

Members shall have the right⁴ to formulate the activities of the organization and shall have the right to criticize the policies and decisions of the organization, but such criticism shall be within the organization. Now member is allowed to give a press note without the consent of the 'State Convenor'.

The Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, is the only State-level organization of the Dalits in Karnataka which has got strong support of over a million people. By the mid 1990s, the movement was organized on district as well as the Statelevels, due to this organizational structure is pyramidal, even the branches at the gram and group panchayats, taluka and district levels and the headquarters at Bangalore.

The different branches of the DSS, such as:

1. Dalit Students Federation (DSF).

The student wing of DSS, has over 30,000 student members. It has its own constitution which clearly defines the aims and objectives, rights and responsibilities of the DSF. It suggests for better hostel facilities, increase in scholarship, against un-employment and atrocities.

⁴ Article 6, Clause (a), (b), of DSS Constitution.

2. Dalit Women's Federation (DWF).

This organization of the Dalit women in Karnataka takes up issues of women. It calls for exemplary punishment all perpetrators heinous atrocities on the Dalit women. It also struggles against superstitions and deaming practices. In 1984, the members of DWF, at Chandragutti of Shimoga district opposed nude worship and demanded a total ban on it. They also demand the abolition of the *Devadasi* system and equal wages for women and financial assistance to start the home industries.

1. Dalit Employees' Federation (DEF).

This is important wing of DSS, extends intellectual, moral and financial support to the main organization, it fights for the promotional opportunities for Dalit employees and against harassment and discrimination at the work place. The employees of HMT, Canara Bank, Syndicate Bank, Reserve Bank, HAL, ITI and teachers of Universities, Schools and Colleges are the active members of DEF. It is estimated that over 10,000 employees work in this organization.

2. Dalit Writers' and Artists' Federation (DAAF).

This wing is considered to be the think tank of DSS. The Dalit Sahitya or literature has created a path-breaking and new literary tradition in Karnataka. The most important the Dalit writers are Siddalingaiah, Devanoor Mahadev, Gangadhar Murthy, C. Mahesh, Govindayya, Indadoor Honnapur, Channanna Walikar, Veerabhadrapa, Munivenkatappa, Arvind Malagatti and host of others.

3. Dalit Municipal Corporation Workers' Federation (DMCWF).

It is estimated that about 80,000 workers are employed in different municipalities in Karnataka. Of these 90 percent belong to

the untouchable castes. DMCW, fights for better working conditions, for total developments of these workers and for proper educational facilities for their children.

The Karnatak Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, is now a fighting force which has spread all over Karnataka. It is organizing the Dalits in three ways:

1. Literary Movement.

In the contemporary world ideas and 'ideologies', play a very important role. For any social-movement an ideological base is necessary. The writings and literature provide the ideological base of any movements which binds the people into a cultural unity and political cohesion.

The major political movements among Dalits, was so particular in Karnataka, that the DSS, was grounded another legacy of the Maharashtrian ferment of the 1970's. This was the Dalit Sahitya (literature) Movement. In Karnataka, however, the Ambedkar influence has been less strong, that the voice was heard by others was life blood for the movement, but the empowering capacity of the voice achieved, speaking out, was its primary motivation and source off its great interest. It has been accepted as a major creative element in the vigorous literature in Marathi and similarly though on a smaller scale in Kannada.

Because of the Constitutional rights and free education the 'Untouchable' have now awakened and have come to realize the conspiracy of Caste Hindus who are of trying to keep Dalits into dark and dismal condition. The literature of the Dalits is called as 'Dalit Sahitya' or the literature of the oppressed.

2. Mobilization through Artists.

For centuries the lower castes in India, particularly in Karnataka have been de-culturised by the Caste-Hindus intellectuals. Hence the Scheduled Castes continued to be at the bottom of the social system, never got opportunity to rise. To rise from all types of Hindu slavery, the Dalit youths are organizing their brethren through literary movement, and also through music and theatre which reveal their true position and abominable conditions. Rape, killing, burning, arson and cheating by the upper castes have become the 'subject-matters' of the Dalit Dramatists and Artists. Dalit Sangharsh Samiti in Karnataka gave the importance of such dramas and demonstration which directly helps to socialize and organize their masses. Hence the DSS has got its own "DalitKalaMandali", in which the young Dalits are involved and they are organizing the Dalits by staging plays like 'Belchi', 'Deoli', 'Pipra', etc. All these plays are written by the Dalits themselves focusing on the killing of Dalits in the aforesaid places in North India.

Though 'DalitKalaMandali', has not developed so rapidly in Karnataka as in Maharashtra, it is making a Herculean effort to organize the people for cultural unity. The DSS, is doing its best to organize the people through staging plays, and singing songs written on Ambedkar and the problems of Scheduled Castes. A Dalit Kala Mela (Dalit Artist Conference) was held on May 6th, 1982 at Kolar, which was inaugurated by Banandur Kempayya, a Dalit Artists⁵.

Art and education create a sense of values and 'culture', among the people. The artist or writer not only recognizes himself but he also recognizes the values of his community and nation. The Dalit writers and artists are writing for their brethren to make them aware of the vested interest of the law givers. Thus, the present Dalit writers have

⁵ 'Panchama', Fortnightly, May, 1982.

completely rejected the social values of the Hindu social system. They are also known as, the “Architects of a Neo-Culture”, for Dalits.

The Dalit Sahitya seems to be revolutionary, sharp and bitter because the experience which have been suppressed in the Dalits for centuries are now coming up in the form of literature and cannot expect the suppressed people to write in a very mild way. A parallel literary movement is launched in Karnataka known as “Bandaya Sahitya” or the “Protest Literature”.

3. Organization through Artists.

The Dalits in Karnataka are organizing their people through agitation against atrocities, killing, rape and all types of humiliation. The slogans coined by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, “ Educate, Organize and Agitate”. The Dalits are killed or beaten for very silly reasons for e.g., if Dalits demand higher wages, the landlords will commit atrocities and if Dalits attempt to enter the Caste Hindu temples and touch the village wells, they are beaten-up. When Dalit women are raped or molested, the Dalits rise against such atrocities. In such situation the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, the vanguard of Dalits, comes forward to get justice to the Dalits. There are many incidents in recent times which show, how the Caste Hindus behave towards the Scheduled Castes.

On July 12, 1981, the DSS took out a procession at Halanayakuna Halli of Bangalore district, because the Caste Hindus landlords had grabbed the land there sanctioned to the Dalits. The agitation was attended by the employees of Canara Bank, All India SC/ST Employees Association of Kerala, Maharashtra, Madras, Delhi and Orissa⁶.

⁶ Panchama, fortnightly, August, 1981.

Dalits youths are honestly fighting against injustice in one form or the other. But the Caste Hindu mass media is not giving it its due publicity. On 14th April, 1982, the Dalit and other progressive writers staged Dharna at Dharwad, Mysore and Bangalore and protested against the killing of Dalits in Belchi, Pipra, Deoli, Sadhupur and Kestar. The participants were P. Lankesh, Basavaraj Kattamani, Poorna Chandra Tejaswi, Dr. Krishnamurthy, Dr. P. Ramamurthy, Dr. Tippeswamy, Dr. Sanjivayya, Dr. Chandrasekhar Patil, Siddalingaiah, Bargur Ramachandrappa, Basavaraj Kestur, Devayya Harave, Devanoor Mahadev and Dr. K. Raghavendra Rao.

The participants warned the Government that if it failed in preventing such mass killing, rape and burning of Dalits, the Dalits, will launch a movement, violent or non-violent and they will not be responsible for the consequence⁷.

Land marks of the DSS Movement:

DSS, has launched several struggles in Karnataka right from its inception and mobilizes the SCs/STs and Other Backward Classes. It has grown by leaps and bounds which has created a cadre-based organization at grass-roots levels to fight against inequalities and discriminations which are the characteristics of the Indian society. The struggles of the DSS, social, religious, economic and political in nature.

I. Fight against Socio-Religious Discriminations and Atrocities.

The Scheduled Castes in India are subject to all kinds of oppressions because of their low social origin. Whenever the SCs/STs question the discriminatory social system and values, the Caste Hindus

⁷ Panchama', Op.Cit., May, 1982 (No. 8-9).

commit atrocities on them. The frequent atrocities on Dalit in Karnataka by caste forces have been a tool of keeping them under subjugation. Atrocities takes place when the traditional society refuses to concede to the assertion of Dalit. As long as Dalit function within the parameters of caste paradigm and carry on their age old occupation, there are no threat to the forces of caste. But the moment they refuse to continue their hereditary occupation they incur the wrath of their caste masters.

Resisting Untouchability:

The first cause of atrocities is the Dalit refusal to suffer any more the indignities associated with Untouchability. A few examples will illustrate the point:

- a. On 3rd November 1991 in a village of Gulbarga, Malkappa was made to eat human excreta for his refusal to cut firewood⁸.
- b. In Harathi village of Kolar when Kannappa a Dalit of Kataganahalli refused to obey the orders of the upper caste to go round Harathi village beating a drum to make a public announcement he was forced to eat human excreta⁹.
- c. In Alagi, another village of Gulbarga when the Dalits refused to cut buffaloes for the Laxmi Devi festival of Caste Hindus, three of their leaders were murdered in June 1992¹⁰.

⁸ Pinto, Ambrose, 1994: "Atrocities on Dalits in Gulbarga", Economic and Political Weekly, 29 (n.16-17, April 16), pp. 895-897.

⁹ Anon, 1994: News item, The Deccan Herald, 30th June.

¹⁰ Ibid.

- d. The Caste Hindus of Tippalapura village in Hunsur taluka ostracised Dalits for discontinuing the age old practice of carrying food from the former houses during festivals¹¹.
- e. For Caste Hindus were killed and twelve others were injured in police firing following a dispute over the entry of Dalits into restaurants run by Caste Hindus in Raichur¹².

The Governments and their machineries seem apathetic to these atrocities and do not protect the lives and properties of the Scheduled Castes. On the contrary they protect the interests of the exploiters.

The following table illustrates the increasing trend of atrocities on Scheduled Castes in Karnataka¹³:

Table: 4.1

	1986	1987	1988	1989
Atrocities	511	630	637	718
Denial of Civil rights	814	688	782	409

Ambedkarism, has provided a viable ideology to DSS. This ideology has come into confrontation with the dominant Brahmanic ideology. The DSS, has developed opposition to the hegemony of Brahmanical Hinduism. It has challenged the very doctrine of dominant castes and asserted the Dalit identity by demanding temple entry and equal religious rights.

II. Struggle against Land:

¹¹ Anon, 1992: News item, The Deccan Herald, (Bangalore), 20th July.

¹² Ibid., 26th, May.

¹³ Quoted by Chandal, "*Karnataka the Dalit Chaluvalli Mattu Dr. B.R. Ambedkar*", Chaitra Prakashan, Chikkatinpathi (Karnataka), 1992, p. 87.

One of the most significant conflict between Dalit and the rest of the community was on Land issues. By tradition Dalits are forbidden to own land. Their role in a caste society is to serve the landlords by providing cheap labour. The Brahmins never cultivated the vast lands they owned under the inamdari system. The interest of the dominant castes are well served by the labourers in Karnataka State. It is estimated that 52% of Scheduled Castes men and 72% of women are agricultural labourers, 2/3 of bonded labourers in India belong to the Scheduled Castes. Land is a matter of power, due to loss of cheap labour to upper caste led to many atrocities in Karnataka State. The following are examples of the Land atrocities:

- a. Gurulingappa of Shammur village in Gulbarga was murdered on October 2, 1993 for buying five acres of land¹⁴.
- b. Thimmaraju, Dalit Co-ordination Committee activist was killed by a gang of 18 persons for opposing the alleged grabbing of 257 acres of land belonging to the Harijan Shakahara Sangh in Kadugodi, Bangalore¹⁵.
- c. When Dandappa bought a two acre land at Yadagiri the upper caste were quick to encroach on it¹⁶.
- d. In Tallasasvanhalli of Chittpur taluka Government land cultivated by Dalits was annexed by Vokkaligas, the land owning caste in Karnataka¹⁷.

¹⁴ Pinto, Ambrose, 1994: "Atrocities on Dalits in Gulabarga", Economic And Political Weekly, 29 (n. 16-17, April 16), pp. 895-897.

¹⁵ Anon, 1995: News item, The Hindu (Bangalore) 4th March.

¹⁶ Pinto, Ambrose, 1994: "Atrocities on Dalits in Gulabarga", Economic And Political Weekly, 29 (n. 16-17, April 16), pp. 895-897.

¹⁷ Anon, 1995: News item, The Hindu (Bangalore) 4th March

Though Article.46, of Indian Constitution proclaims to promote educational and economic interest of the SC/STs, the Governments are indifferent to the problems of the SCs/STs. The following table indicates the paltry amount which was earmarked for the development of SC/STs in the successive five year plans¹⁸.

Table:4.2

Plans	Percentage
First Plan	0.35
Second Plan	0.61
Third Plan	0.43
Fourth Plan	0.37
Fifth Plan	0.80

Keeping in view the low economic position of the SCs/STs, DSS, has launched the many land struggles in Karnataka. The issues have been opposition to usurpation of land by upper castes, land to the landless, regularization of land developed and cultivated by the landless Dalits, end to atrocities by forest officials etc. The other backward castes have also often been the beneficiaries of these struggles.

Some of the other notable Land struggles launched by DSS, against the discrimination by the State to their ownership of Land, were:

- a. Under the Ashraya scheme during the Bangarappa regime the Government had acquired land belonging to Dalits in

¹⁸ Government of India, 'Report of the Working Group on the Development of Scheduled Castes', 1980-81, p.123.

several parts of the State and converted them into Ashraya sites. This was in violation of a Government order of 1972 by the then State Government banning the acquisition of Dalit owned land for the Government's housing schemes. The DSS, agitated against the Government cancelled allotment in Hoodi village near Bangalore under the Ashraya scheme¹⁹.

- b. When the Bangarappa Government proposed the idea of construction a Japanese type industrial township in Kanakapura taluka near Sathanur and Bidadi, the DSS, took out the procession demanding that the proposed construction be cancelled since the township would have displaced over twenty nearby villages where most of the residents are Dalits²⁰.
- c. In several places like, Sidlipur in Bhadravathi, Bidir in Arasikere, Chandagodu in Mudigere, Medakenial in Lingasur, the DSS, struggle for land has borne fruit, where the Government had to sanction land to Dalit families.

III. Other important Struggles:

Some of the important struggles, launched by Karnataka DSS, in the recent years are :

- a. The Government land acquired illegally by a land lord and prominent politician of Chikmangalur was confiscated and with the help of government machinery was distributed

¹⁹ Anon., 1993: News Item, The Deccan Herald, 10th April.

²⁰ Anon., 1992: News Item, The Deccan Herald, 30th October.

amongst the landless Dalits and agricultural labourers in 1980.

- b. At Bidrekaval, of Hassan District nearly 400 acres of Government land which had not been distributed among the landless was acquired and distributed during 1982-83.
- c. Hundreds of bonded labourers were got released from the clutches of local landlords at Nagasandra in Kolar District.
- d. 70 Km March on foot was organized from Hunsikote in Kolar District to Bangalore to draw the attention of the Government towards the atrocities committed by a local politician and feudal lord in Malur Taluka. He had been charged with murdering Sheshagiriappa, a potter.
- e. Shimoga District witnessed serious struggle urging to end the inhuman practice of nude worship of Dalit and downtrodden women in the name of Goddess Yellamma at Chandragutti in 1987. Karnataka DSS, has been successful to bring pressure on the Government and enacting a law banning this worship.
- f. State wide Dharanas, Strikes, to pressurize the Government to stop the sale of poisonous toddy throughout the state, were held during 1988, as a result of which the Veerendra Patil Government which came to power after 1988 elections to the Assembly, ordered the ban on sale of toddy.
- g. DSS, has also demanded the State Government to start residential schools atleast one in each Block of the State for Dalit boys and girls, so that the number of drop-outs in the Primary school level may be lessened.

- h. It was demanded to regularise the lands of the landless Dalits who cultivated unauthorisedly only after the Government failed to distribute the land at its command among the landless throughout the State. This issue is before the Government.
- i. During 1989 and 1990, the DSS, has been organizing phased agitations to compel the Central Government to accept Mandal Commission Report and implement it so that large number of Backward Classes may be benefitted through out the Country.
- j. Rallies were held at Bangalore and at all District Head Quarters to lodge protest against barbaric act at Bendigeri in Belgaum District where Dalits were forced by Caste Hindus to eat human excreta²¹.

Rejuvenation of Arts:

Dalits have inherited a rich artistic heritage. The conscious afforded by the Dalit groups is to rejuvenate and promote their traditional forms. They have their own distinct musical instruments such as, Thamate (Tambourine), Thaza (a kind of drum), Dolu (a large drum), etc²².

Among these Thamate, has a great significance among Dalits who are maesters of this art. It is considered part and parcel of rural culture in India. No function is complete without the Thamate concert in village. It is a symbol of Dalit culture. Dalit feel it is a unifying force

²¹ Prof.B.Krishnappa, eds, "Jana Kala Mela", 1991, Indudhara Honnapur, Mangalar, Vijaya Publications, p.54.

²² Chand Peer, 1991: "*Cultural Dimensions of Dalit Movement in Karnataka*", www.isi-blr.org,p.2.

for them. According to the Prof.B.Krishnappa, one of the founding members of DSS, advised that,

“Dalit not to let their musical instruments which become a tool of slavery and caste in the hands of the rich and the religious people”²³.

Further, he argues that, ‘the Thamate is the life song of the Dalit. It is used to coerce the Dalit into playing during religious ceremonies and for the pleasure of the land lord.

Thamate is played particularly, by Dalit on occasions like celebrating village festivals, war victories, processions of village dieties, during rural games like, Kambala (Buffalo race on paddy fields), Hulivesha (Tiger dance), during Khedda operations, harvest, marriages and also during funerals. The talent and the song of the Dalit were more important than the years of study by urban professional musicians since they never sung to earn money. As Prof.B.Krishnappa, has described that,

“It is purely to express the feelings and emotions within the person. The songs come straight from the hearts and from the sweat and fatigue of hard labour”²⁴.

In 1992, the Dalit Kala Academy, the cultural wing of Samata Sainik Dal, a militant Dalit organization has sent its troops to Japan to give concert at the request of a Japanese cultural forum. Through such programmes Dalits are trying to make younger generations feel proud of their traditional art forms. Other art forms of Dalit community are Kolata, Kamsale and Donnevarse, etc.

²³ Prof.B.Krishnappa, eds, “Jana Kala Mela”. 1991, Indudhara Honnapur, Mangular, Vijaya Publications, p.47.

²⁴ Ibid., p.49.

A New Cultural Paradigm:

The Dalit in Karnataka, are in a historical struggle to build a new identity within the nation's existence. The challenge to them is to create a New Social Order which will put an end to their centuries old political and economic marginalisation and heal their religious wounds as 'Untouchables' with a new cultural paradigm. To articulate itself outside the caste paradigm two noted personalities have inspired the movement in Karnataka.

Siddalingaiah, was the first noted Dalit poet in Karnataka, who attacked Brahmanism and castes, hides the Dalit identity and pretends to belong to the upper castes. His poetry goes beyond literature to associate itself with a movement to bring about change in the Dalit cultural identity²⁵. His songs are sung in street theatre programmes where the DSS, puts up in several gathering for the Dalit consciousness. Even, there are others in the Kannada literature, viz., Devanoor Mahadeva, Gangadhar Murthy, Baraguru Ramachandra, K.S.Bhagawan, who have been responsible to the creation of 'Dalit Sahitya' and have created a tradition of protest against the Hindu Social order system.

In the political field it was B.Basavalingappa who provided the Dalit movement with its most influential support. He represented Dalit aggressiveness and radicalism with the establishment. Terming all literature as 'Bhoosa' (Cattle Feed) for its status quo ideology. During his Ministership as a Cabinet Minister, in 1960's, he was responsible for abolishing the carrying of night soil. Being an atheist, he attacked

²⁵ Walter Fernandes, 1996: "*The Emerging Dalit Identity: The Reassertion of the Subaltern*", Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, p.117.

priesthood and called upon the youth to throw out the photos and idols of Gods and Goddess into the dustbins.

It was both Siddalingaiah and Basavalingappa, who broke the culture of silence imposed on Dalit in Karnataka. Their revolt against the oppressive system became an inspirations to others and to the DSS, as a whole. For the speedy mobilization of Dalit masses, the cultural symbols were revitalized or newly created rather than physical symbols. 'Jai Bheem', became the symbol of greetings within the Dalit fraternity. It was taken to every nook and corner of the State by organizing cadre camps for educating Dalit mass and popularise this symbol of greetings. Even, in the meetings, the Speaker or Leaders, starts with the names of pantheon of the Dalits leaders and ends it with "Jai Bheem and Jai Bharat".

Melas and fairs were other cultural traits, which became the symbols of the Dalit. Against this, the DSS, started organizing Melas on the birth and death anniversaries of their pantheon Dalit leaders, to mobilize the solidarity among the Dalit masses. An artists argued that, "Dalit have no platform to perform their art. Moreover, their rusticity is against the sophistry of the divijas. But these Melas gave new lease of life to the art and artists of the Dalit communities".

An example is the Hassan branch of the DSS. Its members arranged for distribution of food to about 400 non-dalit on the 101st birth anniversary of Ambedkar and welcomed them as guest in 100 Dalit families. Those invited for the Mela were urged to give up caste related biases and thus solve the problem of casteism.

D.R.Nagaraj, a noted Dalit social scientist in his book, "The Flaming Feet: A Study of the Dalit Movement", classifies the Dalit struggle in Karnataka for three rights²⁶:

1. Structural Rights: A change of structures is possible only when Dalits acquire and own land. Claiming ownership of land is essential for the struggle towards equality.
2. Right of Social Space: Equality before law is not possible till the Dalits acquire the right to enter and use public places such as restaurants, public wells, recreation clubs and play fields.
3. Right to Cultural Space: All these years a specific role and occupations were assigned to them in the caste hierarchy. While on the one hand DSS, and other Dalit groups do not want to participate in functions with the traditional role, on the other hand they have assigned a new role for themselves.

A departure from priestly temple rituals has helped the DSS, to define Dalit identity in secular terms away from the mythical, superstitious and dogmatic manner of Brahmanism.

Politics and DSS:

DSS, has emerged as a political force with its vast organization in Karnataka, but in the beginning the movement refused to align itself with any political party for a long time. The fact that every political party in the contemporary situation consists of upper castes bourgeoisie, who are anti-scheduled castes, anti-backward and anti-minorities.

At the inagural of the Republic of India Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, had said that,

²⁶ Ibid., p.118.

“On 26th January 1950 we are going to enter into a new life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be reconginsing the principle of one man and one vote, one value. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which we so labouriously built up”²⁷.

This was so particularly, in Karnataka where the major political movement amongst Dalit, the DSS, was grounded in another legacy of the Maharashtrian ferment of the 1970's. After independence, no political parties has really worked for the over all development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or for the welfare of the weaker sections, but they are merely manipulated as the vote-banks. Taking this view, the DSS, boycotted the Chikmangalur parliamentary by-elections. However, when Devanoor Mahadeva after having been elected as State Convenor of DSS, he did openly supported Janata Party of Ramakrishna Hedge in Karnataka, but it was resented by the Dalit activists. Even the other top leaders of DSS, wrote a letter with a strong oppositions to Devanoor Mahadeva and requesting him to step down from the State Convenor position. Again in 1987 and 1989, DSS, supported Janata Dal in Karnataka. Unfortunately, the committed leader and one of the founding fathers of DSS, Prof.B.Krishnappa, himself contested the parliamentary elections from Kolar reserved constituency in 1991.

Though the immediate impact of the DSS, was positive and effective but problems remained. A gap in communication between

²⁷ Ibid., p.120.

young educated activists and the mass village people mobilization was not possible in large scale penetration into village society. Wider mobilization continued to be the goal, to be worked at energetically with the teams of cultural performers travelling round villages raising consciousness ahead of major rallies, themselves involving cultural promotion as well as directly political activity. However, divisions reappeared, political involvement proved enticing, inspired particularly, by the success of the BSP, to which a major section of the movement in Karnataka became attached²⁸.

At the same time, the unifying policies represented by that party were under increasing strain from tensions within the Dalit camp. Organizations tended to be strongly identified with one particular caste, rather than, transcending caste differences. The DSS, became identified locally with one particular Scheduled Castes, whereas the educated youth of other supported a rival, particularly, if Adi-Karnataka were supporting the DSS, it would be Ambedkar Sangha, supporting the Adi-Dravidas.

A change in the power equation was an automatic through gradual outcome of this change. The intervention of the State through special provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the awareness among the Dalits and Tribes of their age old exploitation by the castiest force brought about a slow awakening in the Dalit. This awakening in Karnataka among the Dalit strengthened the organization in the matters of politics and votes.

²⁸ Simon. R. Charslely and G.K.Karnath, 1998: "*Challenging Untouchability: Dalit Initiatives and Experiences from Karnataka*", Sage Publications, New Delhi, p.69.

Challenges Before DSS:

DSS, as an articulate body had organized itself against the hegemony of Brahmanical Hinduism. The term casteism and capitalism are its main enemies. Its programmes and orientation imply a leftist ideology. It has developed a temper against caste oppression but constructive in its attitude towards the upper castes. Ambedkarism has provided a viable ideology to DSS. However, this ideology has come into confrontation with the dominant Brahmanic ideology. It did not preach hatred against Gandhi or Marx, but there was inclination to understand both. DSS, is struggle oriented. The foregoing characteristics made the DSS, qualitatively different from other organizations in the country.

DSS, has the potential to combine with other downtrodden and progressive sections of the society in order to bring about a coalition of progressive forces and thereby launch a new political party. DSS, has an important role to play for its own survival and for the Dalit movement. In order to play effective role it must transcend its non-political character and must be able to make explicit its own ideology.

The challenges before DSS. has to understand the fact of the following in two points:

1. Exclusive attention to the caste question and the demand for more reservation may make DSS, forget the struggle against capitalism, which is the main source of growing economic disparities in the country and the world. Organization which do not struggle against capitalism for long periods tend to become indirect and passive supporters of capitalism.

2. Economic inequality and social inequality go together because economic inequality is mostly super imposed on the already existing social inequality²⁹.

In an economy which is generating more and more disparity, it is further depressing the social status of the poor class thereby compensating the gains made by social movement and reservations. The gains can be preserved only if there is a simultaneous attack on capitalism and the economic inequality. If the fight against economic oppression is not accompanied by a fight against caste system, the economic struggle itself will become weak. Even the organization manned by youngmen and women drawn from the various layers of Backward Classes will mark the beginning of a new and genuine leftist movement.

A Comment on DSS:

The inspiration for DSS, has provided by the Dalit Panther activists in Maharashtra, in 1974, but the linkages has always been ideological not organizational. In making the transition from one state to another the movement cut across differences in castes and religion as well as language. The DSS, draws its support from caste indigenious to the southern most states, where Dr.Ambedkar is thought of as the paramount of Dalit leader and Buddhism had with limited local impact.

The ideology of DSS, that the Dalits were suffering from both caste and class oppression, the result of vicious human systems shaped by Hinduism and Capitalism are its two main enemies, which should be fought both simultaneously. Throughout the State, DSS, has been

²⁹ Prof.B.Krishnappa, (eds), 1991, "Jana Kala Mela", Indudhara Honnapur, Mangular, Vijaya Publications, p.58.

struggling against the non-implementation of constitutionally promised socio-economic guarantees. There could be no real escape into the new world of middle class consumerism for capitalism enriched few only by impoverishing many. The educated must unite with the impoverished majority of their community to establish a society based on a co-operative ownership of economic resources. Community itself redefined to broaden the base for this revolt and the common ideology of Dalit and the Oppressed, must replace divisions of caste, religion and language.

These are the ideas that has to continue to speak among Dalit, but the extent and form of local mobilizing inspired by the movement differs substantially. The DSS, is a consciously decentralized network of several lakh members spread across the state, has continued local crisis intervention work by developing a variety of means to popularise new values and attitudes. Its greatest assets are people's theatre and professional journalism. The cadres of the movement are another of its strength.

As through the strategy of the group has been to encourage local initiatives to develop self-confidence and self-reliance. The State level organization is only for an exchange of ideas and to pool resources. To the extent the movement continues its efforts to unite all the Dalit segments and focusses on its mission of fighting against casteism, land lordism and big business, it will have a role to play in future politics of the State.

Conclusion

The objective of the Dalit movement was obviously to emancipate the Dalit from the thralldom of untouchability and caste system. However, the strategies, ideologies, approaches, ways and means varied from leader to leader, place to place and time to time. The Dalit consciousness came to fore in different forms and shades.

Present day Karnataka State, which was part of princely Mysore State and other parts were under colonial rule, has experienced Dalit movement differently in different parts or areas. In Karnataka, at first, their response to untouchability came to the fore in the form of Bhakti Cult or Bhakti movement, generally which attracted Dalits. The Dalit movement was led by Basaveswara and others who attacked the caste system and stressed on the equality of status. Though the Dalit movement in Karnataka is as old as Virashiava movement, the Dalit concern received very little attention in the context of the Non-Brahmin movement in the princely Mysore State, which has emerged due to the overwhelming proportion of the working class was Tamil.

The Dalit movement in Karnataka is characterised by a long and gradual social progression. Apart from modern historical processes a few medieval upheavals were also responsible for bringing about a change in the sublime and sensitive attitude of the Dalit in the Karnataka State. The Dalit movement in Karnataka has been an urban phenomenon. The 'Untouchable' castes of village Karnataka have not been drawn into a movement whose main pre-occupations have been literary, cultural and religious fields. The lack of mobilization of village 'Untouchables' in Karnataka and even in Maharashtra serves to

point up the distinctiveness with that of the rural revolt in Bihar, where it has been a derivative of revolutionary Marxism.

In the pre-colonial period, the only significant alternative to Marxism as a total social ideology was Gandhism. Indeed, it was the inadequacies of Gandhism that in many ways pushed the Dalit and anti-castes activists into the framework of a mechanical Marxism. Gandhi's 'Harijan Programmes', offered a challenge to high-caste Hindus wishing to re-legitimize their tradition, but it could only appear as repressive to anti-caste militants. Gandhi's path sought to combine a village oriented decentralized vision of development with a reformed Hindu spirituality. In the 1930's and 40's, there was very little technological base to challenge a Statist/industrial focus, and Gandhism did too often devolve into a spiritualism that refused to really challenge caste domination.

During 1930s and 1940s, the Non-Brahmin groups in Mysore State began to lose their cohesion and lacked the revolutionary social ideology of pioneers such as Phule and Periyar. Instead it took the shape of a caste movement, began to demand separate representation for itself both in the Representative Assembly and in the Government Service. From the 1940s onwards, the two dominant groups of castes namely, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas began to fight between themselves for a share of political power in the newly emerging representative political system. Both Vokkaligas and Lingayats enjoyed constitutional benefits as Backward Classes and thus began to develop a vested interest in their 'Backwardness'. These benefits have, in turn, facilitated reforms in their rituals and enabled them to gain a better status in society.

In this context, Ambedkar's rejection of Hinduism and assertion of an alternative identity was explosive and revolutionary. Marxists, tended to see Ambedkar's Buddhism as the most 'reformist' part of his entire philosophy, but it was conversion announcement of 1936, that galvanised Dalit throughout India and it was the choice of Buddhism that lay down the challenge for an alternative Indian identity.

In Ambedkar's time, a few other Dalit ideologues like Phule, had taken significant steps towards the reinterpretation of mythologies and the recreation of identities at a mass level. There were still only a few educated Dalit and interested activists of higher castes adopted left ideologies but ignored the tradition totally, while accepting large parts of the ideologies such as 'Harijan' and 'Hindu' identities. To provide frame work for this, Ambedkar attempted, in his writings as such that of "Revolution and Counter-Revolution", but too little was done in the colonial period.

The position was thus set for the post-independence situation in which Dalit would be constitutionally and legally guaranteed a share as 'Scheduled Castes'. But the failure to evolve a political vision of liberation or to organize an autonomous Dalit movement or become participants in any vigorous movement against the system is stark. There was no Dalit movement in Mysore State, only process of incorporation accompanied by unresolved problems of social and economic exploitation and the underlying hostility that continued to be generated by them.

The Dalit movement in Karnataka in Post-independence period, did not base its activities on a definite ideological stance. The lack of ideological commitment in turn did not allow it to emerge as a 'Self-Help' movement. The literary movement preceded any narrow political

expression of Dalit radicalism in Karnataka. Without the direct legacy of Ambedkar, the Karnataka Dalits have not sought to establish a Dalit political party. As the Dalit continued to fight for cursory benefits, they locked themselves into the captivity of concessions like, reservations. Besides, they took their 'Dalit world' too much for granted, which ultimately kept them bound by chains of submission to exploitative Hinduism. Strangely, in the process, the Dalit succumbed to the same evils against which they had been fighting. Also, the lack of social cohesion and unity left the various Dalit organizations politically distorted.

This was so particular, in Karnataka where the major political movement amongst Dalit, the DSS, was grounded in another legacy of the Maharashtrian ferment of the 1970's. This was the Dalit Sahitya (literature) Movement. In Karnataka, however, the Ambedkar influence has been less strong, that the voice was heard by others was life blood for the movement, but the empowering capacity of the voice achieved, speaking out, was its primary motivation and source off its great interest. Its programmes and orientation imply a leftist ideology. It has developed a temper against caste oppression but constructive in its attitude towards the upper castes. Ambedkarism has provided a viable ideology to DSS. However, this ideology has come into confrontation with the dominant Brahmanic ideology.

Though the immediate impact of the DSS, was positive and effective but problems remained. A gap in communication between young educated activists and the village masses dashed early hopes of large scale penetration into village society. Wider mobilization continued to be the goal, to be worked at energetically with the teams of cultural performers travelling round villages raising consciousness

ahead of major rallies, themselves involving cultural promotion as well as directly political activity. However, divisions reappeared, political involvement proved enticing, inspired particularly, by the success of the BSP, to which a major section of the movement in Karnataka became attached. At the same time, the unifying policies represented by that party were under increasing strain from tensions within the Dalit camp where the major jatis were, as in other states of the south, adopting increasingly rival stances.

The following are the main reasons for the failure of the Dalit movement in Karnataka:

1. Sub-Caste feeling: A Divisive Factor: The Scheduled Castes in Karnataka are mainly divided into two categories, i.e., 'Untouchable' and 'Touchable' Scheduled Castes. Among the Untouchable Scheduled Castes there are two hostile groups known as 'Left' and 'Right' and 'touchable' groups consists of the Lambanis, Koravas and Bovis. These hostile groups have never worked together for a common cause.
2. Lack of Leadership: For the success of any social movement, a powerful and committed leader is very essential. It is rather unfortunate that 'Untouchables' have produced only one leader in their long history of suppression, i.e., Dr. Ambedkar.
3. Lack of Militancy: The Scheduled Castes are not militant in their struggle for equality. The reason is religion is a uniting force and it builds a cultural bondage among the people. The Hindu religion has killed the spirit, unity and rationality of 'Untouchables', labelling them as 'sub-human' beings.
4. Economic Serfdom: The Scheduled Castes have remained poor and unorganized because of their miserable economic

position. They have always depended upon the work provided by the Caste Hindu and the Caste Hindu want that the Scheduled Castes should always remain poor and disorganized so that they continue to be the cheap source of labour.

5. Fear of Oppression: The objectives of the Dalit movement are to attain social status, economic independence and educational advancement. But the growing feeling of 'self-respect' among the Scheduled Castes is bringing about a adverse reaction among the Caste Hindus.

Another setback to Dalit movement in Karnataka and India is that the people inspired by the ideology of Dr. Ambedkar, have shifted from Ambedkarism to Marxism. The Neo-Dalit Marxist elite group argue that,

“Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by themselves cannot bring about the changes in the socio-economic and political set up of India, because India’s social, economic, and political structure is so complex that caste-organizations divide the people on the basis of their ‘caste-consciousness’ ”.

Another school among the Dalits argue that the Marxist ideology is not the solution for the Indian problems, because the socio-economic and political conditions in India are varied from those of other countries. Thus the entire Dalit movement has been divided on the ideological basis.

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