

DALIT IDEOLOGY :
An Examination of Some Issues

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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C E R T I F I C A T E

Mr's dissertation entitled "IDEOLOGY
OF DALITS AN EXAMINATION OF SOME ISSUES" sub-
mitted by Y.PULLARAO for the award of MASTER
OF PHILOSOPHY is an original work and has not
been previously submitted for any degree of
this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation
be placed before the examiners for award of
Degree of Master of Philosophy.

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

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INTRODUCTION

A strange kind of confusion, misperception and misinterpretation persists in the minds of Dalit thinkers, activists, leaders and social scientists working on Dalits as to which path to adopt for Dalit Liberation. Much of this is due to the complex nature of Indian social system as well as because of methodological inadequacies. Our purpose in this thesis is to study some of the constituent elements of Dalit ideology in order to shed light on the principal ingredients of Dalit oppression.

There are Dalit proponents of all the prominent strategies for change in India : Gandhian moral reform, orthodox Marxism, Western economic development-alism of both capitalist and socialist varieties and Dr. Ambedkar's Radical social democratic views. There has also been an expansion and diversification of an indigenous Dalit tradition that has spread to Dalit communities throughout India and these views are less well known outside Dalit circles. Unfortunately they do not constitute a cohesive and unified perspective. There is intense internal dispute - but there is a "community of communication" within which individuals,

organizations argue and evolve.¹ Whatever may be the number of diverse theories and their emphasis there are two prominent streams of thought existing at present. They are Radical Democratic views of Dr. Ambedkar and his staunch followers and the orthodox marxian views of socialists. In opposition to the latter view the former school of thought urges that social reform should precede economic and political reforms in India in reorganising Indian society.

This claim has been made by Ambedkar himself : "Turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reforms, you cannot have economic revolution, unless you kill this monster."² If we keep in mind the fact that no radical change has occurred in 42 years of Independent India, this statement appears to be true. On the other hand his idea of cultural revolution continues to be Utopian particularly after his act of conversion to Buddhism. Not only has Buddhism

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1. Barbara R.Joshi, Designs for Struggle in Barbara R.Joshi ed., P.140. 1936. The Minority Rights Group Publication, London.
 2. B.R.Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, p.47, 1979, Education Department Publication, Maharashtra Bombay.

failed to uplift Dalits and change the atmosphere of the Indian social system but it has also killed the urgency for cultural revolution. Of course, it cannot be denied that the conversion to Buddhism has given Dalits a spirit of assertion and awareness. It has also given them a distinct identity. But with the vast advancement in education, science and technology caste appears to be waning in the cities. We have to keep this fact in mind. If such modern development have taken place, we need to ask if we still need cultural revolution of Ambedkar's kind? Has it lost its relevance? Has it over emphasised social revolution? These questions must be addressed by serious Dalit thinkers.

If we come to the second stream of thought i.e. orthodox marxian for which economic revolution must precede other revolutions and we obtain the conclusion that with economic and educational advancement caste will die.³ As I have said above although there is some truth in this claim it is a gross oversimplification because despite modern civilization caste does still exist even in the cities. As social scientists, what should we do? Do we need

3. Gail Omvedt, Class and Caste The Non-Brahman Movement, P.5, Dec.24, 1988, frontier, Vol.21 (10), Germinal Publication, Calcutta.

to modify and discover new theories and ideas which can avoid the inadequacies in the above two streams of thought? To answer this question we first need to examine these two streams of thought.

In this work, we address the problems essentially with a Rationalist and humanist approach, My approach is neither Marxist nor Liberal. Perhaps it is more Buddhist, but this is nowhere stated explicitly in the rest of the thesis. My approach has some affinities to the Buddhist method, which Ambedkar himself called rational, scientific and humanistic. However so far as I am aware no political scientist has yet produced a major work explicitly using a Buddhist framework and I hesitate to be the first in this particular dissertation. Our main task is to raise some crucial questions.

II

In the first chapter we have analysed the meanings and definitions of ideology, protest, deprivation and the history of Dalit movements in order to understand the roots of concrete Dalit issues. Without it, it is impossible to judge the veracity of

the problems which we have examined. In the second chapter we have studied in detail Dr. Ambedkar's views on Dalit emancipation. This is necessary because in Ambedkar we find a systematic and scientific understanding of Indian society and therefore of Dalits place in it. In the third chapter we have studied modern Dalit Ideology. This is done to understand the changes in Dalit thinking after Ambedkar's death. This will also help us to compare and contrast Modern Dalit views on Dalit emancipation with the views of Dr. Ambedkar.

Chapter - 1

ROOTS OF DALIT PROBLEM

Before an attempt is made to analyse the principal elements of Dalit ideology , it is necessary to deal with the concrete problems that are crucial for understanding their ideology objectives, the prospects of their success or failure, in their attempts at liberating themselves. In this chapter I have made an attempt to make a detailed study into the meaning and definitions of ideology, protest, deprivation and the problems facing Dalits in India. We can understand these issues if we only look at the roots of their oppressions and protests which Dalits launched and led so far in this society. In other words we must study the brief history of Dalit movements.

According to the manifesto of Dalit Panthers, members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion are Dalits.

Though the words "poor", "oppressed" and "exploited" would undoubtedly have a broad class connotation,

the term 'dalit', as it is ordinarily understood today, is considered applicable more or less exclusively to the ex-untouchables, viz., the Scheduled Castes. In fact, it is a term that the untouchables have given 'themselves' as against the terms such as Harijans (children of God), Avarna (coloured), Antyaja (low-born) Humshudra Scheduled Castes, etc. which were given by 'others.'¹

IDEOLOGY:

To examine Dalit ideology is a difficult task because few systematic documents of their ideology exist. The late Dr. Ambedkar is perhaps the only systematic exponent of Dalit ideology. Years later, the writings of the Dalit Panthers provide another source of Dalit ideology.

The primacy of ideology in any liberation movement is now well-recognised. It is also imperative that such an ideology should evolve from the concrete life experience of the people whose liberation is sought to be realised. Any ideology which does not so evolve cannot be expected to sustain the commitment of the persons concerned, a commitment that depends upon the realisation of the exploitative situation,

1. Suguna Pathy, The untouchables, Protectors Fail, State Society vol.5, no.3, July-September, 1985.

along with the determination to get out of that situation, by the exploited. It is in this broad framework that the Dalit ideology should be analysed. In other words, it is keeping the "praxiological dimension" in mind that we proceed to discuss the issue. It may also be mentioned that the base of an ideology should not be ephemeral, transient phenomena. It should consist of lasting, basic trends in a changing situation.

The term ideology links peculiar notions and mundane practices with a wider set of meanings and lends an honourable and dignified complexion to social conduct. It helps to make more explicit the moral basis of action. Johnson identifies two social functions of ideology, a tension management function with regard to individuals as role occupants and an integrative function with regard to a group.² Ideology demands an involvement. It moves man to action and brings new hope, meaning and assurance to a collective group.

Practices or Social conduct can be of two types. A set of practices can either pose a challenge to the

2. Joseph Mathew, Ideology, Protest and social mobility among Mahars, p.7, 1984, Thesis, JNU.

prevailing order or merely justify it. We can therefore distinguish between conservative and radical ideology. A radical ideology specifies discontents, prescribes radical solutions and justifies change. A conservative ideology attempts to obfuscate the articulation of discontent and justifies the maintenance of the prevailing system. A radical ideology performs certain functions, such as the disruption of the Central institutional and value systems by conflicting with them.

PROTEST :

A protest is an attack on the prevailing system in an intellectual and organised way. It is an effective means of achieving social change and mobility in modern society. Most political and social changes of twentieth Century has been accelerated by various protest movements. Clutter Buck says, "protest is necessary to maintain a fair rate of change in the face of entrenched interests in any society both to further the will of the majority and to attain equity for minorities."³ Norman identifies a few other characteristics of protest movements. Besides bringing social change in society, it has some therapeutic effect.

3. Richard Clutterbuck, Protest and the Urban Guerrilla, p.11, 1973, Cassell & Co. Ltd. London.

But it depends on who protests and what its aims are. Protest is a means by which unhappy, frustrated and exploited people can find atleast momentary satisfaction. At times it becomes a way of life that absorbs all energy and talent of participants and counter participants.

Arora writes "protest and dissent are not the activity of merely the irrational and opportunistic sectors of society. They represent particular mode of political participation chosen by the citizenry.⁴ Why is there protest in a society? Various conditions of relative deprivation lead to protest. Any protester sees his relative position vis-a-vis those who are at an advantageous position in the society. Such discrepancies lead to protest. The disequilibrium that results from discrepancy between one's educational and social status provides ground for discontent and protest. Lower classes experience this discrepancy so that there is large scale protest among them. When there is lack of recognition for the deprived, they tend to protest. Protest as a collective action, involves interrelated factors such as agents of protest, reasons

4. Satish K. Arora, Political Participation and Protest, Economic and Political Weekly, vol.6, No. 3,4,5, p.342, January 1971.

of protest and modes of protest which bring about change in society.

Ideology, protest and social mobility are interrelated to the extent that they cannot sufficiently function without the other. Protest is adequately sustained by an ideology and by an organisation nurtured by an appropriate leadership. They in turn bring about social change in society. The purpose of any movement could be defeated unless it adopts the organizational principles and ideology of modern movements. Protest accelerates social mobility of the lower class in India who are also equally vulnerable to other sources of change such as social reform movements and the state policy of protective discrimination. Protest accentuates social mobility by way of its ideological base supported by organisation and leadership.

DEPRIVATION

Deprivation refers to a state of existence marked by the lack of any feature considered necessary for human living. Deprivation can be absolute or relative. Deprivation is absolute when men and women are dispossessed even of basic amenities. Such deprivation stems from inhuman conditions of material

existence, total powerlessness and ideological oppression. We may identify a hierarchy of deprivation that exists among the most oppressed sections in the society. One might say that the difference between the Backward castes and scheduled castes lies in the fact that the former is relatively deprived and the latter is absolutely deprived. The term relative deprivation was first coined by the authors of "American soldiers" in their socio psychological study of American army carried out during 2nd World War. The authors of "American Soldiers" do not give a rigorous definition to the concept. However they claim that a "person's satisfactions are conditioned by his expectations. The upsetting of expectations provokes a sense of relative deprivation which may in turn provide the impetus for drastic change."⁵

The above distinction is useful. One might say that the difference backward castes are relatively deprived because they do not possess the things which others do. Social inequality gives rise to relative deprivation. The Schedule caste movements are in absolutely deprived categories. Scheduled caste in India as for example

5. Joseph Mathew, Ideology, Protection and Social Mobility among Mahars of Maharashtra and Pulayas of Kerala, p.58, 1964, Thesis submitted to J.U.J.

the Mahars claimed that they had a high status in the ancient past. Hence, the absolute deprivation of their present was a reversal of their high status in the past. Deprivation, absolute or relative can be of three types cultural, political and economic. People are culturally deprived when they are denied access to those cultural resources which afford them a sense of socially recognizable identity. This is the first type of deprivation faced by Scheduled Castes. The second type of discrimination that Scheduled Castes suffer is political disenfranchisement. There is inadequate representation of various sections of the population in statutory and non statutory bodies and political organization. This is more evident in rural areas than in cities. There is no reservation of seats in Rajya Sabha for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes due to the absence of any constitutional provisions for it. No such provision exists in the state Vidhan Parishads (Upper House). In the Panchayat Raj Institutions only minimum representation exists. It is unlikely in many cases that the decision making process of these village bodies gives adequate weight to the nominal representatives of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. SC's and ST's are not included in high power committees. Even when they are verbally

articulate with their representatives and urge for just causes, they do not get sufficient support from high castes.

The third type of oppression which the scheduled castes undergo is economic exploitation. The economic structure of India is embedded with caste monopolies over property rights, occupational imbalances and income irregularities. Even with improved efforts to bring equality in society, distinction between upper and lower castes in terms of their income, style of living, occupation etc., exist. At the bottom of the ladder are the poor farmers and landless agricultural labourers belonging to S.C.'s and S.T.'s whose income continues to be below 2,000 per annum.

In the occupational field there is inadequate representation of Scheduled Castes and ST's in Central and State Government Services. There are 15 percent and 7.5 percent of seats reservations for these categories. But inadequacy prevails in appointments. Educational imbalance continues to prevail in the post independent period. This is evident from few instances of student enrolment in schools and admission to various courses. Caste inequalities tends to breed educational inequality. Casteism is being encouraged

today in admission policies, appointment etc. Despite the fact that there has been marginal improvement in their socio-political and educational facilities, The position of the depressed castes remains deplorable. Their desire to rise above the levels of exploitation and poverty brings them to a stage of protest against the existing system. This is where caste movements begin to develop symptoms of protest.⁶

The initial protest movements of India, starting with the Buddhist revolt of 6th century B.C. were all geared to question the Central ideology of the concept of purity and pollution and Brahmanic supremacy. Our present concern is with the protests of more recent times, which are essentially of three types.

1. Bhakti movements which attempted to purify Hinduism (in the 12th to 18th centuries) of its evils and fought against the tyranny of the caste system but subsequently crystallized as essentially Hindu sects.
2. Movements oriented to a reinterpretation of the doctrines of Hinduism so as to cleanse it of its evil accretions and render it back to the original pristine purity, notably the neo-vedantic movements.
3. Movements which rejected Hinduism

6. Op. cit, page 69,

and led to the adoption of other faiths i.e. conversion movements.

The Bhakti movements were charismatic in that the rise and fall was roughly co-terminus with the saints who initiated them. Kabir, Ramanand and Raidas in North, Chaitanya in the East, Narsinh Mehta and Tukaram in the west, and Ramanuja and Basava in South India. All the Bhakti movements shared the following characteristics. First, they were 'reformist' in that they only attempted to correct some of the evils in Hinduism, particularly the practice of untouchability without questioning the caste system. Second, they were all initiated by caste Hindus and/or admitted clean caste Hindus also into the movement-fold.

This eventually led to the inevitable dominance of the priestly class, the Brahmins, against whose orthodoxy the protests were initiated. Third once castes with differing ritual rank came to be associated with the movements, the participants developed a dual identity, a religious ideological identity with fellow participants and a socio-cultural identity with social collectivities (castes) to which they traced their origin. The latter gained primacy in its day-to-day interactions and transactions and finally the caste

system got replicated in the new sects and each caste group within the movement got socially re-absorbed into the original groups. Fourth, none of the Bhakti movements had a programme of socio-economic upliftment but confined their attention to the ideational realm. In the final analysis, Bhakti movements although popular among the Dalits, in so far as they did not change their socio-economic status, the equality, professed by them remained meaningless.

By the middle of the 19th century a new trend of protest was set in motion by Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati and later by Gandhi. Their movements may be designated as neo-Vedantic movements.⁷ The Kernel of this movement was the disassociation of the practice of untouchability from Hinduism, the argument being that there was no scriptural sanction for this abominable practice. However, the neo-Vedantists upheld the Varna scheme as an essential pre-requisite for the preservation of harmony in society and purity of soul. This doctrinaire unity of Hindu religion was sought to be extended to social life by campaigning for the temple entry of the Dalits. Secular sources

7. Ganeshayam Shah, Anti-Untouchability movements, Paper presented in the Seminar on Removal of Untouchability. pp. 1-16, 1980, Unpublished, Ahmedabad.

of change such as legislation, education, improvement of material conditions, etc. were too pressed into service for the welfare of the Dalits. However, both the Bhakti and neo-Vedantic movements were protests from within initiated by the caste-Hindus. At best they brought about minor changes, helping the Dalits to make some adaptations and caste Hindus, some concessions. As against these adaptive movements came conversion to other religions which were essentially movements of disengagement from Hinduism.

This may be appropriately designated as proselytization. Proselytization in India was started by Muslims during the medieval period and later during the British period, by Christians. Although a handful of Hindu aristocrats did converts these religions, the vast majority of the converts were Dalits; Later the Dalits converted to Sikhism and Buddhism.

Although the new religions embraced by the Dalits professed equality and brotherhood of men, the variations in the antecedents of converts persisted in so far as they were drawn from castes with different status. The converted Dalits came to be known as neo-christians, neo-Buddhists etc.⁸

8. K.C.Alexander. Neo-Christians in Kerala, pp.153-61, 1972 in J.Michael Natar ed. The Untouchables in Contemporary India. Tucson.The University of Arizona Press.

omnipresent caste system penetrated into new religions, whether they were indigenous off-shoots of Hinduism (e.g., Sikhism, Buddhism), or alien religions of conquerors or colonial rulers such as Islam and Christianity.⁹ However, conversion to Buddhism was qualitatively different in that it was more or less a conscious choice by the Dalits.

In spite of the fact that the Bhakti and neo-Vedantic movements were adoptive in their orientation to Hinduism and proselytization was oriented to disengagement from Hinduism, they shared one thing in common - these movements were initiated by 'outsiders', that is, non-dalits, caste Hindus in the first case and foreign and native missionaries in the latter instance, with the exception of conversion to Buddhism. The Dalits were not the initiators of change, they were at the receiving end. Even if some changes did occur due to the above protest movements, it could not have brought about social development of the collectivity concerned.

9. G.A. Oddie. Religion in South Asia p.16, 1977
Manohar Book Service, Delhi.

It is against this background that we should view the Dalit movements which emerged and spread by the turn of the 19th century. The critical difference between the erstwhile movements-Bhakti, Neo-Vedantic and proselytization movements-and the new Dalit movements was that the latter were initiated by the Dalits themselves.

The oppressive as well as the elastic character of the caste system and the failure of even prose-lytization movements - to emancipate the lower castes, seems to have prompted many Dalit groups to improve their status through sanskritization. Although the usual tendency is to view sanskritization as a cultural process aimed at bringing about changes in the states of life of Dalits, it had important structural ramifications in that protest orientation and counter-mobilization were necessary attributes of sanskritizations movements,¹⁰ as Dalits often did it in a spirit of recalcitrance and the upper castes invariably opposed such attempts.

The central tendency in Hindu society was that the jatis in Hindus were the value givers norm-

10. Imtiaz Ahmad, Caste Mobility Movement in North India, pp.164-91, 1971 The Economic and Social History Review, vol.VII 1(2).

setters and institutional builders and others followed them. For once the Dalits provided the lead through the formation of their caste associations, which became the base for self-respect and challenging upper caste authority. We may identify two sub-types of these Dalit movements based on two factors, the resource base of the jatis (population size, presence of at least a small section which was economically independent) and the consequences of the movement. First, those who had favourable resource base and succeeded in crossing the pollution line and ceased to be untouchables.

The Ezhavas of Kerala and the Naders of Tamil Nadu are the classic cases of this type.¹¹ Second, those who had a relatively weaker source base (as compared with the first group) and did not succeed in crossing the pollution line, inspite of a vigorous protest movement among them. This type is exemplified by the Mahars of Maharashtra and the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh.¹² Faced with such a predicament the latter group preferred to opt out of the Hindu fold, as

11. A. Aiyappan, *Social Revolution in Kerala Village, 1965*, Asia Publishing House, London.

12. S. Patvardan, *Change in India's Harijans, 1973*, Orient Longman, Delhi and Owen M. Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Ambedkar and his followers did by embracing Buddhism. But even then they may not be entirely successful in shaking of the shackles of untouchability to escape the label of 'scheduled castes'.¹³ Given such a situation they may attempt to build "parallel cultural systems and refuse to get absorbed in the mainstream of Hinduism through conversion. This is evident by the emergence of the Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra.

It is clear from our analysis that unlike the earlier movements initiated by outsiders, the movements in which the Dalits participated consciously and voluntarily brought about a sea-change in their socio-cultural identity and self-definition. While some of them like the Ezhavas of Kerala and the Nadars of Tamil Nadu succeeded in emancipating themselves from the inhuman practice of untouchability, others like Mahars of Maharashtra, the Chamars of U.P., though not similarly successful, gained a new sense of self-respect and human dignity. However, generally speaking the potential of these movements too was limited as they did not make a frontal attack on the very framework of caste system.

13. Adele Fiske, Scheduled Caste Buddhist Organization in J. Michael Mahars, ed. pp.113-42.

In fact, the Dalits invariably invoked their caste status to wrest benefits from official agencies. This being so all Dalit movements old and new were at best reformist in their ideological orientations and they operated as interest groups to better their socio-economic conditions within the overall framework of the society. Therefore, these movements by themselves could not have brought about any substantial social change and development of the Dalits, as a whole, their status as 'untouchables' persists, although untouchability is officially abolished and described by social reform movements of all hues. This hiatus between their official status as equal citizens before law, and their being treated as untouchables by the clean castes, can at least be partly located in Dalit powerlessness the inadequate development of their political clout.

The prevailing conditions of the Dalits could not have bestowed on them any political bargaining power, their substantial numbers notwithstanding. Freedom as such, had no meaning for them given the conditions of their existence.

At all India level the political articulation of Dalits interests and identity was first initiated by the great lawyer and constitutional expert,

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, a Maharashtrian Mahar. The first visible manifestation of this was found in his demand for separate electorates for the scheduled castes. The chief instrument employed by the state in India was to bestow political power on the Dalits in the guarantee of 'reserved' representation to them in the parliament, state legislatures and local self-government bodies, roughly in proportion to their population. More importantly, it has come to be accepted as a convention by all political parties (irrespective of their ideological orientation) which succeeded in capturing power, to give representation in the ministries formed by them, to Dalits.

This co-option of the Dalits into the establishment was not without its consequences viewed in terms of their mobilization. To begin with the competing political aspirants from among the Dalits get divided on party lines. They face the serious dilemma of competing loyalty between their ideological party affiliations on the one hand and the welfare of their constituency - the Dalits on the other. Second, those Dalit leaders within the ruling party competed with one another to secure position of power and help. This in turn leads to the emergence of factions and

fissions among the Dalits within the same party. The net result of all these has been the political castration of the Dalits, rendering them a highly fractionated social collectivity incapable of serious bargaining with the powers that-that-be. The unanticipated consequence of the policy of protective discrimination seems to be the vivisection of Dalits.

The Dalit political mobilization on the national scene can be traced to the late 1920s when the British Government initiated a series of Round Table Conferences to provide political representation to the scheduled castes. In the second conference in 1931, Dr. Ambedkar was invited as the representative of the depressed classes but he soon realized that precious little could be achieved through the official channels. Ambedkar firmly believed that unless the caste system was destroyed the social evil of untouchability could not be removed and he realized that to achieve this objective the Dalits should have political power.

Keeping this end in view he established in 1942, the All India Scheduled Caste Federation (AISCF) at an All-India Depressed Class Conference in Nagour. In 1957 the (AISCF) was dissolved and the Republican Party of India (RPI) was formed. Although an exclusive

political party of the Dalits, the RPI endorsed the fundamental tenets of ^{the} Indian constitution and it pursued these objectives through the medium of parliamentary democracy. The specific aims of party are fighting for equality of all Indian citizens with a provision to give the Dalits some special considerations to bring about a balanced Indian society and for the removal of exploitation of man and class by class.



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After the death of Dr. Ambedkar the RPI gradually weakened and a large number of its followers joined the Congress party. In 1970 with the formal split of the RPI, two factions emerged, one openly favouring the congress policy and getting co-opted into it, while the other maintained its distinct identity, although without much political clout. The visible indications of the party's existence at the national level are the periodic charter of demands it submitted to the Government, and the very often ineffective and the very infrequent collective actions it launches, focussing on the problems of the Dalits. However, through its persistent demands the RPI was successful in pressing the Government to pass the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976 which prescribes more stringent

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punishment for those who practice untouchability replacing the ~~Untouchability~~ ~~Offences~~ Act, 1955. The RPI failed to make an impact at the national level for the following reasons:-

1. The party was too weak and localized and even in those pockets where it existed, its rank were not united.
2. The party in power commanded the resources to extend patronage to the aspiring Dalit leadership through the policy of protective discriminations. These leaders emerged as serious challengers of the RPI leaders.
3. They did not have an ideology or an action programme radically different from that of other parties.
4. The RPI leaders often co-opted into the ruling parties at the state and central levels, thereby eroding the potentiality of the party for any serious and sustained mobilization of the Dalits.

Faced with such predicaments the Dalit youths gradually have become restive. The visible expression of their mental unrest was first manifested in finding a 'voice' for themselves, the Dalit Literacy movement gradually emerged.¹⁴ By 1972 the Dalit Panthers came

14. Uttam Bhoite, and Anuradha - Bhoite, The Dalit Sahitya Movement in Maharashtra, pp.60-75, 1977, A Sociological Analysis Sociological Bulletin vol.26(1).

into being as a distinct cultural political group with their encouragement in urban Maharashtra, particularly in Bombay and Poona.

The Dalit Panthers are disillusioned with conversion to other religions (most of them are neo-Buddhists) and participation in parliamentary politics. Notwithstanding their continued allegiance to Ambedkar, at least part of their ideological kit is drawn from Marxism. They consciously opt for confrontation or a total revolution, at the same time they do not attest the Marxian understanding of the Indian reality in its entirety as they think it over emphasizes the economic factors and practically ignores other dimensions of the social reality. It is significant to note here that the Dalit Panthers count not only scheduled castes and tribes and neo-Buddhists as Dalits, but the entire toiling masses-industrial workers farm labourers landless tenants, poor peasants - not all of whom are drawn from scheduled castes. The Dalit Panthers should be credited with an appropriate diagnosis of the problems confronting the Dalits. Similarly their including the poor and oppressed from the non-scheduled castes in the Dalit category provides an adequate base for collective mobilization and action of the deprived. And yet, their appeals remain unheeded

and no collective action work the name has been piloted by them so far. The reason for this non-performance should be located in the structure of deprivation in Indian society. As the Dalits are subjected to cumulative dominations and victims of multiple deprivations. Their experiential reality is not authentic to and shared by others who are simply economically poor. Small wonder, then, that the clean-caste poor do not share their 'fraternity' with the Dalit poor.

Our study reveals that neither the activities of the reformist RPI nor the radical verbiage of the Dalits Panthers can deliver the goods for the Dalits. Even if the argument that the Dalit Panthers have potential to trigger off a universal protest enveloping all the Dalits of India (as Dalit Panthers define them) is accepted, they are nowhere near the achievement of this target, even the ideological appeal of the Panthers remains a sectarian enterprise confined to certain jatis in specific regions. On the other hand, the policy of protective discrimination remains equally ineffective. In spite of the representation of the Dalits from the national parliament to local panchayats, their participation in the decision-making process remains peripheral and perfunctory. Even their free and

unfettered participation in routine elections does not take place with ease. They are physically assaulted, politically intimidated, socially humiliated and economically threatened in the exercise of the the constitutionally guaranteed universal adult franchise. It is necessary to understand the reasons for this predicament, which brings us to the point, namely the economic identity of the Dalits and the nature of class consciousness.

In the formal legal sense the Dalits are no more subjects but citizens. But the official guarantee does not automatically lead to the authentic exercise of their political rights we have mentioned above. The most important constraining factor in this context is the discrepancy between their official political status (citizens) and actual economical predicament (slaves). It is common knowledge that the vast majority of the Dalits live in India's vast countryside enmeshed in traditional master-slave relations : they are not yet a free-floating proletariat.

In order to situate the Dalits in the economy of India it is necessary to understand the source of their livelihood. Broadly speaking, we can categorise the sources of livelihood into three : First, those who depend on the investment of their wealth and assets - the

the capitalists, rentiers and landlords. There are, if any, only a handful of the scheduled castes in this category. Second, those who invest capitalist and expertise skill simultaneously - the traders and entrepreneurs and owner-cultivators. There is a small substratum of the scheduled castes in this category. Third, those who are exclusively dependent on their expertise or labour-power for their livelihood, the majority of the Dalits belong to this category. However, there are at least three broad sub-categories of this last category : (i) Those who are in the top professions (Medicine, law engineering, university teaching etc.) and the upper echelons of the civilian bureaucracy and the defence services.

Understandably a few scheduled castes are in these occupations, thanks to the policy of reservations. (ii) Those who are in the middle level occupations (school teachers, nurses, clerks, army jawans etc.). An increasing proportion of the scheduled castes find their placement in this category due to the governmental policy of protective discrimination. But their representation in these services remains much smaller than what is warranted by their size in the general population. (iii) Those who are in the lowest rung of the occupational ladder earning their livelihood through selling their

unskilled labour power. The overwhelming majority belong to this category. Even here, their preponderance is in the disadvantageous sectors - agricultural workers in the rural areas, labourers in the unorganized, informal, underpaid urban sector. Thus it is clear that Dalits are economically the most disadvantaged and they are located, predominantly in the rural and un-organized urban work forces.

It cannot be denied that a small section of the scheduled castes, particularly those from the dominant groups among them (the typical examples are the Chamars, the Mahars and the Pulayas etc.), have experienced an upward mobility in the secular context through the state governments' measures have the following unanticipated consequences. According to Prof. P.K. Jomman ¹⁵

(1) The acceleration of a class polarization among the scheduled castes and the emergence of a bourgeoisie among them. (2) Crystallization of enmity and envy towards the well-off section among the scheduled castes on the part of the clean castes, particularly the poor among the latter. (3) The alienation of the scheduled castes elites, particularly the urban elite, from their

15. P.K. Jomman, Scheduled Castes : Then and now, In B.N. Pande, ed., The Spirit of India, pp.486-93, 1975, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

antecedent social base. At the same time they do not easily get absorbed into the clean castes groups, leading to an identity crisis. (4) The emergence of a leadership from the well-off scheduled castes which often act as political brokers and spokesmen of the Dalits, with the top leadership in their respective context, but use their leadership roles as a political resource to further their career interests and material prospects, in the process endangering the wider interests of their less fortunate Dalit brethren.

Although slavery was formally abolished in India a century ago, its current incarnations with minor modifications abound in contemporary India—forced labour bonded labour, patron-client system. Once again, legally all these practices stand abolished but the utter economic dependence of the Dalits on their rural employers, who are drawn from the upper or intermediate castes, render it difficult for them to wriggle out of their substantive slavery. The non-Dalit agricultural workers do not suffer from this socio-cultural disability. This makes the organization of the rural poor on a common platform nearly impossible. The Indian agrarian proletariat has not yet emerged; they are fractionated caste-wise, and since caste operates in a

regional-cultural context there is scarcely any possibility of mobilizing the Dalits on an all-India basis. This is evident from the fact that while in certain pockets of India Dalits revolts and protests are visible, even virulent, in adjacent regions there may not be any overt manifestation of mobilization, that is conflict, with their oppressors.

Even in those areas where Dalit consciousness has crystalized on class lines the political parties have ~~meted~~ the prospects of their universal mobilization. The Dalits were left out from the purview of mobilization even by the communist parties of India. A.K.Gopalan, the Veteran CPM leader, remarked thus— "We have to make them (the landless labourers) the hub of our activities. Reluctance to take up their specific demands, fearing that this will drive the rich and middle peasants away from us, will have to be given up¹⁶. This means that agrarian proletariat constituted mainly by the Dalits were not the focus of 'Peasant' movements in India. The other thing to be remembered is that these communist parties of India (CPI and CPM) which are caught in the vortex of electoral politics, have to

16. A.K.Gopalan, Strengthen Kisan Sabha, (Presidential Address at the 15th session of All India Kisan Sabha) Peoples Democracy vol.4 (6), pp.5-8.

ponder to the caste sentiments of the Dalits to gain electoral support contrary to their doctrine that caste consciousness is false' and the only authentic consciousness in class based. ¹⁷

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17. T.K.Oommen, Mobilisation of Primordial collectivities and social development. The Indian situation, Kerala Sociologist, vol.viii, pp.78-112.

Certain ideas in this chapter have been used from Prof. T.K.Oommen's unpublished Seminar on ' Sources of deprivation the case of Dalits, 1985 New Delhi.

Chapter - 2

AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON DALIT EMANCIPATION

It is a well considered opinion that no one else has studied the problem of caste so deeply as Dr. Ambedkar. In this chapter we analysed his views on social reconstruction, social reorganisation and Dalit emancipation with special reference to caste and destruction of caste.

Having led the downtrodden since 1920 for 35 years Ambedkar had brought a new awakening in them. His leadership can be understood in three distinct phases. In the first phase, from 1913 to 1930, he was more of a social reformer fighting against the practice of untouchability, against the institution of Varnashrama. The second phase begins with 1930 when as a political leader, he stressed the importance of acquiring political power for the untouchables in order to enhance their social and economic freedom. In the last phase of his life he embraced Buddhism, led lakhs of his caste men to it, openly emerging as a religious revolutionary. He spread the principles of Buddhism and converted untouchables to Buddhism as the final revolutionary step

of his struggle.¹ He believed that the social emancipation and political aspirations of the depressed classes must be subordinated to Buddhist religious sentiments and religious thinking. This became the touchstone of his later thinking. He emphasised two central themes: one, destruction of culturally defined inequality and second, destruction of economic inequality. A common thread runs through his writings: socio-economic transformation in India requires a cultural revolution, one that will not only destroy the culture of the past but also build something of value in its place. Therefore it is necessary to analyse his views in detail.

ON SELF RESPECT AND SELF RULE

In the early days of his struggle he criticised the then ruling bureaucracy as conservative, repressive and irresponsible. He mostly emphasised the self-respect and self-elevation of his caste men. In one of his speeches he quoted Shakespeare's words to awaken his men : "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."² He explained it in detail saying "let your mission, therefore be to educate

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1. Joseph Mathew, Ideology, Protest and Social Mobility among Mahars of Maharashtra and Pulayyas of Kerala, p.124, 1984, Thesis submitted to J.N.U.
 2. Dananjay Keer, Ambedkar : Life and Mission, p.27, 1984, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

and preach the idea of education to those at least who are near to and in close contact with you."

These are the seeds of the self respect, the self help movement, the revolt against the philosophy of helplessness which makes ignorant people resign themselves to their fate and accept their position as a divine desperation. The lines from Shakespeare also suggests caution and watchfulness to utilise every opportunity and the spirit of resilience. In 1918 he wrote a review article on Bertrand Russell's book 'Reconstruction of Society' in the journal of the Indian Economic Society. Describing it as a war book, he observed that Russell was right in believing that war could not be abolished by rationalistic appeals alone, but by positive life of impulses and passions antagonistic to those that led to War.

Russell was against war, but not against quietism. According to Russell, only activity led to growth; quietism was another name for death. Force was energy which must be used constructively to achieve anything and destructively as violence. Ambedkar was afraid that Indians might read in Russell's book a justification for their philosophical bias for the doctrine of non-violence. In the end Ambedkar added that Russell deserved full credit for having emphasised the psychic basis of

social life. Social reconstruction developed upon the right understanding of the relations of individuals in the society - a problem which had eluded the group of many sociologists.

About this time the South Borough Committee dealing with Franchise in the light of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, examined representatives of different interests and communities. Karamveer Sinde and Ambedkar were called upon to give evidence before them. Ambedkar demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for depressed classes in proportion to their population. Later, in one of his letters to 'The Times of India' dated 16th January 1919, he expressed his views on the demand for Home-Rule. He said that before demanding Home Rule it was the duty of advanced classes to grant social equality to the lower and depressed classes who belong to the same religion, followed the same customs, lived with in the same borders, with the same aspirations for liberty and home rule. For everybody recognised, he observed, that home rule was as much the birth right of an untouchable as that of a Brahmin. The first duty, therefore of the advanced classes was to educate, enlighten and elevate them. Until that attitude was adopted, the day on which India

would have home rule was distant. In the first issue of his fortnightly 'Mook Nayak' in January 1920 he wrote that India was the home of inequality. Hindu society, he observed, was just like a tower which had several storeys without a ladder or an entrance. One was to die in the storey in which one was born. Hindu society, he continued, consisted of three parts, the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins and the untouchables. He pitied souls of those persons who believed there existed God in animals and as well as in inanimate things, and yet treated their co-religionist as untouchables. He charged, not the spread of knowledge and literacy but accumulation and monopoly was the aim of the Brahmins. In his view the backwardness of the non-Brahmins was due to lack of education and power. In another article Ambedkar stated the Swarajya wherein there were no fundamental rights guaranteed for the depressed classes, would not be a Swarajya to them.

It will be a new slavery for them. In the first All India Conference convened by untouchables in 1920 at Nagpur Ambedkar held that, 'however that caste Hindus worked hard for the welfare of the untouchables, they did not know their mind.' That is why he was fundamentally opposed to any organisation started by the caste Hindus

for the uplift of depressed classes. He remained independent, refused to join any organisation throughout his life.

In all his speeches, writings and letters he asked the depressed classes to be united to work in combination for their liberation. He said without unity among them they cannot attain real liberation from the Hindu society. a point which is true even in present day India. Diversity among the downtrodden, lack of unity is their real enemy. That is why Dr. Ambedkar repeatedly stressed this aspect of unity.

Ambedkar made a distinction between social reforms in the sense of reforms of Hindu family and social reforms in the sense of reconstruction and reorganisation of Hindu society. According to him "the social movements inaugurated by reformers like Ranade and his organisation Social Conference, related to remarriage of widows, women's right of property, education of women, child marriages and other matters. While the later type related to the abolition of caste system and the reconstruction of Hindu society on the basis of equality, but this began at the top from the bottom."³ Princes

2. Ibid, p.46.

like Chatrapati Sanu and Sayaji Rao Gayakwad and leaders like Karanveer Shinde toiled untiringly for the uplift of the untouchables. Despite these high souled services to the cause none could stir in the heart of these suppressed people an emotion of confidence, hope and aspiration for their own salvation. A feeling of dependence,, a sense of guardianship and an impression of patronage had grown among them. The untouchables knew this but could not express the difference between help and self-help. Self-help is their basic desire which is the best help.

So indifferent and collous was the attitude of the vast masses of the caste Hindus, to the problem that they thought the fate of these suppressed untouchable Hindus was to be determined at their leisure and pleasure. The intention of Hindu reformers was good, but its execution was worse. Their resolutions carried more gestures than active struggle for breaking the shackles that bound the depressed classes. Politically rigorous, valient and watchful, socially most of them wished to whitewash a decayed house. It meant for Ambedkar Hindu society was a decayed house. It had to be totally destroyed and reconstructed. Minor changes like reforming Hindu family would not help. They forgot the truth that whitewashing does not save a dilapidated house. You

must pull it down and build anew. These were the observations made by Dr. Ambedkar on Hindu social reform organisations. The case of Ambedkar was quite different. He sprang from amongst the untouchables. He was a leader who thought as they thought and felt as they felt. He had seen much, suffered much and also studied much. He was a man who regarded the woes and miseries of these classes as a personal humiliation and therefore, he had taken a vow to make self-respecting citizens out of those virtual slaves.

Ambedkar hated the sense of dependency and abhorred the feeling of patronage of the caste Hindu reformers. He held in utter contempt the organisations and movements that prospered or reared in the name of depressed classes wherein untouchables were treated for functional occasions.⁴ Ambedkar was a believer in the divine principle that self-help is the best help. He diagnosed the disease correctly. He knew from history that injustice is not removed till the sufferer himself does away with it by his own exertions and actions. 'As long as the conscience of a slave

4. Ibid. p.59.

does not fill with hatred for his slavery, there is no hope for his salvation.'

'Tell the slave he is a slave and he will revolt,' was the slogan raised by Ambedkar. He exhorted the untouchables to fight for self-elevation. Self help, self elevation and self respect was the symbol on the standard he unfurled. It was the trident with which he goaded his people to action. The leader of the untouchables talked to them in a very caustic manner. He remonstrated with them in a tone; 'there was once tearing, carping and goading. He cried out, "my heart breaks to see the pitiable sight of your faces and to hear your sad voices. You have been goading from time immemorial and yet you are not ashamed to hug your helplessness as an inevitability. Why do you not perish in the prenatal stage instead? Why do you worsen and sadden the picture of sorrows, poverty, slavery and burden of the world with your deplorable, despicable and detestable miserable life? You had better die relieve this world if you cannot rise to a new life and if you cannot rejuvenate yourselves. As a matter of fact it is your birth-right to get food, shelter and clothing in this land in equal proportion with every individual, high or low.

If you believe in living a respectable life, you must believe in self-help which is the best help.⁵

In April 1926 he visited Jejuri. There was a meeting at which he suggested that the untouchables should seek some land for colonisation. Upon this one of the speakers replied that if they failed to abolish untouchability they would act according to the wishes of their leader. The idea of colonisation was indeed astounding. But it shows also to what extent the leader himself was distressed and disgusted with the environment in the country. In a conference at Mohad on March 19, 20, 1927, in an inspiring tone he said, "no lasting progress can be achieved unless we put ourselves to revitalise our thoughts. I, therefore ask you now to take vow from this moment to renounce eating carrions.

"It is high time that we rooted out from our mind the idea of highness and lowness among ourselves. We will attain self-elevation only if we learn to self-help, regain our self respect and gain self-knowledge and impressed upon them the importance of the entering of

5. Ibid., p.60.

government services and of education."⁶ In conclusion he said in a moving tone, "there will be no difference between parents and animals if they will not desire to see their children in a better position than their own."

By one resolution the conference appealed to the caste Hindus to help the untouchables to secure their civic rights, to employ them in services, offer food to untouchable students. Lastly, it appealed to the government to provide them with free and compulsory primary education, give aid to the depressed classes hostels. The depressed classes saw in Ambedkar a liberator preaching them the grand universal law that "liberty is never received as a gift it has to be fought for. Self-elevation is not achieved by the blessing of others but only by ones own struggle and deed."

Ambedkar awakened his people by quoting the great words of Ruskin, "That" doing is a great thing. and Carlyle says that the end of a man is action. He also says that action is the governing character of all makers of history. Reiterating his views after Mahad's struggle he said that untouchability must be condemned

6. Ibid.,

and abolished not only as the need of hour but also as the command of true religion, not only as a policy or as an act of expediency but also a matter of justice, not only as a matter of obligation but also as a service to humanity. He said that notion of purifying oneself with animal urine was more ridiculous and despicable than the notion of defilement at the human touch.

Ambedkar started his fortnightly Marathi paper 'Bahishkrit Bharat' on April 3, 1927 in Bombay. In the first issue he thundered that, "annihilation of caste system is my birth-right." He demanded that the temples and water courses should be open to the untouchables. He wrote editorial after editorial in his short, crisp and fearless style, asking the government not to trust the good sense of the local bodies for its implementation as they were dominated by persons who were narrow minded, old fashioned, orthodox, reactionaries and antagonistic to the interests of the depressed classes. This powerful criticism is true even in the case of Hindu bureaucrats and officials even now. Through his journal he stated that there were some who raised violent protests against the insulting treatment meted out to the Indians in South Africa and

to the Indian students in Britain, and at the same time denied human rights to their own countrymen and co-religionist in India. Ambedkar exposed their inconsistent attitude, their selfishness and shamelessness. He observed that, "lost rights are never regained by begging and by appeals, but by relentless struggle." "goats are used for sacrificial offerings and not lions."⁷

Ambedkar held that equality meant raising the level of lower classes to the level of higher classes as regards the agency which imparts education, he said. In an editorial that no real progress could be made in education if education was entrusted to the teachers coming from the Brahmin community whose minds conceived an abhorrence for the lower classes and showed callous disregard for the intellectual uplift of any other class, treated human beings worse than dogs and never treated them with equality and kindness. He declared that teachers are the Charioteers of the nation. There is no question more important from the stand point of social reform than the selection of proper persons in this teaching profession.

He also stated that education is a noble, national

7. Ibid., p.80.

and enlightened work. This work should not be entrusted to Brahmins. Ambedkar argued that government would be able to achieve genuine progress by weeding out self centred, nation destroying agencies. The progress of the nation, he added, would be stronger on such a broader base. The base is not to recruit narrow-minded teachers. He warned depressed classes that nothing could be achieved, if they did not adopt an aggressive attitude and prove by their thoughts, words and deeds that they would not now tolerate insult and disabilities any further. Ambedkar replying on Satyagraha said that "mere spread of education and exposition of scriptures would not be able to root out the age long disease of untouchability and caste system. The disease he said, was deep rooted and mere dressing it with bandages of knowledge or ingenuous schemes would not cure it. Deadly diseases required drastic remedies."

The question now, observed Ambedkar was whether religion was meant for men or men for religion. He declared, "to clean the unclean, to raise the fallen and to elevate untouchables to a status of equality was the real meaning of culture."⁸ According to Ambedkar,

8. Ibid., p.91.

fight, whether violent or non-violent, was just if the end sought was good. If the end sought was just, the insistence on its achievement and the fight for it must be equally just. If the end was unjust and unfair, then insistence on its achievement must be unjust. But the justness of an end did not change with the means employed for its achievement, the justness of an end did not vary with the employment of different means as does a verb change with its subject. In his opinion it was not possible to observe at all times and on all occasions the grand principle "non-violence is the most proper law." Otherwise, he added man could not stir even his eyelid for fear of killing the germs in the air or eat fruits or drink water, breathe the air, cut the grass and trees.

The man who come to kill you or to outrage the modesty of a woman, or sets fire to another house or commits theft and is killed while struggling to escape, dies by his own sins as all aggressors and wicked man do. If wounding ones feeling is violence, he said Gandhi's Satyagraha is also based on violence. 'Truly speaking he concluded, the law should be non-violent wherever possible; violent wherever necessary.'⁹

9. Ibid., p.82.

Emphasising his point, he said that untouchability was such an abominable stain that it would not matter even if some lives were sacrificed to wash it out. He preached his people 'dragging on life somehow or to live like a crow for a thousand years is not the only and worthy way to live in this world. Life can be ennobled and immortalised by sacrificing it for a lasting good such as the cause of truth, a vow, honour or country. For protection of human rights several great men have immoted themselves at the altar of duty.' 'Better to die in prime youth for a great cause than to live like an oak and do nothing.'

He questioned the Hindus if you say 'your' religion is our religion, then your rights and our rights must be equal. But is this the case? If not, on what grounds do you say we must remain in Hindu fold inspite of kicks and rebuffs?' 'The religion which discriminates between two followers is partial. The religion which inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all. Religion is not for the appellation of such an unjust order. Religion and slavery are incompatible.

Ambedkar defined religion as something that offered you prosperity or elevation first in this world and then

salvation, the former should be the first article of every religion. Untouchability is another appellation for slavery. No race can be raised by destroying its self-respect. So if you really want to uplift untouchables, you must treat them in social order as free citizens, free to carve out their destiny. Here he reminded of the French declaration of human rights preaching revolt against social, religious and political privileges and declaring that all men are born equal and died equals. Ambedkar urged that the ultimate aim of politics was to maintain and protect human rights. Removal of untouchability and 'inter-caste marriages and inter-dinners will not put an end to our ills. He emphasised Hindu society should be reorganised on two principles, equality and absence of casteism.

The Second Mahad conference declared that Manusmriti which directed molten lead to be poured into the ears of such Shudras, as would hear and read the vedas and which decried the Shudras stunted their growth, impaired their self-respect and perpetuated their social, economic, religious slavery, must be publicly burnt. It was thus ruthlessly condemned. The conference condemning Manusmriti outright, said that it was a symbol of inequality, cruelty injustice from

the point of view of the downtrodden classes. On December 15, 1927, Ambedkar with his followers had burnt Manusmriti publicly. In another resolution they demanded that Hindu society must be reduced to one class only and by other resolution it demanded that the present priestly profession be turned into a democratic institution allowing everyone who desire to have the opportunity to become a priest.

At a women's conference Ambedkar said 'never mind if your dress is full of patches, but see that it is clean. Attend more to the cultivation of mind and the spirit of self respect. Ambedkar himself revealed afterwards in 1938, on the burning of Manusmriti that it was not made for the sake of mere hatred, the Manusmriti has been indeed the charter of rights for the caste Hindus and at the same time a Bible of slavery for the untouchables. In an interview with T.V. Parvate, a frontrank journalist, Ambedkar said the bonfire of Manusmriti was quite intentional, it was a very cautious and drastic step, but was taken with a view to forcing the Hindus attention. At intervals such drastic remedies are a necessary.

If you do not knock at the door, none will open it. That it does not contain good principles and that Manu

himself was not a sociologist and was mere fool. We made bonfire of it because we view it as symbol of injustice under which we have been crushed across centuries.¹⁰ Ambedkar reminded the ^{un}touchables that they must abolish their slavery themselves. It is most disgraceful to live at the cost of one's self-respect. Self respect is a most vital factor in life. Without it man is a mere cipher. To live worthily one has to overcome difficulties. It is out of hardwork and ceaseless struggle ~~alone that one derives strength~~ ~~alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition.~~ Everyone is to die someday or other. But one must resolve to lay down one's life in enriching the noble ideals of self respect and in bettering human life. Nothing is disgraceful than to live a life ^{devoid} of self-respect and without love for the country.

Supporting the move of a Parsi gentleman against priesthood Ambedkar in his article 'wanted an anti-priest craft association'¹¹ ^{said} that the Hindu priestly class is in no way superior ethically, educationally or otherwise to the average member of Parsi priesthood. The counts in the indictment, he proceeded against the hereditary Hindu priests are numerous and appalling. Priest is a clong on the wheel of civilization. Man

10. P.V. Pavate, 'Des Ghelalaya Lulakhati' Marathi Journal, 22.5.1920, 1920.

11. In Bombay Chronicle, 8th November 1920.

is born and becomes a member of a family and then in time he dies. All along the priest shadows like an evil genius. Ambedkar described the officiating Brahmin as a miserable specimen of humanity and further he said he preaches the shame of being a middle man between the unseen powers and the helpless man and makes living by it.

No country was good enough, he observed, to rule another country, and it was equally true that no class was good enough to rule another class. As the fundamental principle of the modern democratic state was the recognition of the value of the individual, full opportunity should be accorded to each to attain his maximum development in that life. But living and operative faith he pointed out, of the oligarchy in India was against this ideal.

Although Dr. Ambedkar insisted upon the necessity of securing political power he said that political power cannot be a penance for the ills of depressed classes. Their salvation lies in their social elevation. There is a great necessity to disturb their pathetic contentment and to instill into them that divine discontent which is the spring of all elevation, will result in the emancipation of our people and

establishment of such a state of society in this country of ours in which one man will have one value in all domains of life.

Ambedkar, who had launched a movement in his own way in Nasik for temple entry swiftly changed the rudder of the ship of his movement. He urged his people to devote their energies to gain political rights and power. The salvation of the depressed classes will come only when a caste Hindu ^{is} made to think and is forced to feel that he must alter his ways. I want a revolution in the mentality of caste Hindus. For that you must create a crisis by direct action against the customary code of conduct of the caste Hindus. The crisis will compel the Hindus to think and once he begins to think he will be more ready to change than he is otherwise to be. The great defect in the policy of least resistance and relent infiltration of rational ideas lies in this that they do not produce a crisis.

If Hindu religion is to be the religion of social equality then an amendment of its code to provide temple entry is not enough. What is required is to purge it off the doctrine of Chaturvarna. This is the

root cause of all inequality and also ^{the} parent of caste system and untouchability which are merely other forms of inequality. Unless it is done, the depressed classes will not only reject the temple entry but also the Hindu faith. For to accept temple entry and be content with it is to compromise with evil and to barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in them. We want equality in Hindu religion. The Chaturvarna must be rooted out. The principle of privileges for the higher classes and poverty for the lower classes must be ended now.

ON CASTE

It is indeed difficult to compress his social thought in one chapter. To understand his thoughts on caste and its annihilation one must carefully examine his books on these subjects. Citing well known ethnologists, Ambedkar said that the population of India is a mixture of Aryans, Dravidians, Mangolians and Seythians. Through constant contact and mutual intercourse they evolved a common culture that superceded their distinctive cultures. Ethnically all people are heterogenous. It is the unity of culture that is the basis of homogeneity. He continues, it is because of this homogeneity that caste becomes a problem so difficult to be explained. If Hindu society were a mere federation of mutually exclusive units, the matter would be simple enough. But

caste is a parcelling of an already homogeneous units and the explanation of castes is the explanation of this process of parcelling.¹² After the critical evolution of the various characters of caste he stated that "prohibition, or rather the absence of inter-marriage-endogamy, to be concise is the only one that can be called the essence of caste when rightly understood".¹³

For Ambedkar, Caste in India means an artificial chopping-off^{of} the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. It follows that Endogamy is the characteristic peculiar to caste. He regarded endogamy as a key to the mystery of the caste system. showing how endogamy is maintained. To prove the genesis and the mechanism of caste Ambedkar went on to say that Sati, enforced widowhood and girl marriage are customs that were primarily intended to preserve endogamy against exogamy. Thus the super imposition

12. B.R. Ambedkar, Castes in India, p.2.
1970, Education Department, Publication, Maharashtra Government, Bombay.

13. Ibid., p.3.

of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste. Strict endogamy could not be preserved without these customs while caste without endogamy is a sham. There is no difference between caste and endogamy. The meaning and definitions are one and the same. Rejecting ^{the} atomic conception of individuals in a society Ambedkar argues that to say individuals makeup society is trivial, society is always composed of classes and an individual in a society is always a member of a class. Answering to the question that what was the class that first made itself into a caste, the ways that the above mentioned customs in all their strictness are obtainable only in one caste namely the Brahmin, who occupy the highest place in the social hierarchy of the Hindu-society and as the prevalence of these customs in non-Brahmin castes is derivative of their observance is neither strict nor complete and proved that Brahmins are the class that created caste. And he says: for class and caste, so to say are next door neighbours and it is only a span that separates the two. A caste is an enclosed class.¹⁴ "The strict observance of these customs and the social superiority arrogated by the priestly class in all ancient civilizations are sufficient to prove that

14. Ibid., p.15.

Brahmins were the originators of this "unnatural institution" founded and maintained through these unnatural means." According to Ambedkar caste existed before Manu whom he described as a dare devil. Manu was an upholder of it and therefore philosophised about it, but certainly he did not and could not ordain the present order of Hindu society. His work ended with the codification of existing caste rules and the preaching of caste Dharma. There is a strong belief in the minds of orthodox Hindus that Hindu society was somehow moulded into the frame work of the caste system and that it is an organization consciously created by the Shastras. Not only does this belief exist, but it is being justified on the ground that it cannot but be good, because it is ordained by the Shastras and the Shastras cannot be wrong.

At some time in the history of Hindus the priestly class socially detached itself from the rest of the body of people and through closed door policy became a caste by itself. The other classes being subjected to the law of social division of labour underwent differentiation, some into large, others into very minute groups. Ambedkar believed that the insularity of the Brahmins was responsible for the endogamous character

of the classes. Endogamy or the closed door system, was a fashion in the Hindu society, and as it had originated from the Brahmin caste, it was whole heartedly invited by all the non-Brahmin, sub-division, who in their turn, became endogamous castes. It is the "infection of imitation" that caught all these sub-divisions on their onward march of differentiation and has turned them into castes. In the process of imitation those who failed to strictly observe customs like Sati, life long widow-hood and child marriage were ex-communicated. According to him the whole process of caste-formation in India is a process of imitation of the higher by lower and says that caste in the singular number is an unreality. Castes existed only in plural number.

ON ANNIHILATION OF CASTE

In Ambedkar's famous thesis 'Annihilation of caste' he critically analysed and interpreted caste system, explained the evil of caste system, showed in a powerful and lucid manner the ways and means of destroying caste system. To start with, he questioned whether social reform should precede political reform. According to him this is the point which is at issue. And one class is not fit to rule another. Making a distinction between social reform in the sense of the Hindu family

and social reforms in the sense of reorganisation and reconstruction of the Hindu society. He said that this distinction is necessary in this connection to understand whether political reform should be preceded by social reform or otherwise. He stated that the former has relations to widow remarriage, child marriage etc., while the latter relates to the abolition of caste system. Hindu reformers did not feel the necessity for agitating for the abolition of caste or had not the courage to agitate for it. That political reform cannot with impurities take precedence over social reforms in the sense of reconstruction of society is a thesis which cannot be controverted. On the other hand one can say that history bears out the proposition that political revolutions have always been preceded by social and religious revolutions. The emancipation of the mind and the soul is a necessary preliminary for the political expression of the people. He rejected the notion of Indian socialists that every reform should be preceded by economic reform. One may contend that economic motive is not the only motive by which man is actuated. That economic power is the only kind of power no student of human history can accept. That

the social status of an individual by itself often becomes a source of power and authority is made clear by the sway which the Mahatmas have hold over common man.

Ambedkar argues that the fallacy of Indian socialists lies in supposing that because in the present stage of European society property as a source of power is predominant, that the same is true of India or indeed that the same was true of Europe in the past. To quote Ambedkar : "If liberty is ideal, if liberty means the destruction of the dominion which one man holds over another then obviously it cannot be insisted upon that economic reform worthy of pursuit. If the source of power and dominion is at any given time or in any given society, social and religious then social and religious reform must be accepted as the necessary sort of reform. Religious, social status and property are all sources of power and authority by which one man has control over the liberty of another.. One is predominant at one stage and the other is predominant at another stage. That is the only difference. One can attack the doctrine of Economic Interpretation of History adopted by the socialists

of India like this. But recognize that economic interpretation of history is not necessary for the validity of socialist contention that equalization of property is the only real reform and that it must precede everything else."¹⁵

If the socialists are not content with the mounting of fine phrases, if the socialists wish to make socialism a definite reality then they must recognise that the problem of social reform is fundamental. If by some freak of fortune a revolution does take place anyone would be compelled to take account of caste after revolution if he does not take account of it before the revolution, argues Ambedkar. In his own words "This is only another way of saying that, turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have a political reform, you cannot have economic revolution, unless you kill this monster."¹⁶

According to Ambedkar caste system is not merely division of labour. It is also a division of labourers. Caste system is not merely division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour - it is an

15. B.R. Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste. P.46, 1979, Education Department of Maharashtra Government Publication, Bombay.

16. Ibid., p.47.

hierarchy in which the division of labourers are graded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labour accompanied by this gradation of labourers. As a form of division of labour caste system suffers from another serious defect. The division of labour brought about by the caste system is not division based on choice. Individual sentiment, individual preference has no place in it. It is based on the dogma of predestination. As an economic organization caste can be a harmful institution in as much as, therefore it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclination to the exigencies of social rules.

Ambedkar rejected the biological trends in the defence of caste system. He said that men of pure race exist nowhere and there has been a mixture of all races in all parts of the world. This is specially the case with the people of India. The caste system cannot be said to have grown as a means of preventing the admixture of races or as a means of maintaining purity of blood. As a matter of fact caste system came into being long after the different races of India had commingled in blood and culture. Anyway, what racial

affinity exists between the Brahmins of Punjab and the Brahmins of Madras? What racial difference is there between the untouchables of Bengal and of Madras? The Brahmin of Punjab is racially of the same stock as the Chamar of Punjab and the Brahmin of Madras is of the same race as the Pariah of Madras. For Ambedkar caste does not demarcate racial division. Caste system could well be a social division of people of the same race. Assuming it however to be a case of racial division one asks. What harm could there be if a mixture of races and of blood was permitted to take place in India by intermarriages between different castes? Caste does not result in economic efficiency, caste cannot and has not improved the race. Caste has however done one thing. It has completely disorganised and demoralized the Hindus. The first and foremost thing that must be recognised, according to him is that Hindu society is a myth.

Hindus did not feel the necessity of a common name because they had no conception of their having constituted a community. Hindu society as such does not exist. It is only a collection of castes. Each caste is conscious of its existence. Caste does not even

form a federation. Indeed the ideal Hindu must be like a rat living in his own hole refusing to have any contact with others. According to Ambedkar there is an utter lack of what the sociologists call "consciousness of kind", among the Hindus. There is no Hindu consciousness of kind. In every Hindu the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation. Men constitute a society because they have things which they possess in common. To have similar things is totally different from possessing things in common. And the only way by which men can come to possess things in common with one another is by being in communication with one another. This is merely another way of saying that society continues to exist by communication, indeed in communication. He clarifies that caste system prevents common activity. By preventing common activity it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with a unified life and a consciousness of its own being. Hindus therefore, are not merely an assortment of castes but they are so many warring groups each living for itself and for its selfish ideals. The existence of caste and caste consciousness has served

to keep the memory of past feuds between caste groups and has prevented solidarity.

Hindus, who have not spread the light, and endeavoured to keep others in darkness. Ambedkar had no hesitation in saying that "if the Mohammedan has been cruel, the Hindus has been mean and meanness is worse than cruelty. So long as caste remains, Hindu religion cannot be made a missionary religion and Shudhi will be a folly and futility. The reasons which have made Shudhi impossible for Hindus are also responsible for making Sangathan impossible. So long as caste remains there will be no Sangathan and so long there is no Sangathan the Hindus will remain weak and meek",¹⁷ Ambedkar quoted from the words of Morris and said that the following is seen amongst Hindus. "The great treading down the little, the strong beating down the weak, cruel men fearing not, kind men daring not and wise men caring not." He adds "the effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste killed public spirit Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. There is charity

17. Ibid., p.54.

but begins and ends with caste. It is not the case of standing by virtue and not standing by vice. It is the case of standing or not standing by the caste. "

What is your ideal society if you do not want caste? is a question bound to be asked of you; If you ask me, he says his answer would be : a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. And why not? What objection can there be to fraternity? He said he cannot imagine any. He gave a new meaning and definition to ideal society and democracy. To him, "an ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels, for conveying a change taking place one part to another parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words there should be social endosmosis. This is fraternity which is only another name for democracy. Democracy is not merely a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially, an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen."¹⁸

To eradicate caste and reorganise Hindu society Ambedkar emphasised that Hindus must stop giving

18. Ibid., p.57.

names according to their castes Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra as hierarchical divisions of high and low, based on birth act accordingly. The Hindus must be made ^{to} unlearn all this. If new notions are to be inculcated in the minds of people it is necessary to give them new names. To continue the old names is to make the reform futile. To allow this Chaturvarna based on worth to be designated by such stinking labels of Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra indicative of social division based on birth is a spare.

He also denied Chaturvarna as unnatural and unscientific doctrine. Stating it is impossible to classify men into four classes, it has a close affinity to Platonic ideal of dividing into classes. The critic to which Plato's Republic is subjected, is the criticism which must generally apply to the system of Chaturvarna, in so far as it proceeds upon the possibility of an accurate classification of men into four distinct classes. The Chief criticism against Plato is that his idea of lumping of individuals into a few sharply marked off classes is a very superficial view of man and his powers. Plato had no perception of the uniqueness of every individual of his incommensurability with others, of each individual

forming a class of his own. Criticising ^{what} Plato and Chaturvarna advocated, Ambedkar charged Plato for having no recognition of the infinite diversity of active tendencies and combination of tendencies of which an individual is capable. All this is demonstrably wrong. Modern science has shown that the lumping together of individuals into a few sharply demarcated classes is superficial. He argued that Chaturvarna must fail to the very reason for which Plato republic must fail, namely that it is not possible to pigeon men into holes, according as he belongs to one class or the other, and added that given these difficulties, he thought no one except a congenital idiot could hope and believe in successful regeneration of the Chaturvarna.

Hindu social order must be reformed, caste abolished. Therefore, how to change the Hindu social order and how to abolish caste are the questions of supreme importance. Ambedkar rejected the idea of abolition of sub-castes as impracticable and inter-dining inadequate remedies for reconstructing Hindu society. The real remedy according to him "is inter-caste marriage. Fusion of blood can alone create the

feeling of being kith and kin and unless this feeling of kinship of being kindred becomes paramount, the separatist feeling - the feeling of being alien - created by caste will not vanish."¹⁹ Among the Hindus intercaste marriage must necessarily be a factor of greater force in social life than it need be in the life of the non-Hindus. Where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident of life. But where society is cut asunder marriage as a building force becomes a matter of urgent necessity.

The real remedy for breaking caste is inter-caste marriage.- Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste. Why is it that a large majority of Hindus do not inter-dine and do not inter marry? According to him there can be only one answer to this question and it is that inter-dining and inter-marriage are repugnant to the beliefs and dogmas which the Hindus regard as sacred. Caste is not physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from comingling and which has, therefore to be pulled down.

Caste is a notion, it is a state of mind. The destruction of caste does not therefore mean the destruction of physical barrier. It means a notional

19. Ibid., p.60.

change. Caste may be bad, caste may lead to conduct so gross as to be called man' inhumanity to man. All the same, it must be recognised that Hindus observe caste not because they are inhuman or wrong headed. They observe caste because they are deeply religious. People are not wrong in observing caste. What is wrong according to Ambedkar is in their religion, which has inculcated this notion of caste. If this is correct, then obviously the enemy, you must grapple with is not the people who observe caste, but the Shastras which teach them their religion of caste. The real remedy is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shastras. He questioned how one could expect to succeed if one ~~allowed~~ the Shastras to continue to mould the beliefs and opinions of the people?. Not to question the authority of the Shastras, to permit the people to believe in their sanctity and their sanction. Ambedkar reminded reformers/^{to}work for the removal of untouchability and castism, that they should know the acts of the people are merely the results of their beliefs inculcated upon their minds by the Shastras and cease to believe in the sanctity of the Shastras on which their conduct is founded.

To agitate for and to organise inter-caste dinners and intercaste marriages is like forced feeding brought about by artificial means. "Make every man and every woman free from the thralldom of the **Shastras**, Cleanse their minds of the pernicious notions founded on the **Shastras**, and he or she will inter-dine and inter-marry without telling them to do so."²⁰ He further added it is no use in seeking refuge in quibbles. The SC's must take stand that Buddha, and Guru Nanak took. You must not only discard the **Shastras** you must deny their authority as Buddha and Nanak. You must have courage to tell the Hindus that what is wrong with them is their religion, the religion which has produced in them this notion of the sacredness of caste. To ask people to give up caste is to ask them to go contrary to their fundamental religious notions. This is a stupendous task, well-nigh impossible. Caste has a divine basis. You must therefore destroy the sacredness and divinity with which caste has become invested. In the last analysis, this means according to him you must destroy the authority of the **Shastras** and the **Vedas**. He has emphasised the question of ways and means of destroying the caste because he thought knowing the proper ways and means is more important than knowing the ideal. If you do not

²⁰. Ibid.

know the real ways and means, all your shots are sure to be misfired. The bane of Hindu society according to him is caste. All Hindus are slaves to caste system.

According to Manu rationalism as a cannon of integrating the Vedas and criticism is absolutely condemned. It is regarded to be as wicked as atheism and the punishment provided for it is excommunication. Thus, where a matter is covered by the Vedas or the Smritis, a Hindu cannot restore to rational thinking. To Ambedkar reason and morality are the two most powerful weapons in the armoury of a reformer. To deprive him of the use of these weapons is to disable him for action. How are you going to break up caste, if people are not free to consider whether it coincided with reason? How are the Hindus going to break up caste if people are not free to consider whether it accords with morality, and said the wall built around caste is impregnable and the material, of which it is built contains none of the combustible stuff of reason and morality. You must not forget that if you wish to bring about a breach in the system then you have got to apply the dynamite to the Vedas and the Shastras which deny any part to reason, to Vedas and

Shastras, which deny any part to morality. You must destroy the religion of shrutis and Smritis. Nothing else will avail.

Here he made distinction between principles and rules, and said this distinction is real and important. Rules are practical, they are habitual ways of doing things according to prescription. But principles are intellectual ^{and} they are useful methods of judging things. This difference between rules and principles makes the acts done in pursuit of them different in quality and in content. Doing what is said to be by virtue of a rule and doing good in the light of a principle are two different things. The principle may be wrong but the act is conscious and responsible. The rule may be right but the act is mechanical. A religious act may not be a correct act but must at least be a responsible act. To permit of this responsibility, religion must mainly be a matter of principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules it ceases to be a religion as it feels responsibility which is the essence of truly religious act. "What is Hindusm", the Hindu religion as contained in the Vedas and the Smritis is nothing but a mass of sacrificial, social, political

and sanitary rules and regulations, all mixed up. What is called religion by the Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibition."²¹ That for a Hindu dharma means commands and prohibitions is clear from the way the word Dharma is used in Vedas and smritis and understood by the commentators. To put it in plain language, what the Hindus call religion is really law or at best legalized class ethics. Frankly, I refuse to call this code of ordinances as religion, under it there is no loyalty to ideals, there is only conformity to commands rejected Ambedkar. But the worst part of this code according to Ambedkar is that the laws it contains must be the same yesterday, today and forever. They are unquittious in that they are not the same for one class as for another.

"The objectionable part of such a scheme is not that they are made by certain persons called prophets or law-givers. The objectionable part according to him is that this code has been invested with the character of finality and fixidity. That being the case, how can humanity endure this code of eternal laws, without cramped and without being crippled. I have, therefore, no hesitation in saying that such a religion must be destroyed and I say there is nothing irreligious in working for the destruction of such a religion."²²

²¹. Ibid., p.76.

Indeed he holds that it is our bounden duty to tear the mask, to remove the mis-representation that ^{is} caused by misnaming, this law a religion. This is an essential step for us. Once we clear the minds of the people of this misconception and enable them to realize that what they are told as religion is not religion but it is merely law, we will be in a position to urge for its amendment or abolition. So long as people look upon it as religion they will not be ready for change: because the idea of religion is, generally speaking, not associated with the idea of change. But the idea of law is associated with the idea of change and when people come to know that what is called religion is really law, old and archaic, they will be ready for a change, for people know and accept that law can be changed.

He agreed with Burke's remark that, "True religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil governments rests, and both their sanction" and urged that its place shall be taken by a religion of principles which alone can lay claims to being a true religion. The following in his opinion should be the cardinal items in this reform.

(1) There should be one, and only one standard book

22. Ibid., p.

of Hindu Religion, acceptable to all Hindus and recognised by all Hindus. This of course means that all other books of Hindu religion such as Vedas, Shastras and Puranas which are treated as sacred and authoritative, must by law cease to be so and the preaching of any doctrine, religious or social contained in these books should be penalized. (ii) it would be better if priesthood among Hindus was abolished. But as this seems to be impossible, the priesthood must atleast cease to be hereditary. Every person, who professes to be a Hindu must be eligible for being a priest. It should be provided by law that no Hindu shall be entitled to be priest unless he has passed an examination prescribed by the state and holds a sanad from the state permitting him to practice. (iii) No ceremony performed by a priest who does not hold a sanad shall be decreed to be valid in law and it should be made penal for a person who has no sanad to officiate as a priest. (iv) A priest should be the servant of the state and should be subject to disciplinary action by the state in the matter of his morals, beliefs and worship in addition to his being subject along with other citizens to the ordinary law of the land. (v) The number of priests should be limited by law

according to the requirements of the state as is done in the case of the I.A.S. He says to some this may sound radical. But to his mind there is nothing revolutionary in this. Every profession in India is regulated. Engineers, doctors and lawyers must show proficiency, before they are allowed to practice their profession. During the whole of their career, they must not only obey the law of the land, civil and criminal, but they must also obey the special code of morals prescribed by their respective professions.

Priesthood is the only profession where proficiency is not required. The profession of the Hindu priest is the only profession which is not subject to any code. Mentally a priest may be a idiot, physically a priest may be suffering from a foul diseases, such as syphilis or gonorrhoea morally he may be a wreck. But he is a fit to officiate at solemn ceremonies, to enter the "sanctum sanctorum" of a Hindu temple and worship the Hindu God. All this becomes possible among the Hindus because for a priest it is enough to be born in priestly caste. The whole thing is abominable and is due to the fact that the priestly class among Hindus is subject neither to law nor to morality. It recognizes no duties. It knows only rights and privileges.

It is a pest which divinity seems to let loose on the masses for their mental and moral degradation. The priestly class must be brought under control by some such legislation as he has outlined above. It will prevent it from doing mischief and from misleading people. It will demoralize itself by throwing it open to every one. "It will certainly help to kill Brahminism as well as caste, which is nothing but Brahminism incarnate. Brahminism is the poison which has spoiled Hinduism. You will succeed in saving Hinduism if you kill Brahminism."²³

There should be no opposition to this reform from any quarter. Whether you do that or you do not, you must give a new doctrinal basis to your religion - a basis that will be in consonance with liberty. Equality and Fraternity in short, with democracy. This means a complete change in the fundamental notions and values of life. A radical transformation in outlook and in attitude towards man and things. In Ambedkar's opinion only when the Hindu society becomes a casteless society it can hope to have strength enough to defend itself and progress. Without such internal strength Swaraj for Hindus ^{will} turn out to be only a step towards new slavery.

23. Ibid., p.77.

ON THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND CONVERSION

Although he defended individual development and creativity, he rejected the aggressive, self serving individualism of western capitalism as something guaranteed to perpetuate Dalit Subordination.²⁴ He devoted most of his life searching for radical social democracy but also remained convinced that the arid and inherently impermanent world of legislation and law courts would never be enough to create a necessary sense of community.

His answer was an attempt both to harness and tame the psychological power of religion by developing a modern activist atheist Buddhism, stripped of all belief in super natural forces and committed to the struggle for social and economic equality. According to him there are two aspects of conversion, one social the other religious, material as well as spiritual. The atrocities on SC's have nothing to do with the virtues and vices of an individual. This is not a feud between two rival men. The problem of caste system is a matter of struggle, between two rival men. The problem of caste system is a matter of struggle between rival groups Hindus and the untouchables. This is not a matter of doing injustice against one man. It is one involving

²⁴ 24. Barbara Joshi, Untouchable voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement, Minority Rights Group p.28, 1986.

injustice being done by one group against another.

He stated that this struggle is related to social status. He also explained that caste system is not a temporary feature of Indian society. To put it straight, it can be said that the struggle between the Hindus and the untouchable is a permanent phenomenon. It is eternal because high caste people believe that the religion which has placed Dalit at the lowest level of the society is itself eternal. Those who live a life of self respect will have to think over this. Ambedkar contended that Hindu religion was nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibitions, it does not recognize man as man, Hindu religion for him, was a display of force and mockery. It also does not teach how individuals should behave with each other. He said that religion is for man and not man for religion. He urged that for proper human treatment, one must convert oneself, convert for getting organised, convert for becoming strong, convert for getting equality and liberty. He wondered why people should remain in a religion which prohibited them from entering a temple? Why remain in a religion which prohibited one from getting a proper job. Here he quoted Buddha "Take refuge in reason, do not succumb to others. Be truthful. Take refuge in Truth. Never surrender to anybody."

He laid stress on the need for Dalit's education as well as for adequate political representation. He believed in the power of political bodies to win freedom for the masses and endeavoured to fight for the same. His approach to religion was ethical, social and secular. The Buddhist conception of man is anthropocentric. Everything is related to man and society. Ambedkar's religious views combined empiricism and rationalism and he found Buddhism as a way of life for the Dalits to acquire moral regeneration and social emancipation. Religion to him was the driving force for human activities. It must be judged by social standards based upon social ethics. His religious attitudes were the manifestation of a political man, who desired freedom for the untouchables.

The Bahiskrat Hitakarini Sabha was set up in the year of 1923 by Dr. Ambedkar, soon after his return to India after completing higher education abroad. The organisation was the first to be established for the benefit of the SC's. It was through this organisation that Ambedkar made a representation to the Simon Commission for political safeguards. Although he was against any caste based organisation, the setting up of BHS reflected caste based ideology which influenced

the Dalits largely. The formation of independent Labour Party, a non casteist political body was the first of its kind to motivate the Dalits for a broader political out look aiming at social justice.

The All India Scheduled Caste Federation (AISCF) was formed in July, 1942. The principles enunciated in the (AISCF). manifesto were rigorous economic and political freedom right to equality of opportunity, state responsibility to make every Indian free from want and fear, maintenance of liberty, equality, and fraternity, redemtion from oppression and exploitation of man by man of class by class and of nation by nation and a parliamentary system of government.²⁵ It may be noted that the Dalit idea of parliamentary democracy is different from that of Western Liberal Democracy. Though they followed liberalism, they formed a distinct concept of democracy. Western writers on democracy believed that what was necessary for the realization of the idea of democracy, was the establishment of universal suffrage. Adult suffrage could produce government of the people in contrast to, say, monarchy, but it could not

25. W.N.Kuder, Ambedkar : A critical Study, p.222.
Peoples Publications House, 1973, Delhi.

by itself be said to bring about a democratic government in the sense of government by the people and for the people.

Ambedkar criticised the views of western writers on politics regarding democracy and self-government. He said that a) They fail to take into account the incontrovertible fact that in every country there is a government of governing class. b) Social outlook and social philosophy of the governing class is not taken into account. c) They fail to recognise that the existence of a governing class is inconsistent with democracy and self-government. d) Self-government and democracy become real when the governing class loses its power to capture power and to govern. If the governing class continues to rule people may not have democracy. e) The governing class may be so well entrenched that the servile classes will need other safeguards besides adult suffrage to achieve the same end. The formal framework of democracy is of no value if there is no social democracy. To him, social democracy involves two things : i) attitude of respect and equality amongst people, ii) Social organisation free from rigid social barriers. To him, democracy was incompatible and inconsistent with the isolation

and exclusiveness resulting from the distinction between the privileged and the under privileged.

In his speeches on parliamentary democracy, Ambedkar stated that we must not content with mere political democracy. "We must make our political democracy last unless there lies at its base a social democracy. Social democracy means a way of life organized around principles of equality, and fraternity. Liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They are deeply inter-related so that divorcing one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy."²⁶ Without equality, liberty would produce the superemacy of the few over many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity liberty and equality would not be possible.

ON ECONOMIC LIFE

In his book "States and Minorities", he emphasised two special features : one that state socialism is necessary in economic life. The second is that we should

²⁶. Sarabara R. Joshi, Untouchables Voices of Dalit Liberation movement Minority Rights Group Publications, 1986, London, p.143.

not leave the establishment of state socialism to the will of legislature. State socialism must be established by the law of the constitution unalterable by the any act of the legislature and the Executive. The plan set out by him proposes state ownership in agriculture with a collectivised method of cultivation and a modified form of state socialism in the field of industry. According to him, private enterprise would reproduce those inequalities of wealth which private capitalism has produced in Europe. He made this plan keeping in his mind the poor majority of agricultural labourers.

Chapter - 3

MODERN DALIT IDEOLOGY

In this chapter we examine Modern Dalit Movement and its Ideology with a special reference to Dalit Panthers. The study of awakening among Dalits of Maharashtra is fascinating in the history of Scheduled Castes movement. Despite the fact that there have been improvements in socio-political and educational facilities the position of depressed in our society remained deplorable. Their earnest desire to rise above exploitation and poverty brings them to protest against the existing system.

The need to have a wider political understanding for the betterment of depressed classes led to the formation of Republican Party of India which tried to represent lower classes all over the country. The Republican Party was to speak for the Dalit movement after the death of Dr. Ambedkar in 1956. As any organisation based on a particular ideology, the organisation functioned as a vehicle of mass protest mainly for Dalits, against the social disabilities they suffered at the hands of their oppressors. The formation

of Republican Party had a profound impact on the creation of the self identity of Dalits. It brought self awareness and a forward looking trust among the Dalits of Maharashtra. But gradually by 1970, it began to lose its strength and was ridden with factions. This factional politics of Republican Party led to the emergence of one of the most radical Dalit organisations, the Dalit Panthers.

The development of Dalit literary movement from 60s onwards established deep relationship between Dalit writers and Dalit Panther movement of 70s. This literary movement among Dalits has played a significant role in bringing about awareness among the downtrodden. The objective behind Dalit literature was to demonstrate the existence of an alternative culture, one that opposed established Marathi literature of the time. It touched upon the worst suffering of the downtrodden and Dalit writers made them conscious of their identity and served as a source of militant movement. Their relentless criticism of the essentially middle class nature of existing Marathi literature and their call for the creation of a new Dalit literature was a bold venture that sent shock waves to the Marathi literature. By their espousal of the ideas of equality and self-respect, the Dalit Sahitya exposed the hypocrisy

of the caste based Hindu principles and brought into light the actual condition of the Dalits. Dalit literature sprouted with the radical Mahar writers who protested against the faction ridden, self seeking corrupt and aging leaders of Republican Party. It captured and captivated the minds of the Scheduled Caste youth.

Dalit Panthers, a radical political organisation was born in Bombay on July 9, 1972. But it was only during the January 1974 riots that it shot into nation-wide prominence; by its opposition to the aggressive Shive Sena and by its participation in working class struggle. Its leaders argued that the old leadership that encouraged caste - based political protests like Maharashtra agitation, have no ideological base to stand upon. It was the united struggle which characterised the Dalit protests from 1972 when it was set up to 1974 when the split occurred. For instance, in the year 1972 in Bhugave of Hareli Taluk which was about ten miles from Poona a Dalit girl by name Kamala was raped and murdered by a Maharashtra cast fellow. About 600 Dalits armed with weapons marched towards the village and threatened to burn the village, if the culprit was not brought to book.

In 1973, at a function held at Hastha Peth in Poona, Shankaracharya, speaking in defence of the caste system, was interrupted by about 200 Dalit youths leading to the cancellation of the function. So also in 1974, when Indira Gandhi visited Poona her way was disrupted by a massive group of Dalits near the Agricultural college in protest against government indifference to Dalits problems. In 1977 about 400 Dalits stopped the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai's visit to Poona, in protest against the government's reluctance to provide adequate educational facilities to the neo-Buddhists.¹

In the beginning, the ideology that guided the Dalit Panthers, was radical in nature and based on the ideology of Dr. Ambedkar. The organisation tried to unite and combine all oppressed sections of the society on the basis of Ambedkar's principles and uncompromising attitude to the superstructure combined with a radical policy towards an egalitarian society. Before the split occurred in 1974, the Dalit Panthers declared the manifesto of Dalit Panthers in 1973. Though the document does not represent the views of all who identify themselves with the Panthers, it does represent important themes in the thinking of activists' in a variety of Dalit

1. Joseph Mathew, Ideology, protest and social mobility p. 200, Thesis JNU.

organisations. The manifesto therefore, became one of several points of controversy within the Panthers organisation, even after it was both fragmented and dispersed across the country. It was one of the most powerful documents to have out since the death of Dr. Ambedkar. True, like any other Dalit organisation the Dalit Panthers also failed to emancipate Dalits and despite the fact the manifesto seems well-worn, old and therefore innocuous, a careful examination of its contents reveals that it still has some lasting value and relevance. This especially helps us to understand the change of thinking which took place in the minds of Dalits after the death of Dr. Ambedkar. Hence we can compare and contrast the similarities and dissimilarities between the Dalit Panthers and Dr. Ambedkar. It is with this fact kept in mind that we took this Manifesto as one of the most important document to study modern Dalit ideology. Careful study of this will definitely help us to understand the mind of modern Dalit.

ASSESSMENT OF DALIT PANTHERS MANIFESTO. 1973, BOMBAY

1. To begin with, according to the Manifesto of Dalit Panthers, members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and

the poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of Religion are Dalits.²

2. The manifesto states that "Panthers" no longer represent an emotional outburst of the Dalits. Instead its character has changed into that of a political organisation. This is because Dr. Ambedkar taught his followers to base their calculations about their political strategy on deep study of the political situation confronting them. It is necessary and indispensable for them to keep this ideal before them, otherwise they might mistake the back of a tortoise for a rock, and may be detented in no time. Therefore, the manifesto makes it clear that Dalit Panther is a political organisation whose prime objective is to capture political power.

3. The Manifesto criticised the then Congress rule as essentially a continuation of old Hindu feudalism which kept ^{the} Dalits deprived of power, wealth and status for thousands of years. Therefore, its rule could not bring about social change. Because the entire machinery is dominated by the feudal interests, most

2. Barbara R. Joshi, Untouchable Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement, P.145, 1986, Minority Rights Group, London.

of the agricultural land industry, economic resources and other instruments of power remain out of Dalit's reach. Therefore, inspite of India's independence and the presence of a democratic setup, the problem of Dalits has remained unsolved. Untouchability has remained intact, because the government did not do anything to eradicate it except passing some laws against it.

4. The Manifesto argued that to eradicate untouchability all the land will have to be redistributed.

5. Age-old customs and scriptures will have to be destroyed and new ideas inculcated. The entire social structure, village organisation, and particularly peoples attitude - will have to be restructured to suit true democratic objectives.

6. It stated that the problem of untouchability of the Dalits is one of mental slavery. Untouchability is the most violent form of exploitation on the surface of the earth, which survives the ever changing form of power structures. It is not only alive today but is stronger.

7. It believed that unless Dalits understand and give shape to the revolutionary content latent in the downtrodden lives of untouchables, not a single

individual seeking a social revolution would be able to remain alive in India.

8. For Panthers, truly the problem of Dalits or the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, has become a general problem; the Dalit is no longer merely an untouchable outside village walls and the scriptures. True, he is an untouchable, but he is also a worker, a landless labourer, a proletarian.

9. They urged that unless Dalits strengthen with all their effort this revolutionary unity of the many ~~with all efforts~~, the existence of Dalits has no future. The Dalit must accordingly accept the sections of masses, the other revolutionary forces as part of his own movement. Only then will he be able to fight his enemies effectively. If this does take place, Dalits shall be condemned to a condition worse than slavery. Dalits must develop and help this consciousness ripen every year and every moment.

10. The Manifesto argued that after independence in the place of the king came the president, in the place of the king's Prime Minister came, the 'peoples representative.' In the place of the Vedas, Upanishads, Manusmriti and Gita, came the Constitution and on a black

page, independence, equality, brotherhood proliferated. The problems and needs of the Dalits have been kept in a sort of deep freeze by the government. Beyond preserving state power in its hands, the government has done nothing else for Dalits. It has crushed the Dalits, the landless, poor peasants and the working class under its feet, gambled with their lives and endangered their very existence.

11. It urged Dalits to uproot the Varna system that enslaves them, the soil in which they survive and grow must be made infertile.

12. It alleged that by using divisive tactics that split people along religion, caste and other lines, the government endangered the very integrity of democracy. It argued that true independence in a democracy cannot exist if men continue to be dispossessed of their self-respect & well being, if men cannot develop his individuality, if those who wet with their blood every grain of the country's soil have to starve, if men have to forgo their land, if men have to see their mothers and sisters raped.

13. The manifesto was severely critical of Gandhi, in whose hands the leadership of the Independence struggle

rested and called Gandhi an orthodox, casteist, deceitful and cunning one who gave shelter to those who wanted to preserve class rule. This was in line with Ambedkar's own views who called Gandhi an enemy of the people and the villain of the nation.³

14. Quoting the words of Ambedkar it stated that Gandhism means preservation of religious authority, traditionalism, casteism, the traditional division of labour, incarnationism, the holy cow, worship of images and an unscientific outlook.⁴

15. It also examined what other parties have done for the Dalits. For example, it called both the communist & communists parties as opportunists. It claimed that all the left parties had proved powerless in the task of putting some alternative before the people, of solving the problems of the Dalits, of establishing the rule of the poor in the country. As a result, the revolutionary people had lost faith in electoral democracy. That is why uprising like Nazalbari took place and the spark spread all over the country. Much of this is also due, however, to their ignorance of questions

3. Ibid., p.143.

4. Loc. Cit. p.143.

concerning social revolution. They were unable to combine the class struggle with the struggle against untouchability, they have not raised a voice against cultural and social domination along with economic exploitation.

16. Under the name of high-flown philosophy and liberation of the soul (moksha, nirvana), Dalits have been deprived of earthly happiness, and have been looted of all they possess. Only if a social revolution grips the minds of Dalits will there be a political revolution. The stand that is taken by the left parties prevents the spread of revolutionary ideology amongst the people.

17. Panthers criticized the Republican Party and stated that the problems of the Dalits today, be they social, political or ethical, cannot be solved within the frame work of religion and caste. A scientific outlook, class consciousness and a completely atheistic and fighting humanism alone could add an edge to the struggle of the Dalits.

18. For this purpose, Dr. Ambedkar wanted to transform the then existing Scheduled Caste Federation into a broad based party. This could not happen during his life time. After his death, his followers simply renamed SCF as

the Republican Party and began the pursuit of casteist politics. They never united all the Dalits and all the oppressed. Above all, they conducted the politics of a revolutionary community like the Dalits in a legalistic manner. The party got enmeshed in the web of votes, demands, select places for a handful of the Dalits and concessions.

19. So the Dalit population scattered over the country in many villages remained politically where they were. The leadership of the party went into the hands of the middle class in the community. Destroying the revolutionary voice of Dr. Ambedkar, these contemptible leaders made capital out of his name and set up their beggars bowls. This is Dr. Ambedkar's party, they said. This is Dr. Ambedkar's flag, they said and filled their coffers. And thus except the satyagraha of the landless conducted under Dadasaheb Gaekwad's leadership, the party, did not take up any programme worth its name.

20. It claimed that atrocities against Dalits grew endemic. In a period of one to one and half years, 1,117 Dalits were murdered. Women were raped, houses gutted, people killed. Along with the very question of living, physical indignities grew. The party got caught in the net by a cunning ruling class leader like Yashwant Rao Chavan. Its life perished. If we put our future

in the hands of such impotent leaders like Republican Party, we will forgo our very lives, and that is why today we have to announce with deep pains that we are no blood relatives of the Republican Party. And Dalit Panthers have identified themselves with black panthers and they claim a close relationship with their struggle. We have before our eyes the examples of Vietnam, Cambodia, Africa and the like.

21. The manifesto described as their friends revolutionary parties set to break the caste system and class rule, left parties that are leftist in the true sense and all other sections of the society that are suffering from political and economic oppression.

22. They described as their enemies, power, high price, wealth, landlords, capitalists, money lenders and lackeys. Those parties who indulge in religion or casteist politics and the government which depend on them. Food, clothing, shelter, employment, decent standard of living, removal of untouchability, and social justice as their main issues.

23. It urged that the struggle for the emancipation of the Dalits needs a complete revolution. Partial change is impossible.

24. They claimed that mere change of heart in the individual liberal education, legislature appeals and demands for concessions, elections, satyagrahas were useless in bringing about social change. The Dalits do not want a little place in Brahman Alley. They want the rule of the whole lane. The Dalits, the manifesto claimed, are not looking at persons but at a system.

25. It claimed that panthers will paralyzingly attack untouchability, casteism and economic exploitation. In the present modern forms of slavery there are mental chains of slavishness and Dalits ^{will} break them.

Under the sub-heading 'our programme' :

(1) It stated that more than 80 percentage of India's population lives in the village. Of these landless peasants are 25 percent, and 33 percent of all landless agricultural labourers belong to Scheduled Castes.

The question of landlessness must be resolved.

(2) It urged that feudal exploitation and oppression in villages must be destroyed. (3) Landless peasants must immediately get excess land through the application of the Land Ceiling Act. (4) The wages of landless labourers must be increased. (5) Dalits must be allowed

to draw water from public wells. (6) Dalits must ~~not~~ live outside the village in a separate settlement, but in the village itself. (7) All means of production must belong to the Dalits, in other words they demanded socialism, abolition of social, cultural and economic exploitation and the transfer of the ownership of all means of production to the Dalits. (8) Exploitation by private capital must cease; foreign capital must be confiscated without compensation. (9) Misleading nationalism, it urged, must give way to true introduction of socialism. (10) All Dalits must be given daily wages. (11) Unemployed Dalits must be given unemployment benefits. (12) When giving employment, in educational institutions, the requirement that one declare one's caste and religion must be immediately deleted. (13) The government must stop giving grants to religious institutions and the wealth of the religious places must be used for the benefit of Dalits. (14) Religious and casteist literature must be banned. (15) The division in the army along caste lines must be ended. (16) Black-marketeers, hoarders, money-lenders and all those exploiting the people economically must be destroyed. To eradicate all the injustice against Dalits, they must themselves become rulers.

Soon the organisation tasted the spirit of fragmentation and split took place in 1974 on personal as well as on ideological grounds. Namdev Sahu Bhai Dhasal, a staunch believer in combining Ambedkarism with Marxism, led his supporters to a leftist ideological arena of the movement, while Raja Dhale believed in Ambedkar's principles and found his own mass movement. A third force under the leadership of Arun Kamble and Ramdas Athvale provided revitalising spirit to the Dalit movement.

Dhasal adopted a Marxist metaphor and for him the Dalit Struggle was part of a larger struggle of the world's oppressed. He believed in class consciousness among Dalits and his class approach envisaged an organisation consisting of Scheduled Castes, the poor, and the exploited caste Hindus also. He consciously believed in confrontation and total revolution. His principles were also based on Ambedkar's philosophy. Having pioneered the formation of Dalit Panthers, Dhasal engineered the manifesto of the organisation which reflected his own ideology and which Raja Dhale disagreed to a great extent. Panthers differences involved the issue of Buddha/Ambedkar Vs. Marxism with its implications for strategy, organisation issue and alliance. The issue also involved the problem of self-definition and self identity of the Dalit community in their relation to

Ambedkar and his historic role in the community and Buddhism as a adopted religion.

At present there are fifteen factions among Maharashtra Dalits. Prominent among them are Republican Party of India led by R.S.Gavai, The Bharatiya Republican Party of India led by Dr. Ambedkar's grandson, Mr. Prakash Ambedkar, two branches of Dalit Panthers led by Namdev Dhasal and Ramdas Athavale, The Dalit Mass movement led by Mr. Raja Dhale, and the Dalit Mukti Sena of Jogendra Kawade, with Haji Mastan, the former underworld don, the joint President of Dalit Muslim Suraksha Mahasangh. The common leader acceptable to all is Prakash Ambedkar who has been propounding the need for Dalit unity for sometime. Every organisation claims that they are loyal to Dr. Ambedkar and Ambedkar's ideology as their ideology. Having recognized the need for common leadership and unity, efforts to bring all the organisations together are in process. This process of unification was blood-stained in the sense that it was hastened because of the death of three Dalit youths, including a girl, Alka Jadhav; This happened when, to quell riots between Dalit Panthers and Shiv Sena workers at Siddharth Nagar, Chembur, in north-east Bombay in October 1989, the police opened fire. This incident provoked nine Dalit students to launch an

indefinite fast a few days later, demanding that all factions representing the oppressed classes should come together to deter further attacks on Dalits. There was deep-seated grudge in the minds of Dalits for long that their sufferings had increased and problems remained unsolved mainly because of the lack of unity among **their** leaders and organisations.

The Dalits felt unable to assert their legitimate rights and social status, **they** would always have to be at the receiving end. The history of Dalit movement in Maharashtra bears the marks of this feeling of grudge. Dalit organisations have indeed suffered from factionalism and rivalry among the self-centred leaders. It is hardly believable that there ~~were~~ as many as fifteen factions of Republican Party and the Dalit Panthers, each charting for the same objectives its own course. These factions used to have alliances with different political parties at the time of the Municipal Legislative Assembly or Parliamentary elections, depending upon the motives and convenience of their respective leaders. The R.P.I. (Gawai Khobragade) faction, for example, was a supporter of the Congress; Arun Kambale had opted to support the ^aJanata Dal while Jogendra Kawade's faction of the Dalit Panthers had allied itself with Haji Mastan to form the Dalit Muslim Suraksha Mahasangh. To those

conversant with the politics of Dalit leaders for the last three decades, there is nothing new in the Dalit organisations uniting only to break up within months, ostensibly on ideological issues but in reality because of personality clashes and the egoism of the leaders.⁵ As a matter of fact, the birth of Republican Party in 1957 itself was marked by the beginning of the chain of splits.

The Republican Party then was the scheduled caste federation founded by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar under a new name. The meeting for the formation of the Republican Party was held at Nagpur, the historic place where Dr. Ambedkar renounced the Hindu religion to embrace Buddhism along with lakhs of his followers. But, though the new party was sought to be formed on the basis of the guiding principles enunciated by Dr. Ambedkar in his two famous documents, "Open-Letter" and "States and Minorities", differences arose among the leaders on the interpretation of these guidelines. Some leaders choose to break away from the hope of united party. Since then there have been umpteen number of attempts to form a single united entity to represent the Dalits, but they have all been short-lived.

5. P.K. Naik, Trying it again for Unity, An article Published in Onlooker January 1-15, 1990.

One major attempt for unity of all factions was made in 1969 when three prominent factional leaders, R.S.Gavai, B.D.Khorbragade and B.C.Kamble, at a huge rally at "Chaityabhoomi" (the place at Dadar where Dr. Ambedkar was cremated) vowed to work unitedly for the uplift of the Dalits but within a year they parted company again to run their independent organisations. Then followed another major effort five years later, in 1974, against the backdrop of riots between Dalits and Shiv Sena at Worli. All the factions once again vouched in favour of unity, but their unity lasted hardly six months.

Over the years, the Dalit Panthers also split into various factions because of the rivalry between Dhasal, Raja Dhale, Ramdas Athvale, Arun Kamble and Jogendra Kawade. Prakash Ambedkar appeared on the scene around 1980 to form his own faction of the Republican Party in addition to those run by Gavai, Khobragade and Kamble. One can say that the feeling among a majority of followers that their factional leaders were there more to serve their own interests than the larger cause of Dalit's welfare was not without substance.⁶

6. Ibid.

This was more so about the leadership of Gavai and Khobragade, both of whom happened to support the congress for long in return for some positions. Khobragade was ^{the} deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha for one term and Gavai, Chairman of Maharashtra Legislative Council for several years, mainly because of the backing of the Congress.

There is also some substance in the charge that the congress leaders in Maharashtra deliberately frustrated all efforts of Dalit organisations to come together. The inspiration for this tactic was provided by none other than the shrewd congress leaders. Y.B.Chavan, who foresaw the risks involved in the unity in the Dalit organisation, induced a veteran Republican Party leader Dada Saheb Gaikwad, to stay away from the efforts of unity and support the congress. At the very last minute, Gaikwad refused to sign the unity document with Khobragade in Nasik. Chavan's tactics, driving [^]Wedges among the Dalit organisations, were later successfully followed by other congress leaders like V.P.Naik, Vasant Dada Patil and, of late, Sharad Pawar. The major question of the latest unification of Dalit organisations is, therefore, whether and how long it will last. Politically it is significant, because the Dalits constituting about 22% of the total population of Maharashtra are always in a position to influence the poll

outcome, just as is the case with the Muslims.

It is essential for us to know what exactly Ambedkarism mean to the Dalits of Maharashtra and how they view present Indian society, communists and socialists of India. In an interview one of the Dalit Panther founders Namdev Dhasal explained his views on Ambedkarism. He says that every issue has its own source and its own elaboration of a system. Some identifying characteristics come before our eyes when we talk of that ism. For instance, Marxism means historical materialism, dialectical materialism, class struggle, the concept of political economy etc. Perhaps Ambedkarism may not have such an elaborate shape but it is an ism which calls for removal of untouchability. The method of removing untouchability can take any form. It can have a parliamentary shape, an extra parliamentary shape; it can be reformist, it can be cultural and so on. Ambedkar's own struggle and the weapons he used were diverse. In fact one can say in short that all he did for fighting against untouchability constitute Ambedkarism.

The reason for separating themselves from R.P.I., he explained, was ^{because} that particular year, a wave of atrocities against Dalits had swept over the country. Over the years R.P.I. had abandoned all means to fight against

untouchability except the narrow parliamentary one which is why they took up a richer tradition of Ambedkarism in order to establish the human dignity and rights of Dalits. For Namdev, the communists and socialists still failed to recognize untouchability as a basic problem. The communists say for instance, that with industrialisation all those left-overs of the past will disappear but even in ^a big industrial complex like Bombay city, particularly in the slums, caste discrimination still exists. Whatever difference is there in the lives of Dalits today is due to Ambedkar. I would not be sitting here talking to you in this hotel if it had not been for Ambedkar, yet communists say Ambedkar was a liberal we cannot accept it because to dub Ambedkar as liberal is the expression of the arrogance of caste Hindus.⁵⁷

He said that like himself who writes poetry, many Dalits have a keen sense of acquiring knowledge and education today. All this would simply not have been possible without Ambedkar. He was a man who lifted their existence from a state resembling that of animals to a human one. To call Ambedkar a liberal is nothing but the arrogance of Brahminism. Let us take his view on the dictatorship of proletariat. He said it would merely lead to a dictatorship of bureaucracy. Are not the naxalites today calling the Soviets social imperialists?

-7. Namdev Dhasal in an interview to Sunday Observer, 8th August 1982.

Namdev also claimed that the only way to change Hindu society is to radically alter its conceptual framework. The left has traditionally found this aspect with the result that Hindu forms continue to be on the use. The state cannot help in this matter because of its intrinsic bourgeoisie democratic nature. This state preserves the customs and beliefs of the old society. Since only a state can help change this old order to be guided by socialism. But it is not utopian to think of socialism without the presence of a large and effective proletariat. For Namdev it is not utopian to do so because unlike the communists, Dalits believe that they are the true 'Sarvahara' (Proletariat). Namdev also emphasized that no real reason for disagreement among Dalits exists and that they are all united in their objective to create a caste less and class less society. ³

Reality is different, however every Dalit Organisation has failed to unite Dalits and build a mass movement. Not even Dalit Panthers, who came into existence 'criticizing and abusing R.P.I., their parental organisation, could succeed in uniting them. The Dalit Panthers have done exactly what Republican Party did, They have quarrelled amongst each other and

8. Ibid.

ultimately split into many factions. The idea of Dalit liberation, has therefore, remained utopian. As a matter of fact, if we truly recognize the problems facing Dalits, their movement has lost its significance. The criticism which Dalit Panther levelled against Republican Party and other parties and systems applies equally to them.

There are many other diverse theories and concepts. For the convenience of our study we examine some concepts. To L.R. Balley, a prominent Dalit writer, India is passing through a very critical stage. He feels that all norms and moral codes seem to have collapsed. According to him, the concept which is working in India is Anarchy. To show that there is anarchy in India he quotes Ambedkar's words, "History bears out the proposition that political revolution have always been preceded by social and religious revolutions."⁹

has

This anarchy remained intact, because for many centuries no effort has been made to usher in a cultural revolution in India. A vast majority of Indians are still deeply engulfed in acute

9. L.R. Balley, India Needs a Cultural Revolution, The Outcry, 1984.

poverty, supernaturalism, superstitions and a quagmire of rites, rituals and astrological predictions . He pointed out that priests have a sway over the people and they continue, unchecked and unashamedly, to prey upon them practically. Gold and jewellery worth crores of rupees remain deposited in numerous temples and shrines without any productive utility and without contributing any thing to the welfare of the needy and the poor. All this without the slightest protest from the so-called high castes, who boast of 'being the only custodians of the spiritual and philosophical treasure' or even from the so-called low-caste Hindus who are the victims of this system. He alleged that the Shankaracharya of Puri openly defies law. He publicly preaches untouchability, he denied entry to the ^{Late} Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. Entry in Jagannath Temple at Puri is open to orthodox Hindus only.

He condemned that this attitude, this behaviour and practice of Shankaracharya, is against the Indian constitution. Not only this, his act is ^a criminal offense. ^c This could not be ^{he could not be} averted and prosecuted for fear of Hindu reaction. On the other hand, the followers dragged those who condemned Shankaracharya to the court of law. No Hindu of repute and prominence has criticised the

Shankaracharya or demanded action against him. To a caste Hindu the commandment of his guru (priest) is supreme. All the laws, however revolutionary and beneficial for humanity, peace and prosperity are inferior to it. Another talk about Hinduism according to this author is its ^{supposed} tolerance. ^{If this is so} What do the massacres, brutalities, uprootings, segregations, discriminations, disabilities and prejudices against the untouchables in the whole country ~~show~~ ^{is} all these ~~exhibit~~ kindness and compassion are the question the author L.R. Bailey poses. According to him it is because of Hinduism ^{that} even after forty two years of independence India has not become a nation; it is still a warring multitude - caste and communities. Therefore, in order to ~~make~~ ^a India ^a unified country and to make themselves countrymen, Indians first and last - there must be a cultural revolution.

Besides accepting all the means and methods suggested by Ambedkar for the achievement of cultural revolution, the author emphasised two more things to bring about cultural revolution. One of these is secular morality according to him, means a doctrine of basing morality solely on considerations of well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all consideration drawn from belief in God or in matters of life after death.

Moral values are placed on a firm foundations when they are referred back to the innate rationality of man. They need no other sanction than the good of humanity. He quoted Ambedkar: "Morality does not require the sanction of God. It is for his own good that man has to love men. It is nothing but another name for brotherhood of men." The second thing he suggested is the need for social integration. To strengthen social integrity, contrywide plans should be drawn and executed sincerely to break social stagnation and segregation. To achieve these objectives, inter-state, inter-community and inter-religious meetings, particularly of young boys and young girls should be regularly arranged at the national level through governmental and non-governmental agencies so that young people come near to each other and cross the caste boundaries in matrimonial ties.

In another essay, "Humanism as a Dalit perspective" Prof. G.Singh stressed the need for humanism. Humanism as it has come down to us through centuries, is any system of thought or action which assigns a predominant interest to the affairs of men as compared with the supernatural or the abstract.¹⁰ Prof. Singh says that the Buddhist view

10. G.Singh, Humanism as a Dalit Perspective
The Outcry, 1984.

of man has similarity with humanism. According to Buddhism there is no soul in the highest form that can be said to be governing this Universe. It also rejected the idea of an individual soul which is said to be immortal and eternal. Here the author quotes Ambedkar, "He says man's thinking is affected by objective reality but not absolutely. It is this view which leaves room for the freedom of man, to which Dalits aspired. It is for these reasons that Ambedkar rejected economic determinism or historical materialism while accepting other aspects of Marxism, as a materialistic outlook on the universe and the economic reconstruction of abolishing Capitalism in favour of Socialism and Communism as an ideal society. The author says that society cannot maintain right relations between man and man without some standards of socialability, and morality, further, is synonymous with Buddhist Dhamma. As he wrote, Dhamma is righteousness which means right relations between man and man in all spheres of life."¹¹

According to this author, the right relations must be established on the basis of social principles, liberty, equality and fraternity. These three principles, according to him, serve as the basis of any morality.

11. B.R. Ambedkar, Buddha and his Dhamma, p.316. 1957, Siddhartha College Publication, Bombay.

What is valuable and everlasting in Ambedkar is his rejection of any divine sanction behind moral imperatives. He was an ardent believer in atheistic morality, otherwise known as secular, rational morality. One thing which is purely humanistic and unique in the author's concept of morality is that the purpose of following morality is not the attainment of salvation or Moksha, but to create social harmony. Morality arises from the direct necessity for man to love man. It does not require the sanction of God. It is not to please God that man has to be moral. It is for his own good that man has to love man, argues Ambedkar. He noted that capitalistic economy debases noble feelings of man. Therefore, he pleaded for its destruction. Capitalism breeds exploitative values and therefore it must be abolished and replaced by the establishment of genuine socialism.

Prof. G. Singh further explains Humanism has become a fundamental feature in Dalit ideology. Humanism as it has come down to us through centuries, is any system of thought or action which assigns a predominant interest of men as compared with the supernatural or the abstract. It is a philosophy of which man is the centre and sanction. Actually, humanism as a philosophy represents a specific and forthright view of the universe the nature of man and treatment of human problems. ¹²

12. Corliss Lamont, The Philosophy of Humanism, p.10.

Humanism is the viewpoint that men have but one life to lead and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness, that human happiness is its own justification and requires no sanction or support from supernatural sources, in any case the supernatural usually conceived of, in the form of heavenly gods or immortal heaven, does not exist and that human beings, using their own intelligence and cooperation liberally with one another can build an enduring citadel of peace and beauty on this earth. ¹³

13. Ibid. p.12.

CONCLUSION

Our work has sought to study the concrete problems of Dalits and their roots in order to understand and judge the relevance and veracity of the views of Dr. Ambedkar and Modern Dalit Ideology. We also tried to try to detect the reasons for the ineffectiveness of their views.

There are two types of deprivation (i) Relative deprivation and the other (ii) Absolute deprivation. Dalits are in absolute deprived category. It is in three forms social, economic and political. Concretely the problems the Dalits face are low social status, destitution and poverty and powerlessness. Cultural reasons are more important if only because they have been under emphasised. Once we acknowledge this, we then find that both economic and cultural reasons account for them.

Neither the Bhakti nor the neo-Vedantic movements started by Caste Hindus could bring any fundamental changes in the Dalits. Likewise neither the conversion movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar and his RPI Party nor Radical Dalit Panthers could change the atrocious social atmosphere in India. Nothing radical happened through their efforts. Conversion to Buddhism or christianity

could not help them to or christianity could not
 could not help them to escape the label of Scheduled
 Caste. This being so Dalit movements old and new at
 best reformative and operated as interestgroups.
 Reservation policy became a strong weapon in the
 hands of Hindu rulers to Divide and Rule and seem to have
 resulted in the ~~mis~~section of Dalits. It has killed
 the spirit of self-respect and self-help and handicapped
 Dalits in their dealings with the ruling classes. No
 communist organization could reach out Dalits and mobilise
 them but keep on arguing that caste is not an fundamental
 problem. ~~It is the most cause of their~~

~~I think in ~~fort~~ ~~independent~~ India the
 attitude of Indian ~~units~~ towards Dalits is the
~~ground~~ of their ~~hypocrisy~~ and ~~selfishness~~. ~~It is~~
 to ~~be~~ ~~in~~ ~~case~~ ~~why~~ ~~they~~ ~~could~~ ~~not~~ ~~mobilise~~ ~~the~~ ~~Dalits~~
 or ~~for~~ ~~their~~ ~~independent~~ ~~attitude~~ ~~shows~~
~~us~~ ~~that~~ ~~they~~ ~~do~~ ~~not~~ ~~love~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~case~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~poor~~ ~~and~~ ~~to~~
 understand caste ~~is~~ ~~therefore~~ ~~an~~ ~~applying~~ ~~economic~~
 interpretation of social system.~~

~~It is by Dalit ~~and~~ ~~caste~~ ~~discrimination~~, their
 economic ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~alone~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~cause~~ ~~of~~ ~~their~~ ~~poverty~~,
 economic deprivation. Poverty is not the ~~main~~ ~~and~~ ~~not~~
~~factor~~~~

I have argued that Ambedkar's movement was a selfhelp and self respect movement based on three principles : educate, agitate and organise. For Ambedkar, Dalits salvation lies in their social elevation. Dalits have to adopt aggressive attitude and prove by thought, words and deeds that they will no longer tolerate humiliation. Dalits contentment must be disturbed and a deep discontent must be created in them which is the basis of all elevation. For their emancipation Dalits should try all methods and means. They must learn the grand principle that justice is never achieved by begging but by constant struggle. Conversion to Buddhism alone can emancipate them and make them self-respecting men. Ambedkar also argues that inspite of the composite makeup of the Hindu population there is a deep cultural unity. That caste is a parcelling into bits of a larger cultural units. That there was one class to start with that is Brahmin caste, which was responsible for the creation of caste.

Our study reveals that for Ambedkar caste has ruined Hindu society. That the reorganization of Hindu society is impossible on the basis of Chaturvarna because the Varnavyavastha is like a leaky pot. It is incapable of sustaining itself on its own virtues and has inherent tendency to degenerate into a caste system.

The reorganization of Hindu society on the basis of Chaturvarna is harmful because the effect of the Varnavyavastha is to degrade the masses by denying them opportunity to acquire knowledge and to emancipate them by denying them the right to be armed. Hindu society must be reorganized on a religious basis which would recognize the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. In order to achieve this the sense of religious sanctity behind caste and varna must be destroyed. The sanctity of caste and varna can be destroyed only by discarding the divine authority of shastras.

Our study has shown that Dalit Panthers and modern dalits aim to capture political power. Almost all the organisations view present social system as feudal which deprived dalits from worldly happiness. But dalit panthers, the Republican Party encouraged caste Based politics. Dalit panthers lost faith in democracy and religion and urged for total revolution, and socialism. They recognized the need to combine both cultural and economic revolution to reorganize Hindu society.

Our study also shows that the panthers failed to provide appropriate strategy to bring this revolution. Most Dalit authors repeated the ideas of Ambedkar and Marx. Of course there are certain differences between Ambedkar and Dalit panthers. While Ambedkar believed in parliamentary democracy and devoted all his strength

to achieve the ideal of social democracy through constitutional methods. Dalit Panthers described the constitution as 'Manusmriti'. Therefore they insisted on total unconstitutional confrontation. But Ambedkar's stand on total confrontation was critical.

Post Ambedkar's Dalits struggle was by the Dalit people or the Dalits but for the Dalit leaders. Only Dalit leaders benefitted from it. Not only Hindus but also Dalits have no accurate understanding of Dr. Ambedkar's views on Dalits emancipation. In Ambedkar everything is there for Dalit emancipation in particular and emancipation of India in general if rightly understood. First of all what Dalits and Hindus have to do is to understand Ambedkar properly that will educate them through such education the emancipation of Dalits is possible. Ambedkar's philosophy can be called philosophy of education. What all Indians need is to accept truth as truth and untruth as untruth.. If caste is bad for Dalits, is it not equally bad for Hindus. Then why Hindus are not revolting against this bad system is a question must be addressed by all serious thinkers.

Ideology of Dalits or Dalitism bears the testimony of ideas and inspirations for a revolutionary change

in society. Dalitism is the other name of humanism. It symbolizes the revolt against social injustice, political, economic and educational deprivation and all forms of exploitation and oppression. It is true that the Depressed Classes themselves could alone break their bondage through self-help, self-development and self-assertion. So Dr. Ambedkar once in anguish and with bitter dissatisfaction said, "Tell the slave that he is slave and he will revolt." The implicit and explicit significance of these words of Dr. Ambedkar inspire for total change i.e. revolution.

Before concluding I must emphasize once again that the aim and objective of Dalit Liberation Struggle is to bring about a casteless and classless society. It is, therefore necessary to follow the ideas and Philosophies of Dr. Ambedkar and Karl Marx. Karl Marx said society is based on classes which perpetuate exploitation. Similarly Dr. Ambedkar said Indian Society is based on castes which not only advocate exploitation but discrimination and tyranny as well. In case of India, class is very much akin to caste. Generally the higher caste people are of higher classes and vice-versa. The Objective of Dr. Ambedkar was to destroy class and caste together. However, the aim of Marx and Ambedkar was to ameliorate the oppressed sections of the society.

Their means of struggle might be little different but not at all dichotomous, and their goal was same. Hence, both Marxists and Ambedkarites must unitedly launch their struggle to achieve the long awaited goal i.e. casteless and classless society.

But one thing is the soul of the Dalit Liberation Movement i.e. "Self-sufficiency of Education." Unless and until we achieve the "self-sufficiency" in education we do not foresee our elevation in social, economic and political life. It is futile attempt to go for revolution without education, which is just like a hope after mirage.

In conclusion, we might say that none of the Dalit ideologies had a complete understanding of Dalit problems. Each of them emphasized one at the expense of the other. There is a need then to articulate an ideology which supercedes all of them and combines their relevant features. Only this ideology will guide Dalits when everything else fails.



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