

**SOCIAL FORMATION OF NEW MIDDLE CLASS :
A STUDY OF DALITS IN MAHARASHTRA**

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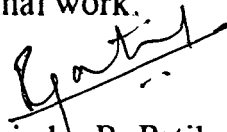
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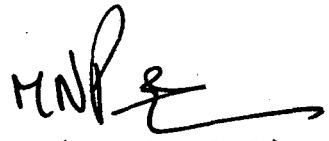
CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "SOCIAL FORMATION OF NEW MIDDLE CLASS : A STUDY OF DALITS IN MAHARASHTRA" submitted in partial fulfilment for the M.Phil. degree of this University has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my original work.


Ravindra R. Patil

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



(NANDU RAM)
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For SD, in Friendship

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CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the middle class as a social category has a long history. According to Misra, "In England in the fourteenth century the emergence of the trader as a separate social and functional category formed the first step in the rise of middle class" (Misra, 1961:4). But the real momentum in the formation of the middle class came through the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century. It were "the exigencies of large scale mechanical production which heralded a new social order, distinct from feudalism and founded not on bondage but free relations" (Misra, 1961:4-5). This led to the increasing number of new groups and categories, emerging from the expansion of trade and industry, education and professions which added to the complexity of social structure and relationship. Finally, "capitalism made the middle classes an integral part of a unitary social order"(Misra, 1961). But what the middle class order implied was not simply that they stood between the capitalists and the workers. But according to Misra, "there were two other important factors. First, they found a composite intermediate layer consisting of a wide range of occupational interests but bound together by a common style of living and behavior pattern. Secondly, they stood for certain liberal, democratic values, which they expressed in their social and political conduct. Ideologically, the new order stood for intellectual freedom and social mobility, liberal individualism and political democracy. A middle class society thus became identified with a stratified social order representing a new standard of values which its members or groups imposed upon the entire societies in which they lived"(ibid).

Emergence of Middle class in India

It was only after the advent of the British rule in India that “the ideas and institutions of a middle class social order were imported into India” (Misra, 1961). Further, “The British attempted as part of their educational policy to create a class comparable to their own, so that it may assist them in the administration of the country” (ibid:10). The British aimed at creating a middle class which was to be a class of imitators and not the originators of new values and methods. The educated class in India which emerged as a result of British educational policy cared more for position and influence in the civil service and than for mass education or economic development (Misra, 1961:11). But its component parts though heterogeneous and even mutually conflicting, exhibited an element of uniformity not only in their behaviour pattern and style of life, but also in their mode of thinking and social values. Thus, from the circumstances of their origin and growth, the members of the educated class, such as government servants, lawyers, college teachers and doctors constituted bulk of the Indian middle class (Misra, 1961:12). Nevertheless, the Indian middle class was largely dominated by the traditionally ^{higher} Acaste people (Varma, 1998:27).

Emergence of Middle Class among Dalits

The middle class as a social category emerged among the dalits only after independence and that too due to implementation of the Protective Discrimination Policy. In Pre-independence period, the British had also adopted various welfare and developmental measures in favour of untouchables or depressed classes. Besides, they had also created new opportunities like jobs in the army, industrialization, advent of means of communication, etc. All these had created a better-off section or new class among Dalits. But in real sense, more comprehensive measures were adopted by

Government of India, after Independence, for the welfare and development of the dalits or Scheduled castes.(Ram,1988).The Reservation in educational institutions,public services,state assemblies and in parliament created better-off section among the scheduled castes.Thus, the 'middle class' emerged among the dalits, though their majority was not evenly located in all but a few scheduled castes(Ram,1988).

Research problem

The Protective Discrimination Policy has certainly helped some of the members of the dalit community to acquire better socio-economic status in the Indian society. In the opinion of various scholars, they are elite, new class and new middle class (Sachchidanand 1977; Abbasayalu 1978; Dushkin 1972 ; Ram 1988). These scholars have given more emphasis on the benefits of the protective discrimination policy on improvement in the socio-economic status of the Dalits.But in real sense, the improvement in their socio-economic status had occurred since the British period as mentioned above. Hence, it is imperative to study the factors and forces of pre-independence period which had helped dalits to emerge as better-off section or middle class in the Indian society.

Though various factors helped dalit to emerge as better-off section or middle class during the pre and post independence periods but which caste or castes from amongst the dalit communities emerged largely as middle class is moot question. Also, how have they emerged as better-off section or middle class? Is it entirely a state creation or out of self efforts if not fully then atleast partially? These question or issues, have not been addressed in above studies. Hence, an attempt has been here to answer the above mentioned questions. In other words, the present study has

attempted to examine the social composition of the middle class among the dalits in Indian society.

It is generally expected that the better-off sections of society have social responsibility towards the progress of the underprivileged sections of population. This is equally true in the case of the better-off section of dalit community wherein dalit masses expect their favourable role in their (latter) socio-economic progress. Hence, our intention is to study whether the better-off section (middle class) of the Dalits is play any positive role in progress the dalit masses.

In brief, following are the objectives of the present study.

1. To enquire the origin and social formation of middle class or new middle class among dalits,
2. to examine the nature and social composition of new middle class, and
3. to analyse the role of new middle class in social transformation.

Conceptual Explanation

A number of terms have been used to denote the traditionally deprived, degraded and exploited sections of people in different parts of the country. These are Untouchables, Depressed Classes, Harijans, Scheduled Castes and more recently Dalits. The social scientists have also used these terms interchangeably. Since these terms have different connotations in different contexts, we shall briefly view at their origin, meaning or connotation and usage in general parlance and in the social science literature as well.

Untouchables

The term untouchable connotes touch of ritually lowest individual(s) defiling or polluting high caste Hindus. Therefore, certain distance ought to be maintained by higher caste Hindus from untouchables. Striking at the horrendous practice of untouchability practised against large section of Indian population, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar invariably used the term untouchable though occasionally and contextually he has also used the term 'Depressed Classes'. More specifically, he had used the term Depressed Classes while dealing with imperial state and putting forward the grievances of the deprived castes in front of British Government for their redressal or social justice (Guru, 1998:16). Anyway, by using this term Ambedkar wanted to make the British government aware about the discrimination existed in Indian Society on the ground of pollution and purity. Accordingly, he successfully impressed upon the government to play a crucial role in improving the life condition of the untouchables. But after independence, untouchability has been legally abolished. "The term 'untouchable' had disappeared from ordinary parlance; it was not only impolite to use it but illegal. The Indian Constitution in 1949 legally 'abolished' untouchability. There is no such thing legally as an 'untouchable' in India" (Issacs, 1965:35). Though untouchability still exists in one form or the other, we have not used term 'untouchable' while analysing the various aspects related to the better-off section or middle class people of the Dalit communities.

Depressed classes

The British government introduced the term 'Depressed classes' for administrative purpose. They used this term for economically and educationally backward people including untouchables and the aboriginal tribes (Issacs, 1965:35-

36). So, the term depressed classes connoted not only untouchables but also those Hindus who were socially, economically and educationally backward. Conversely, some groups were included in depressed classes even though theoretically they were not untouchables (Galanter, 1984:129). Since, our focus in this study is not on tribals and other backward communities, we have not used the term depressed classes in our discussion either on the better-off section of the Dalits or masses.

Harijan

Harijan is another term which was coined by Narsinh Mehta but adopted and used by M.K.Gandhi for the untouchables. The term 'Harijan' literally means "children of god". In fact, Gandhi's purpose behind using the term Harijan for untouchables was to provide them dignity and also to impress upon the caste Hindus to admit these unfortunates into their (Hindu) fold (Issacs, 1965:39). But the educated persons from amongst the Dalits or scheduled castes have not taken this nomenclature kindly as they think that "to single them out as the children of god merely means that attempts were being made to make their condition tolerable rather than to destroy the system which bred inequality" (Roy Burman, 1977:84). Hence, the term 'Harijan' is considered as humiliating by most of the Dalits. Henceforth, we have not used this term in our present discussion that follows.

Scheduled Castes

The British government of India had adopted the term Scheduled Caste in the 1935 Act and accordingly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order was enacted in 1936. In the Schedule or list, only those castes were included which were treated untouchables and were socially, economically and educationally backward. After independence, the framers of the Indian Constitution retained the term

'Scheduled Caste' which came to be used for the castes described earlier as 'untouchables' (Ahuja, 1993:364). This term has been in use as an official category and hence, is legal term till date. But the term has proceeded without a single connotative definition. "The selection has proceeded on the basis of 'untouchability' measured by the incidence of social disabilities but this criterion has been combined in varying degrees with economic, occupational, educational, residential and religious tests" (Galanter, 1984: 134). Further, "The resulting list then designates all of those groups who in the view of parliament require the special protections provided by the Constitution. It defines who may stand for reserved seats and enjoy benefits and reservation for the Scheduled castes. But it does not necessarily include every person or group that might be considered 'untouchables' by any conceivable definition. It omits some groups, which historically suffered disabilities (e.g. Ezhuvas) or which would be untouchables in terms of the 1931 census tests. And it excludes non-Hindus (other than Sikhs) who would clearly seem to be untouchables within the judicial test of 'origin' in a group considered beyond the pale of the caste system. There is, thus, no single inclusive list of all groups considered untouchables, just as there is no single criterion for identifying them"(Galanter, 1984:134).

Since there are also non-untouchable groups along with untouchables incorporated into the category of scheduled castes, our concern is not these non-untouchable groups but untouchables who have emerged as better-off section or middle class. In any case, we have used the term 'Scheduled Caste' with its connotation for the latter and the Dalits interchangeably while discussing about the better-off section or middle class from amongst the Dalits.

Dalits

We have frequently used the term 'Dalit' in our study for both the traditionally deprived and degraded masses and the better-off section or middle class of these communities. The reason for using the term 'Dalit' here is that it is notionally a homogeneous term coined and adopted by the Dalits themselves. The term Dalit, Vivek Kumar writes, "found its expression in the Vinaya Pitika of the Buddhist texts, which has connotation of the poor and deprived masses" (Vivek Kumar, 1994:12). In the modern times, Jotiba Phule was "the first to use the word dalit in connection with caste in the term 'Dalitodhar' (uplift of the depressed)" (Zelliot, 1998:271). But Guru, writes, "the category Dalit was first used by Ambedkar himself in his fortnightly 'Bahishkrit Bharat'. He defined it comprehensively: Dalithood is a kind of life condition which characterises the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalits by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper castes' Brahminical order. Ambedkar, however, did not use this category often" (Gopal Guru, 1998:16).

But it is a fact that the post-Ambedkar Dalit literary movement in Maharashtra popularised the term dalit and gave more recognition to it. The term Dalit was frequently used in the 1960's for the writings that had come chiefly from ex-untouchables, many of whom in Maharashtra are now Buddhist, or other oppressed groups. They defined the term, in 1970s, with a broader connotation and used it for women, lower castes, untouchables, tribes, working class, landless, poor peasants and all those who were suppressed, depressed, exploited, harassed and degraded in the society (Chitre, 1982).

Thus, the term 'Dalit' expresses their self-assertion and sense of pride. It is different from other terms like Harijan and scheduled castes. The term 'Harijan' is an

ascribed one since it does not flow from untouchable's personal experiences. As mentioned earlier, Gandhi and other upper caste Hindu artificially imposed it on the untouchables. Similarly, the term 'Scheduled Castes' is also artificial construction by the state. In contrast, the term dalit is distanced from Harijan and Scheduled Castes. According to Guru, "the category dalit is not a metaphysical construction. It derives epistemic and political strength from the material social experience of the community. It is this social construction of dalithood which makes it authentic and dynamic rather than a passive and rigid" (Guru, 1998:16). But, the term Dalit in Gail Omvedt's opinion "provides a militant alternative to the Gandhian term harijan and the colourless governmental scheduled castes"(Omvedt, 1995:77).

As we have already seen that the other terms like Depressed Classes, Untouchables, Harijan and Scheduled Castes are quite inappropriate, confusing, and humiliating. These also fail to provide the dignity of status to the traditionally deprived castes and that is why, we have used the term 'Dalit' for them, which gives more sense of pride and has become symbol of their social identity. Also, the term dalit is not a mere linguistic expression but has also achieved recognition in the academic parlance specially in Social Science research in recent years.

New Middle Class

Another term new middle class has been used in this study. Mills used this term for managers, salaried professionals, sales people and office workers (Mills, 1956:65). In the words of Bocock and Thompson, "the new middle class include all the service groups thrown up by the spread of bureaucracy, the growth of welfare states and recent rapid growth of service industries"(Bocock and Thompson, 1992:22). It is distinct from the old middle class as, "the old middle class consists of

self employed owners of small business, proprietors of local shops and small farmers”(Giddens, 1997:252).

The different scholars have used the term new middle class in different context. Frazier has used the term new middle class for the black bourgeoisie class emerged from the black masses in the United States of America. He calls businessmen, educated white collar workers and politicians of the Negro Community or Black masses as new middle classes (Frazier, 1966). Similarly, in the Indian context the term new middle class has been referred to the better-off sections of Scheduled Castes. Roy Burman, for instance has considered “the new middle class as the section of the people belonging to the scheduled castes who avail the reservation facilities and belong to the family of marginal farmers” (cf. Ram, 1988:118). Ram has also used the term new middle class, “for the salaried persons of the scheduled caste who have adopted a life style and achieved a socio-economic status and thereby a class position different from earlier ones” (Ram, 1988:119). So, the term ‘new middle class’ has been used in the Indian context for the economically better-off sections of scheduled castes who have achieved such status with the help of Protective Discrimination policy.

We have also used the term ‘new middle class’ for those dalits who have emerged as a better-off section in the society. The reason for our using this term for them is that their emergence as a better-off section is due to Protective Discrimination Policy which was not available to the members of the traditionally dominant old middle classes consisted of the higher castes only. Similarly, the property relation of this new middle class is different from that of the traditionally dominant old middle class. In other words, the old middle classes held property and means of production for centuries together (ibid). We have, however, not used the term ‘elite’ for the better-off section of dalits, because it connotes “a class of people who have the

highest indices of capacity or performance in every Branch of human activity” (Pareto, 1935:1422-3). Similarly, Singh and Sundaram have characterized the elite as, “the leadership group of those persons in the community who possess such qualities that arouse respect and submission in the minds of the common members of the community” (Singh & Sundaram.1987:4-5).

While looking at the above meaning of the term elite, it is quite inappropriate to call the better-off section of dalits as elite because even though some of the dalits have achieved higher socio-economic status, their caste status is still considered as lowest in the Indian society. They still face discriminations and even humiliations on one occasion or the other and cannot gain respect in every branch of human activities. Hence, our use of the term new middle class for better-off section of Dalits appears to be quite in order.

Methodology

The various scholars have studied the upward social mobility of traditionally deprived and untouchable communities of India from the perspective of the Protective Discrimination Policy. The present study also looks at the socio-economic progress of dalit community from such perspective. The method used in this study is historico-analytical. This study is based on the secondary sources of data such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers and other relevant documents like Census reports and statistical handbooks. The data extracted from these sources have been used to analyze the various facets of the issues undertaken in this study and to substantiate the arguments given therein.

Importance of the study

As mentioned earlier, the issues like social origin and formation of new middle class, their social composition and role are the main concerns of this study. Since it is not possible to cover these aspects in studying the new middle class in the Indian society as a whole, the present study is restricted to Maharashtra only. There are still another reasons for this. In the early nineteenth century Maharashtra, the number of non-Brahmin movements were organized arousing a high degree of social awakening among the depressed classes in the state. Secondly, the British government had adopted a number of welfare and developmental measures in favour of the untouchables or depressed classes in the Bombay Presidency besides enactment of certain social legislations against their various types of social disabilities. Although such social measures and legislations were also adopted in favour of these castes or classes in other presidencies and provinces, these were most effective in the Bombay Presidency due to social awakening among the untouchables and depressed classes. Thirdly, the local dalit leaders and Ambedkar had played important role to bring about change in the condition of the depressed classes. Finally, the Government of India after independence has adopted the new Constitution and implemented the Protective Discrimination Policy for the welfare and development of the Scheduled castes. Again, these measures have been better utilized by the already conscious sections of the scheduled castes in the state.

We have already mentioned that they were earlier in the contact of British officials and Army personnels and had availed of some opportunities in the socio-economic and educational spheres. They also took first the advantages of the Protective Discrimination Policy or better known as Reservation Policy. They have

achieved higher education and entered the government jobs. Some of them have emerged as political leaders with their leaning towards the different political parties. Thus, a section of the Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra have emerged as better off due to their own efforts, welfare and developmental activities initiated by the state and the central government.

The present study is significant as it points out that dominant process of emergence of the better-off section among the dalits. With its' enquiry into origin and formation, social composition and the role of this new middle class, this study may indicate towards the in built consequences of the Protective Discrimination Policy. Since the formation of new middle class among the dalits is not a smooth going process, this study may point out some of the significant limitations or constraints of the process vis-à-vis new middle class itself.

Chapterization

The study has been divided into six chapters. Besides this, the second chapter focuses the various theoretical views on the concept of class, middle class and new middle class. It also analyses the nature and composition of the Indian middle class. The third chapter focuses on the socio-historical profile of the Dalits in Maharashtra. In this chapter, the process of origin and factors responsible for formation of a new class among dalits of Maharashtra during the pre and post independence periods have been discussed. Simultaneously, attempt has also been made to analyze why certain communities from amongst the dalits or the Scheduled Castes had emerged earlier as a better-off section and later as a new middle class as compared to other communities.

The fourth chapter deals with the nature and social composition of new middle class among the Dalits of Maharashtra. Similarly, this chapter also briefly looks at the Scheduled and non-scheduled castes and shows that it is the Protective Discrimination Policy that has helped dalits to emerge as a new middle class as compared to general middle class population (non-dalits). This new middle class is very small. Similarly, taking into consideration the parameters like education, occupation, economic and social power, effort has been made in this chapter to provide an intra-composition of new middle class. This chapter also tries to spell out why the new middle class has emerged only from the people of only one Scheduled Castes rather than entire dalit communities in the state.

The role and contribution of the new middle class to social transformation has been discussed in the fifth chapter. More specifically, this chapter discusses the different types of roles played by members of the new middle class in the awakening and consciousness of the dalit masses in Maharashtra. Finally, a summary of discussion made in the preceding chapters has given in the concluding chapter. This chapter also indicates about certain emerging trends with regard to social composition and role of the new middle class in the state as well as in the country as a whole.

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CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In general sense, the term class is defined as a large scale grouping or stratification of people who share common economic and occupational resources. This ultimately represents their particular type of life style. Broadly speaking, class is determined by the people's economic standing like property, income, occupation and land they acquire through various sectors like agriculture, industry and other occupations such as manual and non-manual, skilled and white collar jobs. There are yet a few more explanations of class which give a clear cut picture about what the term is. For instance, the classes are then mainly stratified on the basis of economic standing of the people as mentioned above. The differences in the holding of economic resources create hierarchy in classes. More specifically, people's large scale possession of wealth, property, land and other material resources gives them a higher standing in class structure or system as compared to those who have less possession of material resources. Thus, these inequalities in possession and control of material resources create a social stratification system consisting of high and low classes in society.

There are several views on class and class structure formulated by a large number of social scientists including sociologists. It may not be possible to examine all of them here. Instead, it may be said that these views are broadly categorised as Marxist (including that of Marxian and neo-Marxian and non-Marxist or Weberian). Here, we will first take into consideration the analysis of the term 'class' conceptualised by the two classical German sociologists namely Karl Marx and Max

Weber. Later, we will see how class has been viewed and located by a few sociologists in the Indian context.

Marx could not complete his theory of class (due to his sudden death), as the last (52nd) chapter of the third (and last) Volume of his 'Das Capital' bearing the title "The Classes" is the incomplete one. But later, the Marxist scholars interpreted and analyzed the class theory according to their own understanding and propagated it as Marx's view on class theory. Thus, according to Marxian perspective, the class is not only reality but the great social reality and constitutes the great moving force in history. The Marxists hold that in social development, each period is marked by the predominance of a particular class which constitute itself as ruling class. Each subsequent period gives birth to new class as the chief claimant to take over power or rulership from existing ruling class. Further, the Marxists define class in terms of individual's or group's position in the given economic structure to control and make use of the powers of production (Cole, 1955 : 10.).

So, the term class for the Marxists is a group of people who stand in a common relationship to the means of production-the means by which they gain a livelihood (Giddens, 1977 : 244). In all the stratified societies, there are two social groups namely ruling class and subject class. Thus, in the pre-industrial societies, there were two classes those like aristocrats, feudal lords and landlords who owned land and those like serfs, slaves and land labourers who worked for the former class and actively participated in the production process. Even in the modern industrial societies, there are again two classes - one of those who holds or owns new means of production like factories, offices machinery, wealth or capital. We call it capitalist or industrialist class. The other class is of those who earn their livelihood^{by} selling labour with the means of production owned and controlled by the capitalist and industrialist class. We call it working class. In the Marxist terminology, the former is Bourgeoisie

and the later is proletariat. Further, according to the Marxists, the relationship between Bourgeoisie and proletariat or between ruling class and working class is always exploitative and oppressive one.

Although the Marxists have regarded there are two major classes in the society but in reality class system is much more complex one. There have always been a number of intermediary classes between capitalist or bourgeoisie and proletariat classes. For instance, in the feudal societies there were peasantry classes between feudal landlords and landless labour or serfs. Similarly, in the modern societies there are intermediary classes like supervisor, manager between capitalist or industrialist and labourers. As technical progress has increased manifold, larger units of business enterprises including banking and finance enterprises have also developed. These large scale enterprises have also created a class of technicians, administrators and supervisors who are dispensed with service of the capitalist business. Along with this have also emerged the class of professionals and the managerial class. These are the intermediate classes placed above the manual and clerical workers. Though they use to draw good profits out of their services but they have no independent voice in the control of production. These intermediate groups in the industry basically are servants of the capitalist class. Even, the non-industrial professionals appear to be engaged in following, if not directly then at least indirectly, the order and mustering to the demands of the capitalist class. For Marx, the intermediary classes were part of the proletariat class because of their lack of control over means of production and for providing services to the capitalist class. (Chibber, 1968)

Thus, Marx's analysis of class is uni-dimensional with a single criteria like one's position with respect to the means of production which determines one's position in the stratification system. Unlike Marx, Weber's analysis of class is

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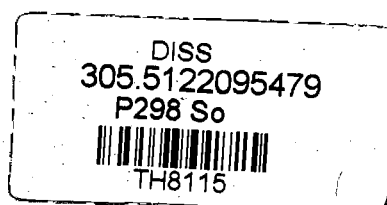
multidimensional. In other words, while analysing class he has included several different and distinct hierarchies. He has also recognised that stratification consists of several possibly independent dimensions like class, status group and party. This is regarded his major contribution to the study of social classes (Blumberg, 1972:21).

In contrast, Weber has defined class in the market situation where - Weber has discussed three major dimensions of stratification system - class, status and power. Although he agrees with Marx on class as a economic term but his understanding and analysis of class is entirely different. For him, class is strictly an objective dimension of social stratification and is determined by one's life chances in the market place as mentioned above. In fact, it is the market where one possesses skills, source of income and the different type of property (ibid). Weber argues that classes develop in the market economy in which individuals compete for economic gains. More precisely, he defines, "Class as a group of individuals, who share similar economic positions in market economy and due to this economic position, they receive similar economic rewards. Thus according to him, individuals' economic position or class situation is a market situation and those who share similar class situation also share similar life chances. He further argues that those who would be having better economic position would receive the highest economic rewards and enjoy superior life chances compared to those who are having low economic position (Chibber, 1968). Then, owning property and lack of property, according to Weber, are therefore the basic categories of class situation.

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There are specific resources like skills and educational credentials or qualification which create economic differences in the society. These further decide the individual's value in the market. In other words, a skilled labour or craftman certainly earns higher wages than the semi and unskilled labour. Similarly, the white collar workers like managers, administrators and professionals receive relatively



higher salaries or emoluments as compared to blue collar workers. Their qualification such as degree, diploma and the specialized professional knowledge make them more marketable than others who do not have such qualification. In Weber's understanding the ownership and non ownership of property are the significant factors in the creation of classes. Simultaneously, skills of individuals in society varies which result in their differing market value and economic return. That is why, there exist different social classes in the society.

While talking about the other two dimensions of stratification system, Weber argues that class is closely related to status and power. According to him, status differs from social groups in the social honour and prestige. Class refers to unequal distribution of economic rewards, whereas status refers to the unequal distribution of social honour. An individual's status is based on his/her mode of living, a formal education level and the acquisition of the corresponding modes of life. It also depends on his/her religious denomination, ethnic origin(birth) and occupation. All these factors of status accord to the individual a differing degree of prestige or esteem in the society. Thus, in Weber's opinion, a status group is constituted of the individuals having similar amount of social honour or prestige and, therefore, sharing the similar status situation. They also share common life style, recognize each other as equals, visit in each other's house and keep connubium or commensality. They often put restrictions on the outsiders if the latter try to interact with them. While giving example of the Indian caste system, Weber argues that in Indian society castes and sub-castes are systematically formed and largely distinguished in view of social honour. The members of caste and sub-caste have specific life style and prestige. Along with this, a number of restrictions in terms of interdinning, inter-caste marriage, etc. have been set on social interaction and social relations among the different status groups.

The relation between class and status has close link in many societies. Status may be based on class, but it is not necessary that it is always determined by class alone because those who share the attributes of higher class may not necessarily belong to the high status group. For example, the newly rich people are not easily accepted by members of the traditionally rich people and are occasionally excluded from the status group of the latter because their manner, tastes, life style, dress pattern, etc. may differ. Similarly, the low class position of a person is not a disqualification for his been regarded as a member of the high status group though one's class position does influence one's social status. The status group also cuts across class division(s). In the society if he belongs to the lower class position, the status of a person remains the same inspite of his higher birth, prestige or race.

Thus, Weber's understanding of status group suggests that in the society status rather than class position provides the basis for the formation of social groups. It develops common interest and group identity among its members. Similarly, he also argues that the different status groups within a single class cut across class divisions and can weaken the class solidarity and class consciousness.

While discussing about the third dimension of stratification system, Weber argues that parties concerned with the acquisition of social power can influence stratification independent of class and status. Party is defined by Weber as a group of individuals who have common background, aims or interests and who work together in the interests of their membership. Such parties have close relation with class and status, and often represent the interests of classes and status groups. According to Marx, both status group and party are influenced by class. But Weber argues that even though both are influenced by class, both can in turn influence the economic circumstances of individuals and groups. He also suggests that though there is close relationship between class, status and power, party can divide and cut across classes

and status groups. Thus, Weber's analysis of class, status and party indicates that apart from classes there are other dimensions which strongly influence people's lives.

In fact, Weber does not entirely disagree with Marx on the centrality of the ownership of means of production which creates stratification in the society. But he argues that a class is conceptually wider than merely of an economic sort. The classes are not only restricted by ownership of means of production but are also driven by the individuals' market positions such as consumers, owners of different kinds of wealth (financial capital, land, etc.), owners or rentiers of a house, employees in the public sector or in a private industry, and so on (Worsley 1991:426). Along with this, Weber also argues that stratification in the society is not only economic but also social. The social status of an individual also depends on both his possession of wealth and property and his inherited or achieved social honour and prestige in the society. It may be then said that those who have inherited social honour and prestige will enjoy higher status in spite of their low economic status. But those who have socially low status will not enjoy higher social status in spite of their higher class position.

Finally, talking about party and its relation with class and status group, Weber argues that party is a group of individuals who always work in the interests of their membership as mentioned above. It always represents the interest of class and status group but is neither based simply on possession of wealth nor on the established position in the society.

Thus, Weber has considered all three dimensions which give more flexible and sophisticated analysis of social stratification than that provided by Marx. In Marx's scheme of thought, other dimensions (superstructures) of social status are

dependent on the economically determined class position(structure). But in Weber's analysis, all dimensions of social status, social stratification for that matter, independently determine one's status in the society though they have close relationship among them and are also complementary to one another.

Classes in Indian Society

But without stretching the argument further, here we will see how some of the Indian scholars having allegiance to both the Marxian and Weberian frames of analysis of class or social status have viewed the social reality in the Indian society.

While discussing about the concept of class in the Indian context, one has necessarily to look at the caste which has remained not only a dominant institution but as part of life of the people for centuries together. Hence, an analysis of class without taking note of caste in Indian situation would be incorrect and irrelevant. In India, both class and caste go hand in hand. This togetherness of caste and class is to be taken as a source of the Marxist and non-Marxist analyses of class in Indian society. The Indian Marxist scholars like A.R. Desai, D.P.Mukherji, Ramakrishna Mukherji, Gail Omvedt, D.D. Kosambi, Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib, etc. have analysed the Indian social reality from the point of class and its social formation. According to these scholars, modes of production and resources in India have been monopolised and controlled by specific class of people. But what these scholars undermine is that these people also belong to the specific caste categories to which they do demonstrate their allegiance in more than one ways. Due to advantage of the traditional superior social status, the certain communities in Indian society have hold over modes of production and resources. All opportunities needed for upward mobility have remained available only to certain socially privileged groups of people. The people of the lower social strata could not reach up to the status of the privileged

ones due to the traditional social and religious restrictions imposed on them. Also, all the opportunities needed for upward social mobility were closed for them due to their low birth.

However, the Marxist scholars in India have conventionally accepted the economic dimension of class wherein the section of people having control over means of production constitute the Bourgeoisie class and those who work as labourers for them constitute the Proletariat class. For instance, while describing the class in Indian situation Desai, (1948) has used the typical orthodox Marxian frame of analysis. He has analyzed agriculture, industry, trade and business, means of transport, modern education, political parties, state administration, role of press, reform movement, etc. from the class perspective. He has clearly demarcated the two classes of bourgeoisie or capitalist and labour or proletariat in Indian society. Thus according to him, there are certain privileged groups in India who always maintain their hegemony in every spheres like ritual and religion, education, industry, agriculture and politics. They have been able to do so on the basis of their privileged birth status and control over modes of production. But it is also a fact that they have achieved and retained their higher status through exploiting the proletariat masses and maintaining hierarchy in the society. Desai (1969:113) has further subscribed to the view that the Indian society has been transformed from a feudal to the capitalist or the semi-capitalist one. It is now stratified into new classes like capitalist (commercial, Industrial and financial), professional (like lawyers, doctors, engineers) a fairly large sized middle class employees, and the labourers or workers in the urban areas. In rural areas, we find the society regrouped into classes of landlords, peasant proprietors, tenants and agricultural labourers along with the strata of the ruined artisans and group of money lenders and traders. Thus, the present day society in India - both in rural and urban areas is highly complex unlike that existed in the past.

Gail Omvedt, another sociologist of the Marxist disposition has observed both caste and class as two distinct categories. The former is a social category and the later is the economic one. Both have existed in India since the beginning of the generation of an economic surplus and social inequality. In the pre-capitalist Indian society the situation, according to Omvedt was more complex. The caste system itself separated the unpaid surplus labour from the direct producer and it was functioning as a class phenomenon and the basic unit of division of labour. It was a system of exploiter and exploited sections of the people. So, according to Omvedt, caste and class are interwoven. The social formation in India is the product of caste and the feudal mode of Production. The capitalism under the colonial rule in India had redefined and reshaped both the caste and class structures. Consequently, there is more close proximity today between caste and class structures in the Indian society. (Omvedt, 1982:14)

Even Gough, though an anthropologist of non-Marxist disposition, appears to have used Marxian approach in her study of a Tanjor village in Tamil Nadu. Considering the agrarian mode of production as a social formation, she finds interconnections of caste, kinship, family, marriage and even rituals with the forces of production and production relations. In her study, she argues that the historical transformation of mode of production has led the emergence of a new class of bourgeoisie, the polarization of peasantry and the pauperization of the working class (Gough, 1960).

However, contrary to the Marxist explanation of class, there are a few non-Marxist scholars who have analysed class in Indian context in the Weberian perspective or framework. For instance, Andre Beteille, Anil Bhatt, K.L. Sharma, Nandu Ram, etc. While analysing some aspects of Indian society, they have used the multidimensional approach formulated and pursued by Weber in his study of social

reality, found specially in the Western society. Both Beteille and Sharma have explained caste and class in their study of rural social stratification vis-a-vis agrarian structure. More precisely, they have adopted the perspective of caste, class and Power (Beteille) or caste, class and authority (Sharma). But Bhatt, on the other hand, has followed the perspective of caste, class and politics. As such, broadly following the Weberian approach these scholars have found caste, class and power or even politics mutually interdependent. Viewing caste and class as mutually exclusive conceptual categories, Ram (1988) has found their complementary roles in an industrial metropolis in India.

The nature of Middle classes

The Rev. Thomas Gibsborn had first employed the term middle class in 1785. He had used it largely to refer to the propertied and entrepreneurial class located in between the landowners on the one hand, and urban industrial workers and agricultural labourers on the other. But in the modern time, use of the term middle class varies considerably though in general the term refers to the various types of white collar workers ranging from higher professionals to relatively routine clerical workers. (Abererombic and Urry, 1983:1). The concept of middle class has also been described by the founding fathers of sociology. For instance, Marx in his theory of social stratification has described various classes. According to him, there are two main antagonistic classes of the haves and the haves not to whom he calls the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx recognises presence of a number of segments of people who are not actually engaged in the production process in a unit. Instead, they mostly engaged in managing the production unit, distribution of produces, etc. Marx calls them petty bourgeoisie or petit bourgeoisie. Marx's analysis of this petit bourgeoisie or middle classes is very interesting. In fact, he treats them not as independent classes because of their no independent standing. For Marx, these classes

are bound to take side either of the bourgeoisie or proletariat classes in their antagonistic relations ultimately resulting into class conflict. Hence, they disappear sooner or later. This is also because they are neither in a position to revolt against the bourgeoisie class nor they can voluntarily become member of the proletariat class.

Unlike Marx, Weber while defining social class speaks of social class structure consisting of plurality of class statuses. According to him, there are positively privileged and negatively privileged classes. The positively privileged class dominates the market with the help of its property and economic activity. Members of this class possess all things and resources which they require and become positively privileged status group. Contrarily, the members of the negatively privileged class are vulnerable in the market situation due to their inability to hold property and other economic activities. In fact, they themselves become the object of ownership. In this way, the negatively privileged class becomes negatively privileged group status due to lack of property. But in between these two extreme groups there are another groups whom Weber calls as middle class or classes. The middle classes, in Weber's opinion, have all sorts of property or marketable abilities through formal education and training. Chhibbar writes, "According to Max Weber, the middle classes 'Float over' acquisition' classes and social classes. If one sells his labour, he belongs to the proletarian class but if he sells his ability in the form of labour commodity acquired through training, vocational or otherwise, he belongs to the middle class, no matter whether he belongs primarily to acquisition class or social class structure. In other words, they may be described as consisting of various occupational and economic groups which are associated with the dependent on the marketable ability of the human beings received through training" (Chhibbar, 1968:14).

Weber has listed a number of occupational and other groups in the middle classes. These groups are : (a) entrepreneurs, (b) executives and managers,

(c)intelligentia, (d) men from liberal professions, (e) small business men, and (f) skilled and semi-skilled workers. But these must be viewed in the light of (1) marketable ability (2) income, and (3) status as determined by income and occupations (Chhibber, 1968:14-15).

Besides the Marxian and Weberian explanations, the term middle class has been analysed by a few other scholars also. For instance, according to Gould, "middle class denotes broadly that deemed intermediate 'between the upper class' and the 'working class'. The lines of demarcations, however, are not precise and are dependent upon number of varying and ambiguous criteria. The most frequent adopted criterion relates occupations. Development within the occupational structure of advanced societies created conceptual as well as practical difficulties in attempt to draw clear boundaries for the middle class. The core of class membership is being more readily located in occupational terms. It should be noted, also, that a shift in occupational status does not itself create more than the condition for shift in class articulation; attitude, interest or loyalties" (Gould 1964:426-27).

There are several other concrete reasons for the emergence of middle class or classes besides those stated earlier. According to Claude Alvares, in the middle of sixteenth century the population of Europe had begun to increase which ultimately led increase in food price and land value. It means, those who could afford to bear the increased prices were the wealthy class and others who failed were deprived and destitute population. These latter who had earlier survived on land migrated later to urban areas in search of work and their survival. (Singh, 1985:19) In the urban areas, these destitute and deprived masses got engaged in varieties of work and became factory workers, artisans, craftsmen, etc. They also ventured into commercial pursuits like local merchants, shop keepers, etc and also contractorship in making canals,

docks and railways. In this way, they ventured into commercial and trading activities in urban areas and gave birth to middle class (Singh, 1985:20).

Middle classes in India

In Indian society, middle class could not grow in the same fashion as it had grown and developed in the European society. This was so due to the caste ridden and hierarchical social system in India. Here, every individual belongs to a certain caste or community. The occupation of each community has also traditionally been fixed and nobody is allowed to change his/her occupation. In the past, there were strict caste restrictions on the individual's occupational and social mobility. That is why, middle class as a social category emerged only among the traditionally higher caste people who had possession and control over means of production both in rural and urban areas.

Nevertheless, middle class as a concept emerged and developed during the British rule in India. The British brought with them the capitalist mode of system like new civil and state administration system, new property and land laws, new judiciary and revenue system, new economic system and new or modern education. This capitalist mode of system reshuffled the traditional Indian society into new social classes (Desai, 1948).

Here, our main concern is to discuss the origin and nature of the Indian urban middle classes. As mentioned earlier, the middle class in India had emerged in India during the British rule and was more visible in urban areas. Since all the activities of trade, business and commerce of the British were concentrated in the coastal cities like Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta and Madras (now Chennai), more population was attracted towards these cities. Those who migrated to these and many other cities

and towns got the first opportunity to enjoy the fruits of the new types of occupations and modern education. Similarly, these modern occupations and the British administrative services helped them to raise their status in the society (Desai 1948).

There was, however, a broad correlation between the traditional caste-hierarchy and the new occupations. The traditionally learned high caste Hindus like Brahmins, Baidyas (in Calcutta), Kayasthas and Banias were the first to avail of the modern education. It is they who dominated the higher level of posts in the British administrative services. In fact, all the white collar jobs including the professional ones were occupied by the higher caste people due to their traditional privileged position. In the later period, a few members of the lower castes also began to leave their traditional occupations and duties. They moved to cities, got educated in the modern formal educational institutions and became employed in the white collar jobs. But ironically, the new state administrative and education system introduced during the colonial rule could hardly change the caste structure and dominance of the high caste people. The higher caste people continued to dominate all the new opportunities in the spheres of education and occupation including numerous professions. Thus, the middle class or classes emerged and grown during the British rule in India was constituted primarily of the traditionally dominant higher caste people. Since the majority of the lower caste people including tribals and people of the several minority communities were deprived of the new opportunities, they could not emerge as middle class. Yet, they followed the pursuit much later.

Emergence of the New Middle Class

Our main concern here is to have a brief look at the theoretical understanding of the new middle class and the position of its members in the class structure. The new middle class as a concept has been used by a number of scholars for different people in different context. Emile Lederer and Jacob Marshack were the first to analyse the concept of new middle class. They wrote, "The war and revolution gave a tremendous impetus to the growth of the salaried employees' class... for war economy means the expansion of big business, as well as extensive "organization", or bureaucratization which multiplies the functions of salaried employees.... tendencies towards municipalization and nationalization have brought into being legions of public servants.. As a further consequences the employees by their sheer numbers offer a counterweight to the increasing numerical strength of the labouring class" (Singh, 1985:2-3).

The members of the new middle class or classes are very different in terms of their work pattern. They have been involved in more complex kinds of works like supervision, management and administration in both technical and scientific field. They have been needed in a vast business and industrial set-up for its administration and management. Besides, they have also been working in the different administrative set-ups for implementing the state's schemes, policies and programmes. So, with the growth of the large business organizations, industries and modern state evolving new types of jobs for the management and administration of these set up, there emerged a new kind of employees dealing with only paper, people and money. These new employees were highly skilled in handling important affairs of organizations and administration. But they remained largely concerned with the matters related to their salaries, promotions, shorter hours of work and some rights regarding administrative and organizational affairs (Mills, 1956:63-76).

Yet, the pertinent question is where to place or locate the new middle class vis-a-vis middle class or classes. In this regard, Dahrendorf has stated, "presumably, a 'middle class' is located somewhere between at least two other classes, one above it and one below it. Yet, the 'new-middle class' has stubbornly resisted all attempts to define its upper and lower-limits". But the questions are whether the salaried employees are to be accepted as members of an upper stratum or of ruling class and where they 'really' still belong in the working class can not in general be answered." (Singh, 1985:5)

The New Middle class associated with many occupations like routine clerical or white collar workers, Professionals, retail and sales workers civil servants, state and local government employees. These occupations similarly are based on structural hierarchy and that is why it is difficult to fit this heterogeneous grouping into single class. Similarly, their varied occupational pattern and hierarchy led different earnings, which again gives picture of their market differentials and status differential position.

Mills, in his argument says that the transformation of middle class is a shift from property to no-property. Earlier there in America there were old middle classes like Big Farmers, Businessmen and Free professionals who held the property and means of production. The industrial mechanics and rise of giant corporation declined the economic importance of old middle classes and gave birth to new middle classes, a white collar salaried workers, who consists of Managers, Salaried Professionals, Salesmen and Office workers. The new occupation created a shift from property to no-property and shift from property to a new axis of stratification, occupation. (Mills, 1969; p 65)

Mills argues that though New Middle Class consists in independent free workers but they are working for someone else's property and depend upon large property for job security. Like propertyless wage workers, they have no direct financial ties with the means of production. Similarly He notes :

"Objectively... the structural position of the white collar mass is becoming more and more similar to that of the wage workers. Both are, ofcourse, propertyless and their incomes draw closer and closer together. All the factors of their status position, which have enabled the white collar workers to set themselves apart from wage workers, are now subject to definite decline. Increased rationalization is lowering the skill levels and making their work more and more factory like" (Mills 1969: pp 297).

Thus, though New middle classes are highly educated and skilled personnel but they are working for some one else and that's why they totally depend on their authorities. They can not take personal decision or seek personal solution for corporation or public problems.

So, these are some of the theoretical standing of New Middle class, which clearly show that though white collar workers' occupation, income and life style; value patterns are distinct from the workers and the wage labourers. But in real sense, the white collar employees are also the part of the property-less section as they not hold any property and means of production. Moreover, the power they exercise is delegated and limited in nature for carrying out their routine tasks in corporations and organizations.

A few other scholars have also used the term new middle class for socially and economically underprivileged section of the people who have achieved higher

socio-economic status in the society with the help of protective and welfare measures of the state. The members of this new middle class are employed in the white collar jobs and have acquired distinct life style in the society, which were not accessible for them in the past. Thus, Frazier (1966) has used the term new middle class for the black bourgeoisie class which has emerged from the black masses in United States. This new middle class of the blacks has emerged due to black's civil rights movement and the state policy of affirmative action adopted in their favour. In the context of Indian society, Roy-Burman has used the term new middle class for a section of people who are marginalised both in the rural and urban areas. In the rural areas, it is the small and marginal farmers of the middle and lower castes background who have been benefitted from a number of measures enacted under the schemes of the land reforms. In urban areas, it is mostly the people of the traditionally privileged scheduled castes who have emerged as elite or better-off section among scheduled castes, due to reservation policy in educational, employment and political spheres (cf. Ram, 1988:118).

Nandu Ram, in his study of Govt. employees in Kanpur city, has used the term new middle class for scheduled caste salaried employees. He writes that the new middle class is consisted of "The salaried persons of the scheduled castes who have adopted a life style and achieved and socio-economic status and thereby a class position different from the earlier ones. This is so partly because their social origin as a class is different from that of the new professionals and salaried persons in general in the country and partly because their structural position in the property relations is in consonance with that of the middle classes found outside of India. The 'New Middle Class' status of most of the respondents belonging to various scheduled castes is supported by the fact that their origin as a member of middle class is of a recent time in comparison to members of the old middle classes in general in the country. Moreover, they have come to this level with the support of the 'protective

discriminations', which have not been available to the members of the old middle class" (Ram, 1988:119).

So, these scholars have used the concept of the new middle class for that section of people who had suffered for centuries and have now achieved new class position in the society due to some protective and welfare measures of the state. These welfare measures have helped them to emerge as better-off section or elite, contrary to their traditionally deprived socio-economic status. The status of this new middle class people is distinct from their traditionally ascribed status and also from that of the people of old middle class in Indian society. The latter is constituted only of the higher caste people.

The Perspective

In the present study, we have used the term new middle class for the educated, the white collar government employees and professionals, and the politicians of the Scheduled Castes or the Dalits as they have come to identify themselves. It is true that the educated persons, if not employed, do not fully qualify to become the members of the new middle class specially in absence of a regular source of earning to sustain their distinctive position. But it is equally true that they are a distinct class or social category in terms of their knowledge and awareness, life style though dependent on their family expenses and their critical appraisal of social reality found around them. Similarly, the politicians as a social category are also not a stable class though they do enjoy some degree of power and prestige as compared to the Scheduled Caste masses. Then, it is only the Scheduled Castes government employees and the professionals who are able in a way to retain their achieved status of the new middle class. Nonetheless, the educated, employed and politicians of Scheduled Castes do constitute the new middle class though such a class is substantially neither homogenous nor uniform in its nature and social composition.

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CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-HISTORICAL PROFILE OF DALITS IN MAHARASHTRA

The Dalits in Maharashtra have been protesting over a century by now for the social justice and equality to be accorded to them. In the course of time, their efforts have succeeded in some spheres. But, on the whole, full realisation of social justice and equality is still a mirage for them. Here in this chapter, we shall examine how the success of their efforts along with the protective and welfare measures of the state have contributed to emergence and social formation of the new middle class among the Dalits in Maharashtra.

Dalits in Maharashtra

There are different theoretical perspectives about the origin of caste system and untouchability in India but that is not our immediate concern here. Rather, we are mainly interested in having a brief look at the social condition of the Dalits in India in general and in Maharashtra in particular. As Keer has cited, "The untouchables had different names in different parts of the country (in the past). They were called Outcastes, Untouchables, Pariahs, Panchamas, Atisudras, Avarnas, Antyajas and Namasudras. Their social disabilities were specific, severe and numerous. Their touch, shadow and even voice were deemed by the caste Hindus to be polluting. So they had to clear the way at the approach of a caste Hindu. They were forbidden to keep certain domestic animals, to use certain metals for ornaments;

were obliged to wear a particular type of dress, to eat a particular type of food, to use a particular type of footwear and were forced to occupy the dirty, dingy and unhygienic outskirts of villages and towns for habitation where they lived in dark insanitary and miserable smoky shanties or cottages. The dress of the male consisted of a turban, a staff in the hand, a rough blanket on the shoulder and a piece of lion cloth. The women wore bodices and rough sarees barely reaching the knees" (Keer, 1962:1). So was in general the living condition of the untouchables in India.

The living condition of the untouchables in the 19th and early 20th centuries in Maharashtra was in no way better than that in other parts of the country. According to Moon, "their touch, shadow, and even the sound of their voices were deemed to be polluting. They were restricted to the most crude clothing and ornaments. Public wells were forbidden to them. They were not to learn, to read or write, and were prohibited from listening to any of the traditional sacred texts. The punishments to be inflicted on transgressors were set out in gruesome detail. Any act of disrespect, especially to the priestly caste of Brahmins, was to be punished with the utmost rigour. To a certain extent, the same disabilities were laid down for the 'Shudra' lower castes of Hindus". (Moon, 1986:16).

The Untouchables were denied all public utility services. Their children were not allowed to attend the schools. The barbers and washer-men refused to render their services to them. They were treated by caste Hindus as sub humanless than man and were kept deprived in all social economic, political and religious spheres. As they were kept illiterate for ages, the jobs in the government offices, and in police and military forces were closed to them. They were forced to do the lowest traditional works like scavenging, sweeping, removing dead animals, skinning, tanning, agriculture labour, village servants, etc.

Under the Peshwa rule, the Untouchables of Maharashtra had suffered severely. In the city of Poona, the Mahars and Mangs were not allowed to enter within city before 9.00 a.m. after 3.00 p.m. because during this particular time, the shadow of bodies cast too long and in case the untouchables' shadow fell upon a Brahmin, it would pollute him. Along with this, they were also not allowed to spit on the road because the caste Hindus would get polluted by touching it with their foot. That is why, they were forced to hang an earthen pot around their neck to hold their spittle and tie a thorny branch or broom in their waist to brush out their foots steps while walking. Thus, there were the severest forms of atrocities imposed on the untouchables during the Peshwa rule and they were not at all treated as human being.

Since our concern in this chapter is to enquire into the emergence and social formation of the new middle class among the Dalits of Maharashtra, it is pertinent to look into their traditional occupational patterns and earning sources for their survival. The Mahar, Chambhar, Mang, Dhor, Holer and Bhangi are the main Dalit castes of Maharashtra. The Mahars have the largest population among Dalits in Maharashtra. Bhangis are not the original inhabitants of this province but have imported from the different states of India at different times as and when their services were needed. Except Bhangis, all other dalit castes communities are the original inhabitants of Maharashtra (Bhatt, 1941:6).

According to Zelliott, "The traditional place of the Mahar in the village community was as a balutedar or watandar, a village servant whose duty was to the village and whose recompense (Baluta or gifts in kind, and Watan or land) came from the village. The Mahar's hereditary duty may, in former times, have involved membership of the village governing body when the village servants, including the Patil (headman, usually a Maratha) and the Kulkarni (accountant, usually a Brahman) sat as the panchayat. The Mahar balutedar's duties included arbitrating in boundary

disputes, acting as the village watchman, mending the village wall, serving as guide and messenger to government servants, calling landowners to pay land revenue at the village chaudi (village hall), sweeping the village roads, escorting the government treasury, tracking thieves, carrying death notice and messages to other villages, bringing fuel to the cremation ground, and removing the carcasses of dead cattle from the village. The Mahar also had fixed duties in religious matters, including the kindling of the first Holi festival fire from which others fires were lit and guarding the shrine of goddess Mariai which was in the Maharawada (residential locality of Mahars). Recompense given by the village for these duties included not only grain and skins of the dead cattle, but a small amount of land known as watan and a host of other perquisites legendarily numbering fifty two. The Mahars not required for balutedar work (in recent decades at least, they have worked in turn) did agricultural labour, their own watan lands being insufficient to support them. This set of duties holds for the Konkan (coastal) and Desh (plains) areas of Maharashtra; in the Vidarbha region to the east, where a loose social structure prevailed, some Mahars were also weavers, tradesmen and malguzars (village revenue collectors)" (Zelliot, 1992:87-88).

The Chambhars, on the other hand, have traditionally been engaged in doing leather work such as preparing shoes and chappals, mats, whips, harness, etc. They have also been doing the tanning work on the non availability of a dhor. Due to their such occupation, they have remained in close proximity of the caste Hindus in the villages. Even in the past, they were regularly serving the needs of caste Hindus and thereby facing less atrocities and exploitation. Their close proximities with caste Hindus have facilitated them to adopt most of the religious rites and rituals of the latter. Also their leather works have helped them to achieve some degree of economic advancement. Interestingly, these together have enabled them to get alienated from rest of the dalit community.

The hereditary occupations of the Mangs of Maharashtra are making ropes, brooms, baskets and other bamboo works, castrating bullocks, the work of watchman and playing music in the marriage processions in villages. So, the people of this community through their such occupations have been able to earn for their survival and have not suffered much of exploitation. Similarly, the Dhors, another dalit community of Maharashtra have been engaged in their hereditary occupation of tanning like Chambhars. They also prepare mots, etc. for agriculture purpose. They are comparatively better off as tanning remains profitable work since early times. Even Chambhars and Caste Hindus are dependent on Dhors for the purpose of tanning of the dead animals. That's why, the Dhors have been having their easy survival and facing less exploitation compared to Mahars and Mangs. The Dhor Kolis, though not untouchables are included in the list of the scheduled castes in Maharashtra. In the absence of Mahars in certain villages, they do the works of Mahars like flying dead cattle, village servants, Watandars, etc. Along with this, they also work as agricultural and casual labourers. So looking at their traditional occupations and work patterns, it is explicit that they have been living in close contact with caste Hindus and have not faced much exploitative treatment from them.

The Holers also are considered at some places to be a sub-caste of Mahar but a sub-caste of Chambhar at other places. Their hereditary occupations have been of vending shoes and playing music in marriage processions. So, they have also traditionally remained in the close contact with caste Hindus and suffered less exploitation at the hand of the latter.

As mentioned earlier, the Mahars as a caste or community faced in past the severest kind of exploitative and inhuman treatment of the caste Hindus in the villages. All the avenues of survival were closed to them and they were forced by the

caste Hindus to live in the inhuman and pathetic condition. They faced discrimination and disabilities in the social, economic, religious, cultural and political spheres. Their entry into temple and pursuit of any kind of occupation other than the prescribed ones were restricted by the caste Hindus.

Social Change Among the Dalits

It is, however, interesting to note that almost all the Untouchable castes in the state have been able to improve their socio-economic condition specially since the latter part of the nineteenth century. But it is equally true that the Mahars, the most exploited and the degraded ones have been more successful than the Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, Holers, etc. Historically speaking, a number of factors or social forces have contributed to improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the Dalits specially Mahars in Maharashtra. Some of the factors and their roles are given below.

1. Military Services :

The dalits especially Mahars had used their employment in the military or armed forces for their social and economic progress. It is a fact that due to their inferior and pollutant status, the Mahars had no right to join the martial services in the Hindu society. However, they were recruited in the military services during the Muslim rule during the sixteenth, seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Some of the valiant and ambitious people had also converted to Islam in order to get good positions in the services of the Muslim rulers. They had also done so probably for taking revenge on the caste Hindus and for rescuing the untouchables from the caste tyranny. Some of them had risen even to be chieftains or petty rulers (Kshirasagar, 1994:32). Mahars were also employed in Shivaji's army to watch the jungles, act as escorts and keep forts supplied with wood and fodder. A Mahar legend reports about

their special duty of guarding the palace of Jijabai, Shivaji's Mother (Omvedt, 1994:71).

As mentioned earlier, the Dalits of Maharashtra had suffered a lot in social, economic, political and religious spheres during the Peshwa reign. They were socially and religiously degraded, exploited and even harassed by the Chitpawan Peshwas (the highest or purest Brahman caste in Maharashtra). Not only their survival was made difficult but all avenues for their subsistence were restricted and closed for them. In such situation, Mahars were the first to come in contact with the Europeans in India. They had joined the military services of the East India Company. They already had a bright history of martial services under the Muslim and Maratha rulers. However, their military career came to prominence only under the British rule. While fighting with the Marathas, the British officers could not trust the Maratha sepoys in the beginning. In Bombay, they employed the Mahars as a butler, menial servant, etc. for their houses. Along with this, they also recruited them in the military and police services. They had a special inclination towards recruiting the Mahars because of military background of the latter who were also reliable, faithful, brave and sturdy. In fact, the East India Company was so much impressed with the services of the Mahars that they raised two separate battalions in 1768 and 1777. The Marine battalion of Bombay Army was raised in which Mahars were recruited in large numbers (Longer, 1981:10-11). Longer has cited further that the total strength of the Indian components of the Bombay army stood at 25,938 men in 1852. Of the these, 8037 were Marathas, 6,928 were Brahmins and Rajputs, 1920 were Muhammedan, 264 were Christians, and 8789 were Mahars and few other castes. It was estimated that Mahars and a few other castes had comprised one third of the Indian components of the Bombay army. (Longer 1981:16).

After their recruitment in the British army, the Mahars became more revengeful to the native rulers as they were deliberately neglected by them in their armed forces in the past. For taking revenge of their exploitation, oppression and discrimination they fought decisively against the orthodox and oppressive Peshwas in 1818 at the battlefield of Koregaon and won the victory for the British East India Company (Kshirsagar, 1994:33). In the memory of Koregaon victory, the British raised later on the monuments on 26 March, 1821 at Koregaon and inscribed the names of the killed and wounded soldiers including the Mahar soldiers. As such, their bravery and martial services of the East India company obviously proved to be great assets for dalits specially the Mahars. They had won many rewards, medals and higher promotions in the military services.

Though recruiting the Mahars in the armed forces was in the self-interest of the British East India Company for its settling firmly in India, it helped the Mahars in coming into contact with the British officials specially the army officers. While serving the British army till the last few decades of the nineteenth century, the Mahars came closer to the western culture and literature. They adopted the manners and disciplines of the British military personnel. They also got exposed to the outside world whenever they had to go on the foreign expeditions. This all was helpful to them not only in coming out of their oppressed, suppressed and degraded conditions, but also distancing ideologically from the caste Hindus and enjoying in certain ways the humanistic treatments from the British military officers and soldiers. The East India Company had adopted the policy of the compulsory education for the Indian soldiers and had opened schools for their dependents. There was no discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, race and sex in imparting education for the pupils. In this context, Ambedkar had stated that "Until the advent of British, the Untouchables were content to remain Untouchables. It was a destiny preordained by the Hindu God and enforced by the Hindu State. Fortunately or unfortunately, the east India

Company needed soldiers for their army in India and it could find none but the Untouchables...In the army of the East India Company there prevailed the system of compulsory education for Indian soldiers and their children both male and female. The education received by the Untouchables in the army...gave them a new vision and a new value. They became conscious that the low esteem in which they had been held was not an inescapable destiny but was a stigma imposed on their personality by the cunning contrivances of the priest. They felt the shame of it as they had never done before and were determined to get rid of it" (Ambedkar, 1991: 189).

Apart from this, there were a few Mahars who had reached through promotions to the rank of the higher officers. Thus in real sense, the British East India Company helped the dalits specially Mahars a lot in their emerging as a social class, who were earlier victims of the severe caste disabilities in the Hindu social system. Incidentally, the recruitment of the Mahars in the British army was banned in 1892 when British East India Company revised its rules for recruitment of the soldiers in its armed forces. At that time, strong protests came from the ex-army men of the Mahar caste against the unjust order. They had appealed the British East India Company, through the Memorandum and petition to withdraw the unjust order and to revive the recruitment of the Mahars in the British army. In this context, Keer writes that in protesting against, the British Government's unjust order. Ramji Sakpal (father of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar) took leading role (along with Gopalbaba Walangkar and Kokan Mahar, the ex-Army servicemen) and approached Ranade to draft a petition appealing to the Government of India to rescind the unjust order. (Keer, 1962:12). The persistent pressure from the Mahar community and the World War I compelled the British government to revive its policy and recruit 412 Mahars on 23 April, 1917.

On the whole, military service helped the Mahars for achieving upward social mobility as stated earlier. Their recruitment in the British army gave them wider

perspective about the world and it developed consciousness among them about their oppressive condition. They learned western values and manners and simultaneously made progress a great extent in educational and economic spheres. Due to their close contact with the British specially the army personnel, they got acquainted with the ideas of equality and freedom in society. So, their military services helped them to move out of the multiple forms of socio-religious sanctions and traditional village economy and restrictions. But what is interesting to mention here is that what was the exact or even approximate number of Mahars who were recruited in the armed forces of the Muslim and Maratha rulers or in the East India Company for that matter. Besides the Mahars, how many persons of the other Untouchable castes like Chambhar, Mang, Dhor, etc. were recruited in these forces? Though such vital statistics is not readily available, it is really helpful to know the precise nature and social composition of the new social class emerged among the Untouchables during the pre-independence period in Maharashtra.

2. Christian Missionaries :

Even though the British East India Company was liberal towards the recruiting the Dalits in their army, the British deliberately discarded them soon after they came to power. The British very cleverly exploited the powers and valour of the Mahars but could not bring any radical change in their socio-economic status. Keer has stated that even in the British regime, there was very limited scope for educating the lower classes due to social pressure. The British Government was very careful about the Indian social situation and did not want to antagonize the Brahmins by educating the lower classes especially untouchables. It always sidetracked the issue as far as possible (Keer 1962:5).

Contrarily, the Christian missionaries fully exploited this situation. They took up the cause of the education of lower classes and also of the untouchables. They started many Christian missionary schools and admitted lower caste and untouchable boys and girls in the schools. The education imparted by the Christian missionaries during the colonial rule had an enormous impact on the socio-economic and educational status of dalits in Maharashtra. It helped them prepare for internalising new ideas and taking up occupations. The educational activities of the missionaries not only raised their literary levels but all generated and instilled in them the ideas of equality, justice and freedom. Though the main purpose of the Christian missionaries was to convert the people of the lower castes into Christianity, they put their hard efforts to educate and proselytize the dalits. They also encouraged and helped the bright dalit students to seek admission in the government secondary schools. In spite of the strong protest from the caste Hindus, they continued their social service work for the upliftment of the dalits and created an educated class from amongst the Dalits specially Mahars for taking up new occupations which obviously were different from their traditional occupations in the villages.

In this regard, Moon has cited the personal observations of Mr. W. Lee Warner, the then Commissioner of the Division, about the effects of education (though without referring to role of the Christian missionaries) on the Mahars in Satara and Ahmednagar districts. In the words of Moon, Warner had observed "that a social revolution was going on in the movement of Mahars and other lower castes from status to contract. The Mahars now could sell their labour and were not required to work the customary village service in exchange for livelihood based on customary perquisites received from other villages as baluta" (Moon 1986:19). Moon quotes Warner as saying that, "the system of compelling the Mahars to stay at home is a device suggested by the specious pretence of precaution against crime, but really proposed by the village officers to suppress the movement towards their

emancipation. In Ahmednagar where the Mahars have been most educated, they have risen from a condition of serfdom to free labour with the very best results" (ibid).

Thus, the generous social services and educational works of the Christian missionaries helped to develop new set of values, ideas, consciousness etc. among the educated class of the dalit community. Some of them later became the employees in the different government departments as office workers and some became civil servants and bureaucrats. This, in turn, helped them to improve their socio-economic condition vis-a-vis other Untouchables specially the Mahars.

3. Westernization, Industrialization and Urbanization:

The British not only ruled over India but also introduced system of trade and business activities. They also brought with them their European life styles, ideas, values and educational system which they implemented on the natives. Due to their open social system, culture and non-vegetarianism, the majority of the caste Hindus always stayed away from them and developed a strong feeling of hatred to foreign rule. But the dalits came closer to the British officials due to availability of non-traditional employments in their houses as stated earlier. In Maharashtra, Mahars were the first who came in contact with the British officials and served in their family as Butlers, Bearers, Butchers and Ayahs (a maid servants). Also, their unfixed traditional occupations allowed them to choose other occupations compared to other untouchable castes. The Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, etc. were having one or the other traditionally fixed occupations for their survival but the Mahars for their survivals had to depend on any kind of occupation. Besides, there were several restrictions imposed on their socio economic and educational status. Consequently, they could not even think of choosing any other occupation which was not allowed to them in the Hindu fold. That is why, they (Mahars) were closer to the British officials as compared to

other natives. Being themselves a beef eater the Mahars did not mind serving the foreign beef eating masters.

Their close contacts with British officials certainly attracted them to the English education, western life style and ideas of equality. Their non-traditional occupations at the British officers' house helped them to rise financially as was the case in Maharwada. Those who worked for the British certainly enjoyed high respect from their brethren. Their economic independence and western values infatuated them to achieve higher status and imitate a life style of the 'Gore Saheb' (British Officers). They started sending their children to the government and the missionary run schools and caring for their education. Some of these children after completing education and growing adults became school teachers in the missionary and army schools. Some of them became clerk in law courts, post offices and other government departments. Certainly, westernization helped dalits especially Mahars to rise as educated class who later on rejected their traditional caste occupations and belief system and became conscious about equality, freedom and social justice as stated earlier. It has further been stated that "Industrialization and urbanization also brought enormous change among Mahars' socio-economic status. It created new economic roles, realizing a wider spectrum of occupational choice, spatial mobility and migration encouraging change in the occupational pattern among Mahars" (Patwardhan, 1973:15).

The steady growth in the export of raw cotton, sheep wool, jute, leather, steel, coal, sugar, etc. had given a new push to the British Government and opened industrial avenues for the Indian businessmen. Several textile mills and industrial establishments were set up in different parts of the country by this time. The location of prosperous cotton growing region and accessible docks facility for loading and unloading of goods created rampant industrialization in the state of Maharashtra. The

already mobile community of Mahars with their unfixed traditional occupations did not miss this opportunity also. They migrated in large numbers to the cities and towns in the state and took up employment in factories and industries. Due to commendable industrial development in the state the Mahars were the solitary community who had achieved the spatial mobility at a large scale. "All these factors have provided Mahars the opportunity to escape from narrow tyranny of hereditary serfdom and untouchability...the main labour force in the Nagpur Textile Mills, for instance, is that of Mahars. The textile mills of Bombay have drawn Mahar labourers and sugar mills of the Ahmednagar district are also maned to a large extent by the Mahars" (Patwardhan, 1973:20).

Along with this, urbanization also brought a complete change in the Mahars' traditional occupational pursuits and in their socio-economic and educational status. Their hereditary occupations were totally irrelevant in the urban situation. They took up both skilled and semi-skilled works in the factories whereas the Chambhars, Dhors, Mangs, etc. continued with their traditional caste occupations in the villages. In towns and cities, the Mahars came into the contact with all types of modern communication systems, government offices, courts and a host of the educated people. This raised their aspiration for achieving high status in the society.

On the whole, the processes of westernization, industrialization and urbanization brought awareness among dalits specially Mahars about their pathetic socio-economic and educational status and raised their feelings to change it. They accepted new environment and employment opportunities, and worked hard for their future generation. They sent their children to schools and colleges and inculcated the importance of education among them. Those who managed to take the advantage of education including higher education, acquired good occupational positions in the society. Some of them started working as clerks, teachers, doctors, engineers, civil

servants, etc. Thus, a new social class emerged among the dalits specially Mahars of Maharashtra.

4. Means of Communication :

The means of communication was one of the important agents which brought socio-economic and educational change among the dalits of Maharashtra. For managing properly the trade, administration and political affairs, the British set up in the country the new institutional systems of communication like post offices, railways, telephones and telegraphs, roads, bridges, docks etc. This also provided new occupational opportunities to the dalits. For instance, the construction of railways played a major role in their socio-economic progress. The Dalits especially Mahars started working as railway labourers, like gangmen, watchmen etc. In this context, Zelliott has stated, "whenever excessive number of Mahars or the implementation of a cash economy threw this village role (watandari) out of balance, Mahars entered other occupations. The coming of British administration also reduced the importance of the Mahar village role as many village functions were removed from local control; however, at the same time, it also opened new fields of occupation. The new freedom from the traditional village service almost invariably brought some social changes" (Zelliott 1992:35). She has also quoted the Khandesh Gazetteer for 1880 according to which some Mahars had made themselves as 'excellent' railway gang labourers and had gained almost a monopoly of the unskilled railway labour market...(ibid). Similarly, there were dalits specially Mahars in the other fields of communication like road and bridge construction, docks etc. Such employment improved their economic condition and raised their social class position amidst their brethren. Like other segments or sections of their caste people, they also sent their children to schools for their better future and achieving higher status in the society. Thus, they accepted

whatever new opportunities became available to them and improved their socio-economic status (Zelliot, 1992).

Thus, the new systems of communication introduced during the British rule changed their traditional role. According to Zelliot, "the Mahar position as an inferior village servant (a British term) lost significance with new methods of communication, justice and government. The post office, the courts and the police replaced the Mahar as messenger, arbitrator of land disputes, and watchman" (Zelliot, 1992:89). Any way, the new means of communication helped dalits to move out of the traditional village occupations and motivated them to accept non-traditional occupations for achieving the better socio-economic status. With their entering the new types of employment, dalits emerged out of degrading living condition to the position of a "new social class".

5. Education and Emancipation of Dalits :

The British education system introduced during the colonial rule also brought enormous change in the socio-economic condition of dalits especially Mahars in Maharashtra. Though British imparted English education among Indians for the purpose of running their administration smoothly. But this had helped both directly and indirectly the people including dalits for achieving their socio-economic progress and status enhancement. In other words, the objective of imparting English education to Indians was also to help them imbibe new knowledge and values needed to serve the administration better besides bringing about reform in the orthodox Indian society. Such education system with English as medium of instruction was deliberately made available for all people irrespective of caste, race, religion and gender. According to the governments directive, "nobody should be refused admission to a governments college or school merely on the ground of caste. This

principle was reaffirmed in 1863. It was applicable to all institutions which were maintained at the cost of public funds, provincial or local. The Education Commissioner referred to the opposition to this principle which existed in Bombay itself, and rejected the opposition on the ground that education would advance them (low caste) in life and induce them to seek emancipation from their servile condition. The Commission, therefore, opined that this class of society requires special help and they indicate the institution of schools as the best method" (Moon, 1986:21-22). Due to such policy of education system, some of the dalits got opportunity to enter the government run schools, colleges and other educational institutions though the oppositions from the caste Hindus continued to that as mentioned above.

Beside the British government of India, the princely states and social reformers also made several efforts for the educational upliftment of dalits. Mahatma Phule was the first person to start schools for girls and untouchables in India. Thereafter many schools were opened for the dalit children in Maharashtra. Mathew has cited, "In 1882, about 16 special schools for the untouchables in Bombay province were opened with 564 pupils. In the central province, about 4 schools were opened with 111 pupils. By the end of nineteenth century, Gaikwad of Baroda opened 18 special schools for the untouchables. These all helped the Mahars' education very much" (Mathew, 1986:56).

Similarly, due to efforts of the British government of India some universities and colleges came up in 1857, and a few dalits also took advantage of receiving higher education from these. Though there were restriction on untouchables' education, the efforts of British authorities, the missionaries, social reformers and the untouchable leaders helped the latter to rise as a educated class. Later on a few among them rose up as school teachers; some joined the government services and emerged as a social class as stated earlier. In the 1930's and 1940's a large number of untouchable

children followed their path to schools (Isaacs, 1965:69). Thus, the educational avenues created a new social class among dalits specially Mahars and helped them achieve higher socio-economic status.

6. Role of Leadership and Their Organization :

The emergence of a "new class" among the Dalits in Indian society was contributed by both internal and external factors as mentioned above. But the Dalit leadership and their organization also made outstanding efforts for the upliftment of the dalit masses. It is a historical fact that the early leadership among dalits especially Mahars came through the adoption of the new set of values, ideas, cultures, education system and their employment in the British army. "With one exception, this early leadership in the western area came from those Mahars who had entered the British army" (Zelliot, 1992:36). The dalit leadership thus emerged from the Dalit army men in Maharashtra. Gopalbaba Walangkar, an ex-armyman sincerely tried to uplift the dalit masses by bringing social awareness and inculcating Western education among them. He started a Mahar newspaper and used to write about grievances of the Untouchables in 'Deenbandhu' and 'Sudharak', the Marathi journals. In the year 1895 he was respectfully nominated as a member of the Local Board, at Mahad though not liked by the other high caste members of the Board. He wrote books like 'Vital Vidhawansan' (1889) and 'Hindu Dharma Darpan' (1894) (Kshirsagar, 1994: 372). Through his writings, Walangkar created awareness among the Dalit masses about their exploitative and oppressive condition and generated a feeling among them to go for achieving education and bringing social reform. Besides him, there were several ex-army men and pensioned soldiers who had settled in some villages and towns and had generated social awareness and consciousness among the dalit masses. They also used to write petition to the British government of India about special attention to be

given on education of the dalit children. Some of them had started, through their personal efforts, schools for the dalit children (Joshi, 1986:20).

Like Walangkar, Shivram Janba Kamble another Mahar leader had also created awareness among the Dalits about their discriminatory and exploitative condition. Through writing articles in the Marathi and English news papers, he urged the dalits to educate their children for better future. He also exhorted the government to recruit Dalits in military and police services. For bringing socio-political awareness among Dalits, he used to write 'Sochipatra' (pamphlets) and distribute that among them at his own expenses. He had also started his own monthly journal named 'Somavanshiya Mitra' in Pune on 1 July 1908 for bringing widespread socio-political awareness among dalits. He had founded an organization for the socio-economic and educational upliftment of dalit community through which he used to generate consciousness among the dalits and impress upon the government about their educational upliftment. For the educational progress of dalits, he had started schools and a library in Pune. His basic intention was to see dalit community as well-educated and well-placed in the British administration and bureaucracy (Kshirsagar, 1994:239-40).

In nineteenth century, the Nagpur-Vidharbha region had seen comparatively very strong and independent dalit movements. While describing the Vidharbha's socio-economic characteristics and dalit movements, Omvedt writes, "A relatively strong and independent dalit movement grew in the Nagpur-Vidharbha region linked to its social-economic characteristics. It was a relatively prosperous cotton growing region from the nineteenth century, with accompanying trade and processing. The mills of Nagpur and some other major cities provided much needed employment with Mahar forming a larger section of the emerging industrial working class then in Bombay, comprising nearly 40% of textile workers in Nagpur itself. The

commercialization of the agrarian economy laid the basis for undermining the traditional village balutedari system and this, combined with the frontier characteristics of eastern maharashtra, aided the relative independence of Mahars. Many of the community members were weavers, many more were small cultivators, and few managed to become relatively affluent traders and bigger landlords including four malguzars, two of whom later became followers of Ambedkar. With British rule and missionary activity a small but growing section gained access to education, and by the end of the nineteenth century began establishing their own schools. These educated and better-off Mahars generated a growing Mahar leadership, while the Mahar Mill workers, weavers and poor peasants provided the community's militancy and the spread of the Satyashodhak Movement among the regions non-Brahmans helped to give the militancy a radical ideological edge" (Omvedt, 1994:108-9).

However, the elite among dalits especially Mahars realized that the educational efforts of government and Christian missionaries were not enough to uplift dalit masses. That's why, they started establishing their own organizations, schools, hostels, etc. for the educational progress of dalit children. According to Moon, "By the end of the 19th century, Mahars had started establishing their own institutions. In 1884, Janoji Khandare, a forest contractor had started a free boys' hostel in Akola, a district town in Vidharbha... Mr. Khandere used to approach other Mahar families, bringing in these boys from various places for education, feeding them and teaching them under rigorous discipline" (Moon, 1986: 24).

Similarly, among early leaders of Mahar community, the most well known leader was Kisan Faguji Bansode who started many educational institutions for dalit children. He also started several papers for creating awareness among dalit masses about importance of education (Omvedt, 1994: 109). Besides, there were several other socially conscious persons and local leaders who had taken initiatives for

creating educated and better-off section among the dalits specially Mahars. They had opened schools and hostels, and submitted memorandum and petition to the government in regard to dalits' basic problems and grievances. The educated and better employed Dalits, on their part, had generated both directly and indirectly the social awareness and consciousness among the Dalits and provided ideological basis and led their movements. They had thus, prepared the background work for leaders likes Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and M.K.Gandhi to articulate later the problems of the Dalits in the country.

A fact may be noted here that prior to DR. Ambedkar, the efforts of Dalits leaders were quite unorganized and scattered in nature. There was not single dalit leader who could mobilise the entire dalit masses to raise their voices of their exploitation and deprived socio-economic status. But the beginning of 20th century saw Dr. Ambedkar as reformist, emancipator and saviour of the untouchables. He himself belonged to an educated Dalit family in which his father had served as a subedar in the education core of the British army. In the initial period (between 1918 and 1930) of his political career, he was more like a social reformist, and had fought against the rigid caste system and practice of untouchability. But in the later period, he became a political leader and statesman of the Dalits. In this context, Mathew writes, "In the second half of his life beginning from 1930, he was a political leader who stressed the need of acquiring political power for the untouchables for social and economic freedom. He fought for separate electorates for the untouchables and set up political organization to enable them to achieve power" (Mathew, 1986:61). Through political organization, he put forward the grievances of dalit community by demanding reservations for them in the British government's administrative services and educational institutions.

Along with this, Dr. Ambedkar had given special emphasis on education of Dalit community. He was strongly determined about the importance of education for

them in achieving their socio-economic progress. In this regards, he had set up the Peoples Education Society and started several educational institutions with the required facilities for the dalit students. His sole intention behind setting up educational institutions was to create an educated and employed 'new class' among dalits who could lead illiterate, poor and exploited dalit masses in their achieving socio-economic and political progress in the country (Ram, 1995:90). As Chairman of Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, he played very crucial role and brought the Protective Discrimination Policy in the Constitution for comprehensive progress and development of the dalit community. Due to his intellectual calibre and statesmanship, Dr. Ambedkar alone did great work for the upliftment of Dalit community. His personal efforts gave major impetus to the dalits', socio-economic and educational progress.

7. Protective Discrimination Policy :

The protective and welfare measures for the rights of Dalit community came into existence in the form of a well conceived policy in the Indian Constitution, though a number of such measures for untouchables had existed even earlier. (Ram : 1988).

However, implementation level, In the words of Ram, "After independence more systematic attempts have been made by the government to deal with the problems of scheduled castes. They have been provided with special rights and privileges and their interests are safeguarded through various provisions made in the Constitution. These provisions have been made in the form of (1) protective measures such prohibition of discrimination, of forced labour, and untouchability, (2) welfare measures guaranteeing representation in various categories of public services, in state

Assemblies and in Parliament, and (3) developmental measures providing grants-in-aid and other facilities for social and economic development" (Ram, 1988:8).

More precisely, under the Protective Discrimination Policy the certain percentage of seats have been reserved to the scheduled castes in the government run educational institutions, employment in the government departments and the State Assemblies and Parliament. The various educational facilities provided under the policy are scholarships, exemption from tuition fees, free hostel accommodations, etc. All these welfare and developmental measures have helped the dalits to achieved a higher social mobility in educational and socio-economic spheres.

But In spite of all these protective, welfare and developmental measures, not much significant changes have taken among the Dalits in the country including Maharashtra. This is so as all these provisions and measures have all along been suffering from serious lacunae at the implementation level.

In sum, the British government India's policy towards education and employment had brought some positive changes among the Dalits specially Mahars in Maharashtra. We have also seen in this chapter that the then educated & employed Dalits had contributed both directly and indirectly to evolve, social awareness and consciousness among the Dalits. This was supplemented by the Dalit leadership of both Pre and Post independence period. The leadership, specially under Dr. Ambedkar had successfully mobilised the Dalits to fight against various forms of injustices and strive for their rights. Finally the protective discrimination policy adopted after independence has contributed to socio-economic progress of the Dalits. All these together, have played significant role in emergence of a new middle class among the Dalits especially Mahars in Maharashtra about which we have discussed in detail in the next chapters.

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CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4

NATURE AND SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS

In the preceding chapter, we have seen that a new social class has emerged among the traditionally exploited and suppressed scheduled castes or dalits specially Mahars of Maharashtra. We have also discussed that this has been possible due to the favorable and developmental attitude of the British government in India, Dalits' own efforts and the benefits of the state's protective, welfare and developmental measures specially adopted after the independence. We have also mentioned, in chapters 1 and 2 about the conceptual explanations about the new middle class among the scheduled castes or dalits. In this chapter, we shall analyze the nature and social composition of the new middle class among the dalits specially Mahars in Maharashtra. In the process, we shall also compare it with the old middle class or the middle class per se consisted primarily of the upper caste people in India.

Nature of New Middle Class

Traditionally, Indian society specially the Hindu social system has been highly closed in which status of a person is largely based on his or her birth in a particular caste. But the British rule in India brought some changes in the Indian society as a whole including Hindu social system. The British brought with them new economic, political, administrative and educational systems. With the adoption and implementation of such systems, a new class consisting of traders, administrators, intellectuals and other professionals emerged in India. This class entirely different

from the traditional class of upper castes has been termed as new elite which was highly westernized (see Srinivas, 1966:46-88). Moreover, members of the new class were highly urbanized because almost all administrative, trade, and commerce activities, and educational institutions were located in the cities like Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai), Calcutta (kolkata), Delhi, etc. Thus, the new class had also found all favorable environment to grow in the urban areas.

This, new class was later termed as middle class (Desai, 1946, Misra 1961) keeping its reference to the top British officers posted in India, local kings along with Chieftains and the big landlords. The middle class had first emerged among the upper caste, who were already in dominant and privileged positions. That is why they were able to take modern education first and got recruited in the British administration and other services, and thus became first the middle class (Chibber, 1968:40-41). More precisely, these were the Khattris of Punjab, Kashmiri Pandits, South Indian Brahmin, Nagars of Gujarat, Chitpawan Brahmins and Prabhus (Kayastha) of Maharashtra and the Kayasthas of North India (Varma, 1998:27). The new systems adopted by the British government in India, thus, proved to be beneficial to these caste people who practically grabbed and monopolized the new opportunities. They not only retained their earlier enjoyed privileges but also improved their status further in the newly created esteem.

The middle class as a conceptual category has generally been viewed with the characteristics of its members being employed in specific types of occupation, having respectable level of income, better education, social status, etc. According to Chibber, the term "middle classes" denotes a way of life based on occupation, income, education and social status which, in turn, is determined by the extent of social participation, i.e. accessibility or otherwise to the main body of the middle class entertainment and other social functions and relationships (Chibber, 1968:52). The

occupations of the middle class are unique in terms of their significance and are completely different from the occupations of the labour and capitalist classes. The middle class occupations are based on the formal education and training, and are related to specialized kinds of work like that of doctors, engineers, lawyers, professors, administrators or civil servants, etc. Such occupations have certain time frame within which the related duties and services are performed. More importantly, the middle class occupation are in reality non-manual works which are basically related to the production and not actually producing things. These are, infact, the paper works dealing with rules and regulations, money and the people. Thus, all white-collar workers basically dealing with paper works command power in relation to their work (Mills.1956: 65).

The second important characteristic of the middle class is their income which was decided on the basis of education, training and specialization of the persons. The highly skilled individuals or those who having specialized knowledge hold better job and certainly earn more income or remuneration than otherwise. Further, their income decides their life style, tastes and membership of a social group. Thus, the highly paid white collar workers certainly enjoy better lifestyle, develop good taste and also maintain cordial relation with the people of the same income or status group. Their income provides them a better place in the market situation where in they possess any commodity, which they require. The third characteristic of the middle class is education and formal training of it's members which enables them to take respectable occupation, earn better income, social status, prestige, privileges, etc. It also places them at better position in the market situation as mentioned above. It also helps them to acquire specific life style, taste, behaviour and attitudes.

The fourth and final characteristic of middle class is social status, which is determined by occupational persuite, income level, and education and formal training.

As mentioned earlier, this together enables the persons to achieve middle class status in the society with specific style of life, tastes, values, morals, etc. These also help in their acceptability in the social groups similar in nature.

Then with these characteristics of the middle class as a conceptual category when we look at the middle class in the Indian context, we find that it consisted primarily of the traditionally dominant upper caste people who had taken first the benefits of modern education, government services and the related power and prestige. Infact, these had supplemented to their traditionally acquired privileged positions. They were ritually high in the traditional caste-hierarchy and had used their traditional hegemony for ruling over others. They had not only maintained their social hegemony by monopolizing the new opportunities created during the colonial regime but simultaneously had also opposed a number of measures adopted for the upliftment of people of the lower castes and communities. Even the British officials in India did not get directly involved in the religious and traditional matters of the Hindu society with fear that the caste Hindus would revolt against them and make it difficult for them to rule over the country. Though the British government in India was having inclination towards the welfare of the weaker sections but due to orthodox nature of the Hindu society they could not implement forcefully and effectively their welfare schemes in favor of the weaker sections. Thus, the Hindu caste system was the major hindrance towards the progress of Indian society in general and of weaker sections in particular. The caste system could not change fully the attitudes and behavior even of the educated middle class people of India. Rather, they continually oppose, on one pretext or the other, the progress of people of the traditionally deprived sections of the society.

New Middle Class

When we locate the concept of middle class or classes among the Dalits, we find that a sizeable number of dalits though have achieved higher education, are employed in high administrative or bureaucratic position and earn higher amount of salary, they do not enjoy the same degree of bureaucratic power and prestige as enjoyed by the caste Hindus placed in the similar positions. This is so as the social status of the person is not determined fully on the basis of his or her achievement. Rather, one's birth in a particular caste or community still holds its greater significance in this matter. Even if members of the middle class from amongst the Dalits try to maintain social relationship with the members of the middle class from the upper castes, the society would not accept positively their such initiative and would rather ridicule them. Hence, their full acceptability in the middle class or classes still doubtful though from their point of view they are fully qualified to be members of the middle class. Another interesting dimension to mention is that the higher caste people of the middle class or classes enjoy the privileges of their twin social statuses of members of upper castes and middle class in the Indian society. As stated earlier, their socially superior and ritually pure status has accorded them dominant position and higher prestige in the traditional esteem and their new status, based on socio-economic achievements has further enhanced their overall social status including power, prestige and privileges in the society. Contrary to this, members of the middle class drawn from the Scheduled Castes or Dalits have been traditionally deprived of power and privileges due to their lowest or untouchable caste background. Also, their achieved middle class status has depended solely on the benefits of a number of provisions and measures adopted and implemented by the state during both pre and post independent periods which in no case have been available to the members of the middle class or classes drawn from the upper castes. All these together help us to convincingly conceive of the formation of a new middle

class, instead of middle class or old middle class among the Dalits specially Mahars in Maharashtra and elsewhere in the country.

Social Composition of the New Middle Class

We have already analyzed the formation of a social class among Dalits specially Mahars of Maharashtra due to the liberal policy adopted by the government in India, which was based on the notions of equality, social justice, and liberty.

We shall analyze, in this section, the social composition of the new middle class among the Dalits specially Mahars of Maharashtra in terms of a number of parameters like education, employment, social power, etc. which are the major attributes of a social class.

(a) Education :

The government had enacted several legislations in favor of the weaker sections specially the untouchables or Dalits and implemented a number of developmental and welfare schemes for their socio-economic and educational progress. The Christian missionaries also took up the cause of the untouchables and enrolled their children in the missionary schools. The government specially enacted legislations opening the common schools and colleges even for the untouchable children. Even special schools were opened for them at the government expenses. In 1939, there were 1,178 special schools for scheduled caste pupils in the Madras Presidency. The grants were refused to any educational institution which would not admit pupils belonging to the untouchable castes (Rajagopalchari, 1946:27).

Besides, a number of concessions like fee remissions, stipend, or scholarship, boarding grants and book allowances were granted to enable, the students of

untouchable castes to pursue their general as well as industrial and technical courses. In brief, the stipends or scholarships given to the students of these castes in 1939 in Madras Presidency were: 62 residential and 3159 non-residential scholarship in secondary and elementary schools; 22 scholarships in arts colleges, and 180 scholarships to the students undergoing professional, commercial, industrial and other courses of training (ibid).

The total number of students belonging to these castes enrolled at various levels of education in 1939 in the Madras Presidency is given in the following table:

TABLE 1

Primary Schools		Middle schools		High schools		Colleges	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
247513	7632	9362	1855	1738	105	172	13

Source: Rajagopalchari, 1946: 27.

Besides, the persons belonging to this castes were also given some reservations, relaxations in age and minimum qualification to secure jobs in the different government departments. Consequently, in 1939 there were nine superior gazetted, 29 non gazetted officers belonging to the untouchable community (Rajagopalchari, 1946:29).

Similar figures about the enrollment of the untouchable children in the Bombay Presidency are not available at this stage. However, in May 1939, a survey was conducted by the Harijan Sewak Sangh in the ten districts of Maharashtra on the educational level of the untouchable castes. This is given in the following table.

Table 2: Number of post-matric students of the untouchable caste in 1939.

Castes	Graduates	Matriculation
Mahars	24	50
Chambars & Dhors	11	25
Mangs	2	5
Bhangis	1	4

Source: Bhatt, 1941: 22.

According to the survey report, all of them generally got government service and many were employed in the clerical jobs. It is, however; clear that as compared to others like Chambhars, Mangs, etc. the Mahars had taken lead in education and those who had achieved higher education also got good jobs in the government administration. With their better financial condition, they improved their standard of living, tastes, habits, dress patterns, values, etc. and emerged as a new class among the Dalits specially Mahars in the state. Others like Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, Holers, and Bhangis lagged in making use of the opportunities available at that time. Hence, number of the persons forming the new class or social class among them was negligible.

The number of untouchable employees at the lower level of government jobs was obviously more. Thus the educated and government employees specially at the higher levels of services had formed a new social class amongst the untouchable castes in the urban areas like Bombay, Madras and Bengal Presidencies, and also in other provinces as stated earlier.

It is true that after independence, the number of educated Scheduled castes or Dalits in the country has gone very high due to adoption of the reservation policy with greater emphasis on education and public sector employment. It is also a fact there is comparatively high rate of educational drop out among the scheduled castes in every state in the country. But looking at the co-efficient of equality (ratio of enrolment of both the Scheduled and non-scheduled caste students in proportion to total population of these castes, at various levels of education from primary to secondary to higher education), one finds that the proportional enrollment of the Scheduled caste students at all levels of education has been more in recent years than that of the non-Scheduled Caste students (Ram, 1995). But the percentage enrollment of the former is obviously lower than that of the latter (see table 3). Anyway this is not our immediate concern here. Rather, it may be said here that the traditional symmetrical relationship in terms of educational achievement still continues

Table 3: Educational Level of Scheduled and Non-Scheduled Castes in India During 1971-1981.

Educational Level	1971						1981					
	Scheduled Caste			Non - Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Caste			Non - Scheduled Caste		
	Persons	M	F	Persons	M	F	Person	M	F	Person	M	F
Primary or Junior basic	51.87	51.93	51.67	53.80	53.62	54.18	46.98	47.26	46.13	48.06	47.07	49.97
Matric and above but below graduate	5.50	6.23	2.75	12.24	13.93	8.60	9.90	11.00	6.52	17.28	19.24	13.51
Graduate and above	0.42	0.49	0.17	2.23	2.61	1.42	1.42	1.68	0.60	4.26	4.84	3.14

Source: Sharma, 1994: 68-69; 72-73.

between Mahars and other Dalit caste in Maharashtra. In other words, Mahars are much ahead in educational achievement in comparison to Chambhars, Mangs and so forth. The data pertaining to the educational achievement of the various Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra for 1961-81 is given in table 4.

Table 4: Caste wise Educational Levels (graduation and above) of Dalits in 1961-81 in Maharashtra.

Dalits	1961		1971		1981	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Chambhar	140	10	525	39	4423	570
Bhangi	16	2	39	4	233	37
Dhor	31	2	18	1	639	79
Holar	4	--	6	--	94	--
Mahar	350	20	729	33	9763	1386
Mang	35	6	148	3	2105	139
Total	576	40	1457	80	17257	2211

Sources: Census of India, 1961-1981 Special tables on SC/ST, vols. 10, 11, 12.

The available data clearly shows that among the six numerically dominant dalit communities in Maharashtra, the representations of Mahars, Chambhars and Mangs in higher education is comparatively high. The other three communities like Bhangi, Dhor, Holar have very low representation in higher education. Again, Mahars have the highest representation in higher education as compared to Chambhars and Mangs. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, Mahars do not have traditionally fix

occupations like Chambhars and Mangs. The “Maharki”(traditional work of Mahar) is quite irrelevant today due to urbanization and industrialization. As stated earlier the Mahars had accepted varieties of jobs other than their caste occupations. During the pre-independence and in the post independence period, they have gone for more diversified modern occupations including various professions and have inculcated the importance of education among their children. Secondly, they were the first who came in contact with British officials through their employment in the British Army in India and had realized the importance of education. That is why, they have taken the maximum advantage of the educational facilities provided by the government after independence. On the other hand, the Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, Holers, and Bhanghis being associated with their fixed traditional occupations, could not take initiative for achieving education and inculcating the importance of education among their children inspite of the educational facilities made available for the Scheduled Castes in the state.

(b) Occupation:

It is rightly believed that the higher level of one's educational achievement helps him or her in getting employment with better salary or emoluments. This, in turn, helps the person to achieve higher status including prestige and power or decision making capacity in the society. But such proposition has turned to be not universally true atleast in the recent time specially in wake of the growing educated unemployment in the country. This is equally true in the case of the Dalits in spite of the job-reservation for them. The representation of Scheduled and non-Scheduled Caste persons in the various groups of the government services during the last three decades is given below.

TABLE 5

**Representation of Scheduled and Non Scheduled Castes in Groups A, B, and C
Services of the Govt. Departments during 1971-1991.**

Category	Scheduled Castes			Non-Scheduled Castes		
	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
A Group	(1.51%) 904	(3.93%) 6334	(7.07%) 17837	(98.21%) 58,916	(95.24%) 153467	(91.14%) 229,790
B Group	(2.93%) 2343	(6.95%) 12074	(10.06%) 28228	(96.76%) 77363	(91.61%) 159117	(87.47%) 245,357
C Group	(8.78%) 155561	(15.07%) 477689	(16.97%) 648478	(89.63%) 1588157	(79.83%) 2530556	(76.55%) 2925071

Source: Sharma, 1994: 118-119

The available data clearly establishes that in India the non Scheduled Castes have occupied larger number of shares in Groups A, B, C, services in the different government departments. This simply means that the larger number of the non-Scheduled Castes have achieved higher education and thereby are able to get employed in the number of Group A and B services in the government departments. But it is equally true that the number of available jobs in these groups or categories for them are more than that for the Scheduled Castes or Dalits. Comparatively, Scheduled Castes' representations in these services are very low at the all India level. The specific reason given by the selectors or the government for this state of affairs is that the suitable candidates from the Scheduled Castes or Dalits are not available. On the contrary, the Dalit's, perception for their less representations in these groups of services is routed in the reflection of the traditional prejudices practiced by the

selectors. Anyway, that is not our immediate concern of enquiry here. Instead, we are interested in having a cursory look at the representation of the different Scheduled castes in such services in Maharashtra is clear from the statistics available for the year 1967 that out of total of 279 Scheduled Caste employees in the groups A and B in the various government departments in Maharashtra their caste-wise break-up was as Mahars 183, Chambhars 37, Mangs 26, Dhorts 15, Holers 3, Megavanshis 4, Chavadis 2 and Bhangis 9 (Patwardhan, 1973: 78).

Thus, the representation of Mahars in government services is much higher than that of other Dalit castes in Maharashtra due to the reasons stated in this and earlier chapters. It may then be summarized that the representation of other scheduled castes like Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, etc. could have been slightly better in Groups C and D services.

(c) Economic Position:

Related to job or employment is one's income or economic position. Although to measure one's income level or economic position is the difficult and cumbersome exercise, yet one's consumption patterns, standard of living, etc. are some of the indicators through which one's economic position may be found out. Here, our intention is not to find out the precise income level or economic position of those Dalits in Maharashtra who are better educated and employed in Groups A and B services in the government departments. Rather, we presume that the economic position of such persons is relatively better than those who are illiterate or less educated and employed in the inferior types of jobs. The economic position of the better-off Mahars is, then certainly better than that of Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, etc.

Further, one's higher level of income makes certain things accessible to him. The higher income level of Mahars has helped them acquire good standard of living,

dress patterns, taste, etc. besides enabling their children's access to better education. The people of other Dalit communities like Chambhar, Mang, Dhor, Holer, Bhangi, etc. certainly lag behind due to their moderate employment and income position though a few from these castes are definitely in better position.

(d) Social Power:

According to Ram (1988:57), social power is defined as "position(s) occupied by a person in certain formal and informal organisation. His decision making capacity, and his influence over others". Social power is authority, which an individual exercises over others due to his or her supremacy over certain things like knowledge, economic position, etc. The education, occupation, income and social status of an individual also provides him social power or authority both in the specific domains and in the society. Thus, those who are privileged in terms of education, occupation, income and the social status also hold power through which they are able to keep Alive their own interest and also interests of the group which they belong.

More specifically, those Dalits who are educated and employed in the higher government services enjoy, though limited as compared to the Non Dalit officials, power or authority of decision making in their respective field of jobs. Obviously, such power or authority of decision making was not available to their earlier generation. As mentioned earlier, Mahars of Maharashtra had enjoyed in the past power or authority, even though it was much limited for their emancipation as well as that of people of their caste. Even, they had enjoyed the political power by forming their own political party (RPI) and joining other political parties. People of the other dalit communities like Chambhar, Mang, Dhor, Holer and Bhangi could not emerge as political power though they have joining one or the other political parties. That is

why they have not been able to serve better their own interest as well as the interest of their communities.

In sum, it may be said that a new social class emerged in the past amongst the Dalits in Maharashtra. Over a period of time specially after independence, this class has become qualified to be termed as middle class. This has been possible due to the protective discrimination policy-making provisions for welfare, protection and development of the Scheduled Castes in the country. During all these years, the policy has definitely helped the Dalits in improving their socio-economic status (social class) in the society but it does not guarantee an improvement of their status in the caste hierarchy. "There is only an implied expectation in the constitutional measures that after improving their class status, the Scheduled Caste people would assimilate themselves with people of other castes and communities" (Ram, 1988:72). But such expectation has not yet materialized due to rigidity of caste system in spite of some changes occurred in it. Even at the acceptance level, the Dalit members of the middle class are not fully included in the closed social structural milieu and intimate relationship with its non-Dalit members. Hence, the new middle class among the Dalits.

But such a new middle class is not homogeneous or unified social category either at the level of its social composition or at the level of relation among its members. For instance, in Maharashtra this class is constituted of Mahars, Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, Holers, etc. though its largest segment is of mahars. We have already stated that the Mahars are much ahead in educational achievement, employment, income and power position as compared to Chambhars, Mangs, etc. Besides structuration of their social status or position as of new social class or new middle class for relatively longer period, they have acclimatised to enjoy their superiority over other Scheduled Castes including their tiny section of this class.

Hence, a considerable degree of hostility and antagonism has crept in the relationship between the Mahars and other Dalit caste members of this class. Moreover, these caste members do retain their caste identity and promote its interests though contextually they exhibit their allegiance to the new middle class or the middle class per se.

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CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF NEW MIDDLE CLASS IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

We have seen in the preceding chapter that the new middle class among Dalits has achieved better socio-economic status due to its educational and occupational progress. Both educationally and economically, some of its members are at par with the privileged section of higher castes but their social status is still considered to be low and inferior in the Indian society due to their traditional low caste status. Their both ascribed and achieved statuses (caste and class statuses) have created dilemma in their status identification (Ram 1988). For achieving higher social status in the society, they occasionally conceal their caste identity, discard their caste surnames and accept secular or even higher caste surnames. But all this has not brought the desired change in their low caste status. In fact, on one, or the other occasion, they are made to realize about their inferior caste status and that is how they suffer from status anxiety (Ram 1988).

Another problem of the new middle class of Dalits is that with their better socio-economic status and emulation of life style of the middle class or classes as their reference group, they are said to be often alienated from majority of the people of their own community who are still in underprivileged condition. But this is equally true in the case of the middle class perse (see Varma, 1998). However, the efforts of the new middle class to establish a 'new identity' and an 'ideal group' in the society

on the basis of social equality, justice and egalitarian values do not help them get social recognition and acceptance in society though it is definitely accepted and emulated by the people of their own caste within the limited means of the latter. Also, their low caste status does not allow them at all to serve as an 'ideal group' in the society. The members of the new middle class of the Dalits, thus, face considerable hardship at the level of their social identification.

Further, there are quite frequent yet harsh critiques coming from both general population and dalit masses that members of the new middle class continue to enjoy the maximum benefits of the protective discrimination policy but do not play any significant role in the uplift of deprived dalit masses and in the social transformation in general. Members of the new middle class are often said to be insensitive to the various forms of deprivation and exploitation of dalit masses. Similarly, they appear to remain unable to protect the interests of their people and fail to organize any kind of movement protesting against the various forms of discriminations and injustices' in their daily life as well as that of their people.

Role in socio-economic change

These charges labelled against the new middle class question their commitment towards their own community and society. But according to Ram, "Such charges against the middle class Dalits, historically speaking, are unfounded on three specific grounds. First, the middle class Dalits, during the era of Ambedkar Movement, had played very significant roles in articulating various demands of Dalits ranging from social reforms in terms of crusades against untouchability and the caste system to the sharing of power and privileges. Besides impressing upon the government to safeguard the interests of Dalits through enacting a number of welfare and development measures in their favour, they had also organized numerous

movements of Dalits in different parts of the country. Even in their capacity of elected representative of Dalits in the Post-Independence period they have, by and large, succeeded in leaning some concessions on Dalits in spite of their contiguous socio-political constraints. Second, besides being the vanguards of Dalit movements by providing ideological and strategic methods through their innumerable writings and speeches the middle class Dalits have also provided positive reference to the Dalit masses for achieving upward social mobility. Quite a few of them have come much closer, in recent years, to the Dalit masses in the latter's struggles for social liberation... Finally, the middle class Dalits, whether in politics or bureaucracy and allied white collar jobs, have not subordinated themselves to the upper caste and class bosses in the traditional way. Instead, they have protested time and again against discrimination, prejudiced attitudes and injustices inflicted on them by their colleagues and bosses though they have not always done this on the trade union pattern" (Ram, 1988:113-114).

This has been endorsed by various other studies also (for instance, see Joshi 1993). In fact, it has been seen that compared to caste Hindu middle class the dalit middle class or new middle class for that matter are more community conscious, keep greater ties and links with their family and community members, and take more initiatives for the uplift and welfare of the dalit masses. They are not completely detached from their kith and kins, and extend all possible occasional and sometime regular helps including monetary help to their siblings for promoting education of their children. According to Gaikwad, "They help their community people by giving the proper guidance in various matters viz., pursuing education, applying for loans, giving information about the available facilities, other sorts of help including financial help mostly to the students for pursuing education, helping in getting employment and introducing with others, who can do their work" (Gaikwad, 1991:5). In this way, the dalit middle classes are playing an important role in the uplift of dalit

masses. They also help, in one way or the other, to the Dalit masses in elevating the latter's socio-economic status. Sachchidanand (1977), for instance, in his study of the Dalit public servants, social workers and legislators in Bihar has found them taken various measures to bring about change in social, economic and psychological condition of the poor dalit masses and in their integration with the larger society. Some of them have also worked, through organising meetings, etc., for removing the caste disabilities and practice of untouchability against the poor Dalits. Still, a few others have taken lead in getting economic condition of the poor Dalits improved through encouraging them to adopt innovation in both agricultural and non-agricultural (handicrafts, etc.) occupations. Regarding change in the behavioural patterns of the people of their own community, they have all along insisted to change their food habits and retrain from eating of meat of dead animals. Besides they encourage them to go for widow remarriage, stop child marriage, and work against separation, desertion and divorce. Some of the elites have also tried to bring political consciousness among the dalit masses through organising caste mahasabhas (associations) and evolving pressure groups for eradicating caste disabilities, keeping their community interests alive and improving their socio-economic condition. (Sachchidanand 1977: 128-147).

Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh members of the new middle class consisting of the Dalit Legislatures, IAS officers, lawyers, judges, doctors, engineers and university teachers have played active roles in seeking solution, through official procedures, for grievances of the dalit masses. (Abbasyalu, 1978). More specifically, they have helped the scheduled castes or Dalits by appealing the government machinery to provide more jobs, land, education and other facilities to the Dālits. Some of the them have brought awareness among the dalit masses about the various existing constitutional provisions and have advised them to make full use of these. Still, a few

other have helped the dalit masses by providing them free medical, legal and financial aids (Abbasayalu 1978: 115-122).

Not many empirical studies have been done on the role of members of the new middle class towards development of the Dalit masses in Maharashtra. But Dahiwale (1994) in his study of the Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs in Kolhapur city has noted their positive role in the socio-economic development of the downtrodden Dalits. Considering university and college teachers, Government servants, self-employed persons and social workers as elite or the new middle class, Dahiwale (1994) has analysed their role in bringing about social transformation among the Dalit masses through their formal organizations. Such organizations have given prime importance to removal of caste disabilities through the enlightenment of both dalit as well as non-dalit masses. These had also taken up the issue of implementation of the existing special provisions for the upliftment of dalits. More specifically, these organisations have taken up the issue of economic uplift of the poor dalits and helped them in getting the credit loan facility and also making the self-employment schemes available to them. They have also helped them in getting the surplus land distributed to them, aids for house construction, regularization of slums, etc. Some members of the new middle class have set up cooperative housing societies for thousand dalit families residing in the unhygienic slum condition (Dahiwale 1994: 109).

In the field of education, these Dalit organizations have been conducting programmes among college and university Dalit students sensitising them about the thoughts of Mahatma Phule, Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Such programmes have been organised for creating awareness about the importance of education. They have also been providing career guidance, hostel facilities and in some cases financial assistance also to the backward and dalit students. Similarly, they have been conducting the anti-dowry campaigns, spreading awareness about

equal rights to women and men, and women's issues like dowry, desertion, divorce, providing guidance and counselling to them for better marital life.

Dalit Literature and Social Transformation

In Maharashtra, the nine hundred years old Marathi literary tradition does not provide proper attention towards the existing social reality. The traditional evil practices and social problems have hardly been reflected in the writings of the caste Hindu literateurs and scholars of the general as well as specialised orientations in Maharashtra, though there were few exceptional writers like Shripad Mahadeo Mate, Madhu Mangesh Karnik, G.T. Madholkar and Arun Sadhu who put their heart and soul together in depicting the deep sorrow and sufferings of dalits (Joshi, 1986: 81). Thus, the Marathi writers belonging to middle class of the higher castes did not provide any space in their writings for the social reality and sufferings of the under-privileged sections of the people. In this context Dangale has stated, "Most Marathi writers belong to the middle class and middle class too is facing problems in the present economic condition. The collapsing joint family system, eroding values, insults, humiliation and conflicts are some of the major problems confronting the middle class. How many of these middle-class conditions and problems are reflected in Marathi literature? Many youth are today involved in revolutionary struggles or work amongst Dalits, Adivasis and landless labourers. How many Marathi writers have written about them?" (Dangale 1992: 263). Thus, the Marathi writers have ignored the actual social reality and not made any effort to portray the evil social practices, the deprived condition of the dalits and many emergent social problems.

Contrary to it, the Marathi Dalit literature being hardly sixty to seventy years old looks at the social reality with open eyes. As mentioned earlier, most of the dalit writers belong to the new middle class background and have emerged from the poor

socio-economic condition and have remained the first or second generation learners in their family. They have been writing about their life experiences and agony through their autobiography, poetry, short stories, fictions, etc. In her study of fifteen Mahar Boudha writers employed in white collar jobs and as lawyers, teachers, etc. in Maharashtra, Karnard (1993 :2-7) has found them experiencing a sense of rejection, hatred and discrimination from their caste Hindu colleagues, superiors and neighbours in spite of their achieved middle class or new middle class status. Their contribution to dalit literature or literature per se is not accepted and appreciated by the caste Hindu writers and masses. But despite this unfavourable condition, they have not given up their mission of dalits upliftment and have ceaselessly contributed for the cause of social reform. Through this they have also depicted the traditional customs and practices, social disabilities and sufferings of the Dalit masses. Sociologically speaking, the subject matters of their expressions are mostly subjective in the form of depicting their life experiences but their presentations are objective in the sense of representing the life experiences of the Dalit masses. More so, their autobiographies speak of delineation of the Indian social system, injustices, casteism and communalism, exploitation, oppression and suffering of those who have been subjected to such evils. For instance, the autobiographies like Baluta (Daya Pawar), Upra (Laxman Mane), Athvaniche Pakshi (P.E.Sonkamble), Majya Jalmachi Chittar Katha (Shantabai Kamble), Antaspat (Kumud Pawade), Akkarmasi (Sharan Kumar Limbale), etc. show the real picture of miserable poverty, hunger, exploitation, deprivation of human rights and psychological mind-set of the dalits living in chawls and urban slums, and rural wadas. These autobiographies also portrat the real life condition of members of the new middle class including their identity crisis due to their low caste status (Dangale 1992:255). Similarly, the short stories and poems written by dalit writers depict the sufferings and agony of dalit people and strongly criticize the Indian social system and its caste based discrimination.

The dalit women writers on the other hand, have strongly criticized the patriarchy or the male dominated social system. In their protest against patriarchal social system, they have not only blamed Manu and Hindu social system but also strongly criticized the patriarchal attitudes and behaviours of their own people who have always discriminated them on gender ground and have not provided them any opportunity for their upward social mobility. They have drawn inspiration from the thought provoking writings of Dr. Ambedkar and started writing about sufferings of women in general and dalit women in particular. Some of the dalit women writers have also concluded that Dalit women are 'Dalit among the dalits' (Das and Massey, 1995:185). In this context, Pantwane writes that "After a period of century or more Dalit women have awakened and are again giving literary expression to their deep feelings" (Joshi, 1986:85).

On the whole, the Dalit writers have launched a literary movement in support of the social and cultural movements of the Dalits specially Mahars in Maharashtra. According to Dangale , "It is significant that Dalit literature owes its origin to a revolutionary struggle for social and economic change. This explains the various aspects of serious thought in dalit literature. This literature is closely associated with the hopes for freedom of a group of people who as untouchables are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality. Their literature is thus characterized by a feeling of rebellion against the establishment, of negativism and scientificity. Studying Dalit literature or the role of this literature from only a literary or an academic point of view fails to present a complete perspective in assessing it. Dalit literature must be assessed in the sociological frame work". (Dangale 1992: 237). However, the dalit writers have not only portrayed the sufferings and exploitation of the dalit masses but also created ground-work for transforming the existing society and evolving a new society or social order with the egalitarian ethos. They have created lasting awareness and consciousness among their own people and provoked them fight against their

existing exploitation, oppression and social degradation. Thus, the dalit literature has become now a symbol of social change, revolutions and social transformation. It hopes for freedom of millions of people who have remained victims of religious, social, economic and cultural inequality. In the words of Dangale, "Society and literature are closely related. If we examine literature in the light of social change, we note that it is not the one and only medium to bring about that change. Each medium has its own in built strength. It is inevitable that values of life are spread through literature, but if one does not have a correct estimate of the strength of this medium, one cannot use it effectively. It is an illusion to believe that literature alone can create a revolution. To bring about a revolution, one should have the necessary philosophy and a plan of action, and a group (of people) to implement them" (Dangale 1992:257). The emergence of 'Dalit Panthers' in Maharashtra is one of the best examples, contribution of the Dalit literature for creating revolutionary any movement in India.

All the writers or leaders of the Dalit Panthers were white collar workers such as lecturers, clerks, writers and artists. Murugkar has stated, "They were from among the first and second generations of Dalits who had access to university education because of Ambedkar's efforts in opening colleges for Dalits" (Murugkar, 1991 :53). They used to meet and discuss about the pathetic condition of dalits both in rural and urban areas. They were upset and disgusted with the ruling political party like Congress Party which was only interested in dalits' votes but not in improving their socio-economic status. Similarly, the Republican Party of India, the dalits' own party, did not take up any issue of dalits' uplift due to internal party conflicts, splits and selfishness of the leaders. The frustrated dalit writers realized that there was no point in merely writing provocative poetry against injustices and exploitation of dalits. Instead, there had to be proper action to curb exploitation and oppression of the dalit masses. They were highly inspired and guided by the literature and activities of the

black movement in U.S.A. The young writers like Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangale, Raja Dhale and J.V. Pawar took initiative and established the 'Dalit Panthers' in Bombay on 9th July, 1972 (Dangale, 1992 : 253).

Within a short period of time, the Dalit Panthers could manage to mobilize large number of dalit masses to lead a social revolution in urban and rural areas in Maharashtra. The movement concentrated on the issues like fighting back the atrocities on and social inequality practiced against the Dalits, and generation of consciousness among them. Their methods were both militant and democratic. "At some of the places, Dalit Panthers forcibly took back land from big landlords and distributed among landless dalit and poor masses; took foodgrains from black marketers' godowns and distributed among poor and dalit masses; conducted on the spot surveys of incidents of atrocities and organised armed counter-attacks. Similarly, through procession, demonstration, meetings, rallies, distribution of movement literature, sit-ins and hunger strikes they brought consciousness among general mass and government about atrocities, injustice, landlessness and unemployment problems of dalit youths. Their protest agitation against the landlessness and unemployment helped to get favourable response from the government (Murugkar, 1991). Murugkar cited, "The government issued orders which helped in return about 6000 acres of land from the rich-landlords to the actual poor farmers" (Murugkar, 1991: 134). Thus, the Dalit literature led a social revolution in India. It was probably first time in the Indian history that the writers became politically active and led a social revolution for transforming-exploitative and oppressive social system. (Dangale 1992: 254).

Another important aspect of Dalit literature is self criticism or self-protest. It is easier to protest against the enemy and evil practices but it is rather very difficult to protest against ourselves. The new middle class writers are well aware about growing peculiar tendencies of their own community and they do not hesitate to attack on such

kind of tendencies. (Joshi, 1986). One such tendency is the growing alienation of the members of the new middle class from the overall suffering of the Dalit masses and even from that of their kith and kin. They are becoming self-centred and are engaged merely in the socio-economic progress of their family members. These and some other internal issues and tendencies of members of the new middle class have been portrayed and strongly criticized by the dalit writers. (Joshi, 1986: 84). Thus, the Dalit writers have played successful role in creating consciousness and awareness among the dalit masses against their continued oppression, exploitation and social degradation, and have exerted the members of the new middle class for playing significant role in social transformation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that the members, including dalit writers, of the new middle class in Maharashtra have helped the poor and needy people of the Dalit masses. The professional members of this class have been taking the cases of poor and innocent clients without charging any fees, organising dalits against injustices and atrocities inflicted on them both in the rural and urban areas, and spreading education among poor and women and helping in educational pursuits of the poor Dalit students. In spite of personal problems, members of the middle class have been playing significant roles in the uplift of dalit masses in particular and social transformation in general.

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CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The middle class as a concept emerged and developed in India during the British rule and due to their capitalist modes of system like new civil and state administration system, new property and land laws, new judiciary and revenue system, new economic system and new educational policies. In India, the middle class as a phenomenon or social category first emerged among the higher caste people. This was so the traditionally learned high caste Hindus were the first to avail of the modern education. It is they who dominated the higher level of posts in the British administrative services. In fact, the higher caste people due to their traditionally privileged position occupied all the white collar jobs including professional ones. Though a few of the lower caste people also got educated and became employed in new occupation but compared to the higher castes they were very meagre in size. Thus, the middle class or classes emerged in India and primarily constituted the traditionally dominant higher caste people. The lower caste and other deprived communities could not emerge as middle class due to the traditional caste discrimination and hegemony of higher caste people in socio-economic and educational spheres. Yet, some of the people among this section emerged as middle class much later.

In the Indian context, the emergence of better-off section or elite among the deprived communities has been considered by some scholars as the emergence of a new middle class. This is so because their new achieved socio-economic status is qualitatively different from their traditionally ascribed status. Their social origin as a class or middle class for that matter is also different from the old middle class primarily constituted of the higher caste people. Similarly, their origin as a member

of middle class is a recent development in comparison to the members of old middle class. Moreover, they have achieved their better socio-economic status with the help of protective and welfare measures of the Protective Discrimination Policy of the state. But such benefits have not been available to the members of the old middle class.

In the light of this, the present study has focussed on the formation of the middle class among dalits specially Mahars of Maharashtra. In the first chapter, we have discussed the historical origin of middle class in the India and a tiny new class among Dalits. Besides, the chapter identifies research problem and objectives and methodology. In addition to providing conceptual explanations of various terms like Untouchables, Depressed Classes, Dalits, Elite, Middle Class and New Middle Classes etc. it also points out some limitations and importance of the study.

A number of theoretical perspectives on class, middle class and new middle class have been explained in the second chapter. In The chapter third, we have seen that various factors and forces of the pre and post independence periods which have helped dalits to emerge as new middle class in the society. The British Government's policy towards education and employment brought some positive changes among the dalits especially Mahars in Maharashtra. We have also discussed in this chapter how the then educated and employed dalits contributed both directly and indirectly to generate social awareness and consciousness among the dalit masses. This was supplemented by the dalit leadership of both the pre and post independence periods. The leadership specially under Ambedkar had successfully mobilised dalits to fight against various forms of injustices and strive for their rights. Finally, this chapter analyses how the Protective Discrimination Policy adopted after independence has contributed to socio-economic progress of the Dalits. All these together have played a significant role in emergence of new middle class among the dalits specially Mahars in Maharashtra. /

Though the newly emerged new middle class is smaller in size, it is somewhat uniform in the case of Maharashtra as discussed in the chapter fourth. It is true that the new middle class is not homogeneous or unified social category, like middle class or classes per se, either at the level of its composition or at the level of relation among its members. For instance, this class is constituted of Mahars, Chambhars, Mangs, Dhors, Holers, etc. in Maharashtra though its largest segment is from Mahars. It is in that sense this seems to be uniform or homogenous. But we have already stated that the Mahars are much ahead in educational achievement, employment and power positions as compared to Chambhars, Mangs, etc. The structuration of their social status as a new class or new middle class is also since relatively longer period. As a consequence, they have acclimatized to enjoy their superiority over other Scheduled Castes in the state. Hence, a considerable degree of hostility and antagonism has crept in the relationship between the Mahars and other Dalit caste members of this class. Moreover, members of these castes do retain their caste identity and promote, in some ways, the interests of their own caste people though contextually they exhibit their allegiance to the new middle class or the middle class per se.

We have also discussed, in this chapter, issue pertaining to the new middle class among the dalits in Maharashtra. Though small section of dalits in Maharashtra achieved better socio-economic status and became members of a new middle class, members of this class still suffer from the problem of status identification. Their low caste status often obstructs them to get assimilated into the middle class dominated by the upper caste people. Their both ascribed and achieved statuses (caste and class statuses) have created dilemma in their status identification. But in spite of personal problems, the members of new middle class are well aware about their social responsibility and they have been playing .

significant roles in the upliftment of dalit masses in particular and social transformation in general.

The fifth chapter mainly emphasises on role of the new middle class in social transformation. In this chapter, we have seen that the new middle class has been playing a commendable role and contributing to the cause of upliftment of the Dalits. Though this new middle class is small and its members are placed at varied positions for the purpose of jobs, they have close contact with their community members and they help their brethren in achieving socio-economic progress. Similarly, the Dalit writers who are also members of the new middle class have been depicting, through their writings, the actual deprived condition of the dalit masses. Others have been trying to impress upon the government to safeguard the interest of dalits through properly implementing a number of welfare and developmental schemes and measures in their favour. They have also organised movements for the emancipation of dalit masses.

In Maharashtra, the new middle class writers led the 'Dalit Panther Movement' in the early 1970's for the cause of emancipation of dalit masses and also for social transformation. They along with others have established a number of formal organisations through which they have been spreading awareness about achieving education, eradicating superstitions and providing credit loan facilities to the poor dalits. Similarly, lawyers, doctors and social workers being members of this class have been providing important services to the needy and disadvantaged sections of the society. Thus, in spite their of personal problems they have been playing significant roles in the uplift of dalit masses in particular and social transformation in general.

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