



Disunity and Fragmentation among Dalit Castes of Maharashtra

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Abstract: This article tries to trace why the dalit castes in Maharashtra could not emerge as a cohesive political force, despite some success as a social movement. The Dalit castes, with disunity, feeling of superiority with relation to each other on the base of social hierarchy, endogamous nature given by caste structure, basic material conflict at the village level, influence or domination of established caste on their course of social behavior, have not been able to overcome the material and psychological obstacles of ultra-caste solidarity. There are many other socio, economic, and political reasons that discouraged dalit castes to mould themselves into politically efficient group and this has hampered the process of political development of dalit castes in the state. Despite the same experience of being outcaste and untouchability these castes could not come ahead as socially and politically united.

Keywords: Dalits of Maharashtra, Buddhist Dalit, Non-Buddhist Dalit, Hindu Dalit, Disunity and Fragmentation., Dalit Politics.

The dalit castes of Maharashtra alike in other states are not a socio-politically united community. In Maharashtra the major line of divide among dalit caste is religion on the base of 1956's conversion to Buddhism. The dalits who converted to Buddhism call themselves Neo-buddhist or Buddhist. This is open and interactive for all caste persons but in reality the dominant share of this community is belonged to Mahar caste. The second large group is of Non-buddhist who did not convert to Buddhism they are Hindu dalit but a Hindu religion is itself not a cause of unity among Hindu dalit castes. So this article is an enquiry in the past to see root causes of disunity, fragmentation and socio-political behavior of dalits which did not let them politically united and kept far away from political power in Maharashtra. In this article the major dalit castes of Maharashtra -

Neo-buddhist or Buddhist or Mahar, Matang and Charmakar or Chambhar has been taken into account because of their prominent presence in state dalit politics.

Review of literature:

The last two-three decades have seen many scholars both Indian and foreign in social sciences particularly from political science and sociology making serious attempts to study the socio-cultural-political aspects of the dalit community, leading to the emergence of a new area i.e. Dalit studies. There is abundant and qualitative work in this made by both Indian and foreign scholars- Gopal Guru, Anand Teltumbade, Kancha Ilaiah, Raosaheb Kasabe, MSS.Pandian, Sudha Pai, Sukhadev Thorat, Harish Wankhede,

Ahire D C, Gail Omvedt, Christophe Jafferlot, Eleanor Zelliot.

All the scholars have made significant contribution to the dalit study and have revealed different aspect of dalit life. But this literature has not focused on one aspect of the dalit study in greater term that is the fragmentation of dalit castes in itself, especially, the ridge on Buddhism among dalit which ultimately hamper their political development. Therefore, I felt that this aspect could be a focus for this article. I have enumerated here few literature made by some scholars on this aspect.

- Arjune, Dr. Dileep, 2006, "*Matang Samaj: Sthiti aani Gati (Marathi)*", Printwell, Chikalthana, M.I.D.C., Aurangabad, tried to sort out the causes of backwardness of Matang caste compare to ex-untouchable castes. He analyze it in Marxist perspective and gives material accounts for this, that the pity small business of Matang community like rope making, basket making did no allowed them to leave the village and sever its ties with other caste on which they were dependent. So they did not wage war against the untouchablity and atrocities made by upper caste on dalit, also did not join to Buddhist as both castes were having conflict many times with each other.

- Beltz, Johannes, in his Ph.D thesis published as book "*Mahar, Buddhist and Dalit: Religious Conversion and Socio-Political Emancipation (2005)*", has studied the Mahar caste with its three living identity-Mahar as assertive caste among low ex-untouchable caste, Dalit while dealing with upper caste and Buddhist as in a transitive phase in her cultural assertion. He has dealt with all aspect of life of Buddhist and unveils psychological, social, economic and political interaction with other socio-

religious group, especially, focusing on their relation with other dalit caste including their differences, disputes, conflict and politically different behaviour. He has given the real and prevalent socio-economic and political problem of Buddhist in relation to non-mahar dalit castes, obc's and upper castes.

- Birmal, Nitin, Ghotale Vivek, 2010, 'Matadarsangha Dalitanche, Rajkaran Prasthapeeth Jaatinche (Marathi)', in "*Parivartanacha Vatsaru*", Diwali Vishesank, Pune. Their article argue through the study of 2009 Lok Sabha election of Maharashtra that till today upper castes hesitate in accepting dalit as their representative. The de-limitation commission census 2001 increased the reserved seats of SC in the state. This change was disappointing for upper caste because this increase was on the cost of open seats. So in this disappointing situation the upper caste very strategically played 'Hindu Dalit' card against the neo-buddhist in Lok Sabha poll with the themes or propaganda like 'Jai-bhim peksha Ram-Ram bara (Ram-Ram is good than greeting Jai-Bhim)', 'Menbatti is good than Udbatti (Incense is good than candle)', 'Nili peksha Gulal bara (Saffron is good than Blue)', 'Mahara peksha Chambhar/Mang/Dhor bara (Charmakar/Matang/Dhor is good than Mahar/Neo-buddhist). The upper caste took the benefits of stratification among dalit castes. According to Nitin Birmal and Vivek Ghotale this is the major reason that all RPI candidates lost their seats in this election.

- Bhosale B.V., 2006, "*Charmakar in Transition*", Nurali Prakashan Company, Mumbai, has mentioned the reluctant attitude of Charmakar while dealing with other dalit caste and used to feel shameful to revel their caste identity in public. He has traced the psychological and behavioural course of social life

while dealing with other caste group like upper castes, obc's and dalits, also, their feelings of political-economic insecurity and isolation from other dalit castes. Further he writes that with the changing circumstances and neo-liberal policy Charkar have broken up past bondage and being assimilate with modern order, education and bridging up the gap between Neo-buddhist and them.

- Gare, Govinda, Shirubhau Limye, 1973, "*Maharashtrateel Dalit: Shodh aani Bodh (Marathi)*", Sahadhyayan Prakashan, Mumbai. The authors with the help of 'Rashtra Seva Dal' and 'Jati Nirmulan Sanstha' in 1969-70 conducted a socio economic survey of Dalit in Maharashtra, and findings published in this form of a book. This book denotes the variation in the behavior of dalit especially between the Mahar or Neo-buddhist and Non-buddhist dalit with the impact of modern values, order and Ambedkarite ideology. One observation from the book, I would like to quote here that, in many villages Neo-Buddhist and Mahar used to sit at par with upper caste in the Gram Panchayat meetings, but, other dalit castes Chambhar, Dhor, Mang used to not sit at par with upper caste in the functioning of Gram Panchayat because they used to say that one should not cross the norms, limit or tradition of caste or should behave within the limit of caste.

- Kathare, Dr. Anil, 2009(2002), "*Shivkal wa Peshavaiteel Maharancha Itihas (Marathi)*", Saguna Prakashan, Pune. He has provided the accounts of social and military status of Mahar in the era of Shivaji, Adilshahi and Peshwai. Also he has mentioned the conflicting point between the Mahar and Matang on the base of 'vatan' and pity 'honour' in village system which given at that time to them.

- Palshikar, Suhas, 1998, "*Jaat wa Maharashtraatil Sattakaran (Marathi)*": He writes that how the assertion of Buddhist in culture, education and government sector was misappropriated by Shiv Sena to make intrusion in non-buddhist dalit vote bank and appeased upper caste by curbing militancy of Mahar or Neo-buddhidt in socio-culture. In his another book "*Shiv Sena Ek Bahumukhi Wagh (Marathi-2006)*" says Shiv Sena evolved with changing circumstances and appropriated the contemporary socio-political conditions for her political purpose. The aggressive assertion of Buddhist had disappointed many other castes in state, so Shiv Sena indulged these disappointing conditions and played 'Hindu-dalit' card against Neo-buddhist or Mahar in electoral poll to win reserved constituency.

- Sakate Mahindra, 2009, "*Matang Samara Amoral Awahane(Marathi)*", 'Vicharshalaka', Prof. Nagorao Kumbhar (ed), Year 22nd, June-2008 to July 2009, Latur. In this article author has given the detail account of education, economic conditions, poverty and the challenges ahead of Matang community with the rise of LPG model. He sorts out the reasons that why and how Matang remained backward compare to Buddhist or Mahar. He blames for the present condition of Matang to political representatives of Matang and the weak response of Matang community given to Ambedkarite ideology which caused for the non-assertion of them in socio-economic and political field.

- Salunkhe, Dr. Aa.Ha., a prominent writer of Maharashtra in his paper 'Jaat Samjun Ghetana'(Marathi), presented in the National Seminar "*Understanding Caste*" organized by Bharatna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Studies Center, S.P. College, Pune in 2011, focused the nature of

caste which abet itself against another caste and dalit castes are not exception for this. So, he appeals to dalit and obc caste to discharge their differences and conflicts and come united on socio-cultural platform.

- Somwanshi, Prof. B.C. (Ed), 2006, "*Maharashtrateel Mang (Marathi)*", has compiled the many articles which give the different perspectives on Matang castes as well as shadings some lights on their genesis to present socio-political status. Some articles are about the condemnation made by Matang against Mahar or Buddhist. This book ends with the tune of socio-political reconciliation of two castes on the base of Ambedkarite ideology.

- Sonawane, Kailash, 2007, "*Maharashtrateel Charmakar Samajche Rajkaran (Marathi)*" PhD Thesis, University of Pune. He has been briefly studied the charmakar caste with its origine, sub-caste groups, social condition, economic conditions and political behaviour. He also mentions the dominant presence of 'sanskratization' process in their cultural bahaviour to have parity with upper caste and alienate from ex-untouchablity and ex-untouchable castes.

- Wankhede, Harish S, in his article 'The Political and Social in Dalit Movement Today' published in "*EPW*" on Feb 09, 2008, pg.50-57. In this article he see the success and limitation of two successful dalit movement, first is socio-cultural Buddhist movement of Maharashtra and BSP's political movement in Uttar Pradesh. He argues that the modern Buddhist identity offers socio-political and cultural dignity to transform dalit into modern, democratic and radical which is not offered by the wretched, degraded and lower caste 'Hindu' identity. Further, he says that Buddhist movement of Maharashtra is successful on

three parameter viz. social, cultural and economic but failed in political arena. Here I want to say that as Harish Wankhede says that Buddhist movement is successful in socio, economic and cultural sphere but this success is limited to the Mahar caste only and minors who were non Mahar before their conversion. So, this is not the case for all dalit castes of Maharashtra, especially, who were remained far from Buddhist movement. And I think this is the one reason that Buddhist movement could not succeed in political sphere and failed in asserting themselves as the true heir of Ambedkarite socio-political legacy. Harish Wankhede has given a very good and compact assessment of the failure of Buddhist movement as political movement. This analysis is Buddhist centric and Buddhist perspective, so, he does not go to the account, reasons and materialistic conditions for the alienation of non-mahar dalit and obc castes from Buddhist movement.

Integration and disintegration of low castes in the society- trace in history:

In the history of Indian society, the untouchable castes and lower castes were submerged with the Hindu social order as serving caste with traditional occupation, tradition, rules, norms and notion of sin or bless.¹ The strong Caste Panchayat system never allowed an individual to break up the demarcated caste structure, practices and line of work. There were some religious sects like Buddhism and Charwak in ancient time- Sufi, Vaishnav, Lingayat, Mahanubhav and Bhakti in the medieval period who tried to mould the social order with absence of caste discrimination and hierarchy, but in the real sense they were not successful, and the basic social order remained unshaken. With the privileges given by orthodox social order to upper caste, they never acted

as if they were likely to lose a hierarchical social order based on inequality as it was against their privileged interests.² The upper caste integrated the whole social structure with the assimilation of lower and untouchable castes by giving protection through demarcation of occupation and services which was set up on caste line.

The lower and untouchable castes were significant in the village system for rendering services to village like military as supplying force, worker castes- carpenter, smith man, shoe-maker, leather worker and fighting castes.³ This is the same case about Maharashtrian untouchable castes: the Mahar caste, an untouchable caste of Maharashtra, was the backbone of Maratha army. Their services were continued till Peshawa period. Along with Maratha and Muslim they were entitled to 'Vatan' called 'Mahar Vatan' which was given by Adilshaha of Bidar, Maratha King for their honesty and military services.⁴ Articles of leather made by Chambahr were useful for military as well as social purpose. Yet these features did not bring any changes of their social exclusion. According to Dr. Ambedkar, indeed, the 'vatan' was a memorandum of dishonor and slavery of untouchable castes.

In the modern era, the British declaring the Mahar caste as one of the martial race, used them in military by establishing 'Mahar regiment'. At the same time, Rango Bapuji a revolutionary in seventeenth century conglomerated lower castes Ramoshi, Koli, Bhil, Mang against the colonial power.⁵ The revolutionary Vasudev Balwant Phadke formed an alliance of Mahar, Mang, Ramoshi, Koli, Bhil with Brahmin and Muslim supporters against British in the area of Pune.⁶ Though these castes were used for multiple services in village like cleaning villages, protecting

village, farm work, providing evidence in criminal cases and communication yet their services were not valued and they remained deprived, exploited, lowest in socio-economic political structure. It is only in colonial era with the access to modernity, the untouchable castes became conscious of their social status and started to proclaim the basic right for self development and dignity but somehow it was not the same case of all untouchable castes.⁷

The exclusion and exploitation of all dalit castes also did not bring them on one political platform because of the endogamous nature of caste, feeling of superiority and inferiority with relation to other untouchable caste on the base of social hierarchy, basic material conflict at the village level, influence or domination of established caste on their course of social behavior and public life. Thus, though the social conditions and material conditions were similar among untouchables, they never came together (for their enhancement) because of traditional norms, rules and honor given by castes. The Indian society remained stable and continuous with unique feature of discrimination and hierarchy because each person was working and behaving within the caste given set up. So there was no discontent about this social structure until the modern values and critique touched this system, so, inherently dalit castes with their caste mindset-up were never united for any common purpose and it was not so different thing about the other Hindu castes that is why Dr. Ambedkar fought very rigorously to annihilate the caste.⁸

Limited sources and contest for futile honor, material among untouchable castes:

The superiority and inferiority complex in relation to each other among Dalit castes in Maharashtra

prohibited them from coming together. The material conditions used to be cause of contestation among Dalit castes with each other on the base of 'Vatan', 'traditional occupation' and 'rendering services' which were the means of their daily bread and butter.⁹ Often these issues were seen the course of dispute between the Mahar and Matang castes in post- Shivaji era.¹⁰ The 'Chambhar' another untouchable caste used to consider herself superior to Mahar – Mang and hesitated to develop any relations with them and other Dalit castes. The reason for this was, that Chambhar were economically in a better condition compared to Mahar- Mang because of their useful leather business and service.¹¹

In the pre-independence era, the Mahar, by giving response to a call given by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to educate, unite and agitate, gave up their filthy traditional unclean occupation and left the village, village services and Vatan. But the rest of untouchable castes such like Chambhar, Matang and Dhor did not respond equally.¹² As a result of the education and quest of self identity, the Mahar caste infiltrated government jobs and educational institutions. Out of 10 % of SC's in Maharashtra, 35.11% Mahar (1961- census) compared to 32.28% Matang and 22.06% Chambers, took lead in all sector of life.¹³ (Census - 2010-Mahar 57.50%, Matang 20.30%, Carmakers less than 07.00% of 10.20% Maharashtra's SC Population). Thus, it became visible trend in government jobs, scholarship and reservation quota that the Mahar comparatively dominated the quota (appropriated it mostly). This was correct but there were many reasons behind this like numerical strength of Mahar and the quest for self respect and education. But without estimating these social reasons, the picture of reservation of government and education in which Mahar were

dominant, was used against the Mahar by many Hindu political organization in Maharashtra especially by Shiv Sena in 1990's to get the support of Dalit castes other than Mahar or Neo-Buddhist.¹⁴

Though the Dalit castes did not have harmony among themselves, yet they did not have any harsh conflict against each other. When they migrated to urban areas, they accommodated each other in government quarters and congested areas of city, mainly slums.¹⁵ In the past, enlightened and educated Matang, Chambhar supported Dr. Ambedkar's Dalit movement- R.G. Khadagale, Aappasaheb More, K.K.Sakat, Bahusaheb Sathe, Shivram Janaba Kamble, Eknath Awad named here who worked and contributed to the Ambedkarite movement, irrespective of their caste identity.¹⁶ In the recent era, especially after 1990s, with the spread of education among Matang, Charmakar, Dhor and rest of the dalit castes, they have started looking at the Ambedkarite ideology for the right course of development as the Mahar/Neo-buddhist have made for themselves. Consequently, there have been some attempts among these castes for exchanging thoughts, having public debate and seminar to come together for the harmony and development- in this work the intellectuals, government employees and teaching community have taken lead.¹⁷ Yet one can not say that all dalit castes have been become united politically.

Religion:

In India, religion plays the role of ideology and sets the parameter for individual and group behavior.¹⁸ Thus, two different religious ideologies became the strong force for the bifurcation of Dalit castes, like conversion to Buddhism became conflicting issue among dalit castes. The Chambhar, Matang, Dhor

remained and believed in Hinduism and worshiped the Hindu Gods. The Neo-Buddhist rejected Hinduism and Hindu God. The issue of conversion was inescapable while interactions took place between Buddhist Dalit and non Buddhist Dalit. The Chambhar never challenged the Hindu social hierarchical system on the base of exclusion, discrimination and underprivileges.¹⁹ In spite of this; they attempted to imitate Brahmin in social behavior and looked themselves on par with Hindu upper caste. The process of 'sanskritization' had strong roots in Chambhar, compared to other Dalit castes of Maharashtra. So the majority of Chamber caste abstained from Dalit movement, though there were some eminent persons in Dr. Ambedkar movement who belonged to the Charmakar caste.

Charmakar, generally, used to conceal their social identity and keep themselves distinct from Dalit, while utilizing the benefits of reservation policy. This conduct of Chambhar annoyed the Neo-Buddhist and increased the rift between both castes.²⁰ Often, Charmakars were used as political and social mean to contest Mahar/Neo-Buddhist by upper castes- the defeat of Dr. Ambedkar in 1st Lok Sabha election from Charmakar candidate on Congress ticket hurt the Mahar. That is why Neo-buddhist stake strong anti-Charmakar feeling.²¹ The neo- Buddhist on the base of conversion, every time rejected the Matang calling them Hindu- Mang, thus it generated disinterest in Matang community to join neo-buddhist politically and socially.²² Conversion in Maharashtra, not purposefully, made another new distinction among dalit castes that 'Buddhist' dalit- the dalits who converted to Buddhism and who did not convert to Buddhism remained as 'Hindu' dalit. After 1980's, BJP-Shiv Sena played 'Hindu' dalit card for political and social purpose and tried to club all Hindu Dalit

castes together on 'Hindu' identity but this never brought Hindu dalit castes on one discourse.

Ideology:

The first break up in RPI was duly on the base of political ideology. The RPI under the leadership of Dadasaheb Gaikwad joined hands with 'socialist' and 'communist' movement on the issue of land satyagraha which was initiated by Nana Patil.²³ Another lieutenant of RPI, B.C. Kamble and his follower disfavored it calling this as being against the teaching of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.²⁴ After this, the RPI every time fell apart with distinct group on reason of religion, communism, secularism (Congressism), communalism (Shiv Sena- BJP). Many times, behind this reason, the real case was personal gain and lack of political prudence. The militant Dalit panther- a non-political organization (1972), was also bifurcated in two group on the base of communalism and Buddhism and degenerated in a passive organization.²⁵ At that time the Dalit mass could not able to conceive the dichotomy between 'Caste' and 'Class' ideology, which was one of the cause of disunity among Dalit mass by simply following leaders.²⁶ Ideological dispute was a feature of dalit political leader where mass had little role- only as follower, so, the differences among dalit on the basis of ideology is corollary of many leaders of many opinion and ideology.

Role of political parties:

The political parties are perceived for their political role in society to mobilize, awake and motivate the masses for political power, interest aggregation, mass mobilization, representation and designing itself into the state power. In the case of Maharashtrian Dalit caste this role of political party was not performed by

any political party nor could it unite the dalits as politically cohesive force.

Shiv Sena: The Shiv Sena established in 1969 with the cause of Marathi common man, transcended herself from social organization to active political party as defender of Hindu interest.²⁷ In the late 1970's, with the rise of many caste organization, Dalit militancy and discontent about minority Muslim, Shiva Sena pulled up the support of upper caste Hindus taking stance against the Dalit especially Mahar or Neo-buddhist and Muslim.²⁸ The Shiv Sena protested against the critical writings of Dr. Ambedkar on Hindu religion, especially the Riddles in Hinduism.²⁹ Further, Shiv Sena declared that though she is against the dalit, especially, against the Neo-buddhist.³⁰ This stance of the Shiv Sena enabled her to get the support of Non- Buddhist Dalit especially Chambhar and Matang. The Shiv Sena took advantage of discontent in Non- Buddhist Dalit about the Neo-buddhist because of their large share in government job. This discontent was propagated by Shiv Sena against Neo-buddhist, in 1994 on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar birth anniversary. The then, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Manohar Joshi, indirectly accused Neo-buddhist for having exploited reservation quota, and asked Non-Buddhist Dalit to join Shiv Sena.³¹

In the opinion of Prof. Suhas Palshikar, the wrath of Shiv Sena against Neo-buddhist was because of conversion.³² In reality, this was not the fact; Shiv Sena strategically took advantage of discontent against Mahar which was in the mind of Non-Buddhist Dalit and upper caste because of their assertiveness and rebellious character. Indeed, the dominant caste punished those lower castes, which were audacious enough to attempt it. And Mahar or

Neo-buddhist were not exception in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, after 1980's, there were several attempts to bring Hindu Dalit castes together. Actually, Hindu Dalit, with their different caste association and conferences were formed together, as a challenge to Buddhist Dalit politics by Shiv Sena-BJP alliance in Maharashtra. Thus the icon of Saint Rohidas, Lahuji Vastad, Annabhahu Sathe, Babu Jagjivan Ram were used for this separately.³³

The proposal of Shivshakti- Bhimshakti, alliance in 2003 and its declaration of alliance on 13th may 2011 goes against the earlier stance of Shiv Sena against Neo-Buddhist, which was used to refer on the base of conversion.³⁴ So this shows that the stance taken by Shiv Sena against converted Buddhist dalit had mere a political purpose, with changing circumstance.

Indian National Congress: It is seems that Shiv Sena and BJP were harsh against the Dalit autonomous politics and worked for the fragmentation of Dalit politics. But the Indian National Congress party was much ahead in this in the early phase from Independence era. On 30 September 1932, with the efforts of Gandhi, an 'Anti-untouchability League' was established. Later this organization was transformed in 'Harijan Sevak Sangh'. Initially, Dr. Ambedkar was also part of this organization. But the policies of Harijan Sevak Sangh were inclined towards the Congress policies,³⁵ and it was argued that the Dalits, especially Mahar, who were ardent followers of Dr. Ambedkar, were rejected for the scholarship awarded by Harijan Sevak Sangh. The reason given by Thakkar Bappa, a Congress follower, was that the Mahars of Bombay Residency were most developed, compared to other Dalits. Thus, the Congress disfavored Mahar for economic help as they were not compatible with Gandhian

ideology and they were follower of Dr. Ambedkar who was an ardent critic of Gandhi and Congress.³⁶ So spontaneously, the focus of Congress was on dalits, but other than Mahar.

The Congress also fostered non- Ambedkarite representation for Dalit. She sought to make alternative leadership to Dr. Ambedkar for Dalit by instituting Babu Jagjivan Ram, a Charnakar from Bihar.³⁷ The mass conversion of Mahar had been questioned for the benefit of reservation policy. Non-Buddhist Dalit castes and upper castes claimed that converted Dalit cannot take the benefit from the reservation quota. But in the 1960, then chief minister of newly formed Maharashtra state Yashwantrao Chavan, extended reservation benefits to converted Buddhist due to their contribution in Sanyukata Maharashtra Samiti. This extension of reservation policy to Neo-Buddhist was extensively opposed by Babu Jagjivan Ram.³⁸ This extension of reservation to Neo-Buddhist dalit was the first major success for followers of Dr. Ambedkar in Maharashtra after Dr. Ambedkar.

Though the Neo-Buddhist benefitted from the reservation policy at the State level, they were not entitled for reservation in Central services until 1990. This issue was raised in Lok Sabha by Ramvilas Pasvan and he pressurized the then government to extend reservation benefits for Neo- Buddhist in Central services. Thus, the Congress government kept Neo-Buddhist excluded for forty years for the reservation benefit at Center it was the V.P. Singh government who extended reservation at the center level to Neo-Buddhist.³⁹ The point is that Congress never favored Mahar or Neo-buddhist because of their quest for autonomous dalit politics which was threat to her catch all politics. So this disfavor of

Congress for Mahar or Neo-buddhist was blessing to non Buddhist dalit who were expecting benefit under the patronage of Congress. In addition to this, Congress was also cautious that all Dalit caste shall not become united.⁴⁰

In the 1999, a new party was carved out of Indian National Congress by Sharad Pawar, P. A. Sangama, Tariq Anwar opposing any foreign person hosting nations highest post like prime minister and boosted that she is the true bearer of nationalist and secularist ideology which was handed over to INC by Indian National Freedom struggle.⁴¹ NCP till her initial year had not a different stance toward Buddhist dalit and non Buddhist dalit than INC. But in the late first decade of 21st century both party shifted their focus to Neo-Buddhist and offered and seats to Buddhist dalit with changing circumstances to not apart their support base from Buddhist dalit who are numerically dominant in Maharashtra. Many time NCP Chief Sharad Pawar and the Deputy CM of Maharashtra Ajit Pawar appealed to Neo-Buddhist to join NCP and come into main course of state politics. In this time the Neo-Buddhist have extended their support and joined all main stream political parties.

RPI: The Republican party of India which was established immediately after the death of Dr. Ambedkar by his followers represented itself as forerunner of dalit interests after independence and felt as dreamt party of Dr. Ambedkar. The role of RPI who represents the political existence of dalits in the state politics cannot be ignored in the state politics of Maharashtra though there are many pitfalls in the RPI politics. The Republican Party did not make any serious attempt to bring Non-Buddhist Dalit political leaders under one roof - even she failed to maintain political unity of Mahar or Neo-buddhist.

The hardcore Buddhist Republican leaders wanted Non-buddhist to become Buddhist first to prove their loyalty toward the party. But non converted Dalits never wished to renounce Hinduism immediately. According to them, Buddhism was not the only solution for present socio-economic conditions. This contesting point never let them become united.⁴²

Another point is that when the RPI tried to break up the limit of dalit politics and to broaden its wing, the mentality of Hindu castes did not allow them to support RPI, for instance, under the leadership of Dadasaheb Gaikwad, the RPI led the movement for landless land labors. Focusing on the issue of land, Dadasaheb Gaikwad tried to take Dalit politics beyond the Dalit castes. But non- Dalit castes even non Mahar dalit caste did not support to this.⁴³ The reason for this was that the castes, apart from dalit, were still hesitating to accept dalit as leader. Even dalit castes did not accept Mahar leadership who were politically conscious and aware among lower castes.

Even RPI in itself after very short period of time, was used by the self interested Mahar leadership. The RPI failed to capitalize on the vibrant Dalit movement and mostly worked against its ethos.⁴⁴ The RPI failed not only in mobilizing the backward castes and Muslims against the ruling Congress but also failed in convincing the non-Mahar Dalits.⁴⁵ Another side of the failure was hidden in the strong 'hegemony' and 'political violence' of upper castes that other backward castes and dalit castes did not show any support to RPI.⁴⁶ Further, the RPI leadership was failed in the strategic tactics for the existence of party, for the enlargement of scope in the mass and prudent stance or role on the different political, social, economic, local, national events. In the early

phase of RPI, the party leadership shown keen interest on specific problems of society through debut, discussion, opinion with their extensive reading and knowledge about society. But, later on the party was starved out for this kind of leadership. No any leader could interpret Dr. Ambedkar's thought and knowledge in the context of contemporary social reality.

The monotonous kind of interpretation Ambedkarite thought became the limitation of RPI and she could not look beyond that. Every time the RPI leadership, after each split, abused the name of Dr. Ambedkar and sentiments of dalit toward Dr. Ambedkar as dalit were perceived RPI- a dreamt party of Dr.Ambedkar.⁴⁷ Once success and spread over three state the RPI was diminished into different factions and groups with severe limitations, some of them: Ambedkarite Republican Party, People's Republican Party, Republican Party of India, Republican Party of India(Athavale), Republican Party of India(Democratic), Republican Party of India(Kamble), Bhartiya Republican Paksha.⁴⁸ All factions are limited to Maharashtra, some of them only to a district and no faction is in strong position that she could get her candidate elected. According to Raosaheb Kasabe RPI became sentimental issue rather than a pragmatic, practical political party. She ever acted like a pressure group and not alike political party.⁴⁹

Yet, the RPI, in right manner never, neglected the political existence and aspiration of Neo-Buddhist. Thus, RPI was the separate and distinct political assertion and representation of Neo-Buddhist in state.⁵⁰ Polarization of Neo-Buddhist in state politics was duly the failure of RPI Neo-Buddhist leadership who could not mould all dalit castes in a one political

force and fight against the strategies of other political parties which were denying the Dalit autonomous politics.⁵¹

The role of Neo-Buddhist movement:

The Dalit Buddhist movement in Maharashtra has had limited success. The movement failed in generating a dynamic- cultural assertion, which can encompass the aspiration of all oppressed section. Certainly there was no soft landing for this movement in society. The movement over estimated the values of ideological commitment and failed drastically on the arena of politics.⁵² The result of the Lok Sabha election 2009 was an eye opener and very pessimistic for the neo- Buddhist Dalit, who had been totally polarized in state politics and society.⁵³

The role of State:

The role of State is very negative about the Dalit - that is the role of ruling party about the dalit politics. It has zealously maintained the divide between the Dalit and non-Dalit universe within itself.⁵⁴ The ruling party, through organizing different caste conferences of different dalit castes, has not let dalit castes get united under one icon. It has happened every time that the Dalit autonomy was denied by the ruling party in the state apparatus. They excluded and appropriated Dalit politics through the evoking Dalit sentiments and oppressing them with Dalit anti course, especially anti-Mahar discourse in Maharashtra. In the State politics, the Buddhist and followers of Ambedkar were often victims of collective violence because of their defiant attitude, which used to challenge the established political, economic and social structure. Anti-Mahar discourse was the main strategy of Hindutva organization of political parties .⁵⁵ The political parties select the

candidate belonging up to the Dalit caste who do not react against party if the interest of Dalits are being encroached. If any Dalit political leader acts in favor of Dalit interest he would have fear the losing his party position.⁵⁶ So all these things have seriously challenged the political consciousness of dalit castes in the state politics.

Actually state is not a distinct, separate entity from society, it is the reflection of the policies of the government run by then ruling political party. So state and state functionaries many time not remained unprejudiced and castiest sentiment toward the dalit consciously or unconsciously. It has been proved many times that state and its functionaries like police, revenue department, and social justice department remained apathetic toward dalit and unpreventive against dalit atrocities, some time themselves are involved in atrocities on dalit. In the riot case at Mata Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar, Mumbai on July 11,1997,11 people were killed and 26 injured when police opened fire on a Dalit group for rioting, following the desecration of Dr B R Ambedkar statue by some miscreants.⁵⁷ In worst Khiarlanji massacre case on 28th September 2006 the dalit family was tortured, raped and killed. The state machinery from talathi, tahasildar, collector, medical officer and police remained indifferent about the incident that case was filed under the Protection of Civil Right Act rather than Prevention of Atrocities (SC & ST) Act. Though the bodies of female member of family were found naked and humiliated investigation was not directed to detect rape incident nor post mortem was done under proper rule and authority. The state almost tried to suppress this news with the help of media but some social organization brought this crime of humanity in public sphere. Here also the state tried to suppress the protest organized by social

organization. In a report brought out in November, 2006, the Centre for Equity and Social Justice of the government's own Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA) found a "deep rooted social conspiracy towards facilitating the crime and subsequent suppressing of evidence on the part of certain communal forces as well as various elements from politics and administration."⁵⁸

Thus state and its functionaries in many atrocity cases against dalit remained passive in delivering justice and social security to dalit, sometime became part of suppression in oppressing dalits voice. Since the formation of Maharashtra state till today no dalit party and person got the reign of state power that she/he could offer patronage and social security to dalit that resulted them in the riotous. So state totally failed to generate faith and confidence among dalit concerning states impartiality, security and justice, making them indifference toward it.

Methodology:

In this article I used comparative and historical method to study more than two groups or castes, so I considered it need not to conduct survey and go for empirical method or be exclusively dependent on primary sources for this library work. For this purpose I used the secondary resources- the articles and books published by scholars, published reports and survey organized by NGO's and IGO's as well as the data from government records. While the writing of this article driving force to me was the curiosity rather than certainty, so, I cannot proclaim the completeness of it but will feel successful if anyone make deepening attempt in this issue.

Result:

The different response to Ambedkarite ideology, education and reservation by dalit castes have led to different level of development among dalit caste which became sometime contesting point among them. With the end of 1990's decade the reconciliation process among dalit geared up to remove differences and conflict with each other due to the spread of education, strong and peaceful socio-economic-cultural assertion of Buddhist as well as the rise of obc's in the state. The path of Buddhism accepted by ex-untouchables in 1956 is being considered and evaluated by Non-buddhist dalit. The Buddhist has left the issue of 'conversion' on the 'cognizance of each' in the case of Non-buddhist dalit. There is appeal by non dalit main regional and national political parties to Buddhist to join them and come in main course of politics. We can see some changes in the attitude of non dalit political parties toward Buddhist through state assembly Election 2009 before declaration of any alliance with them. Thus one can easily expect in the rise of seat tally of Buddhist in the next election.

2009-Legislative Assembly Election - Reserved Seats

	Neo Buddhist	Chambhar	Matang	Other	Total
INC	03	01	02	-	06
NCP	02	04	01	-	07
BJP	02	01	01	03	07
Shiv Sena	02	05	-	02	09
Total	09	11	04	05	29

2009 - Legislative Assembly Election – General Seats.

	Neo Buddhist	Chambhar	Matang	Dhor	Total
INC	02	-	-	01	03
NCP	01	-	-	-	01
BJP	-	01	-	-	01
Shiv Sena	-	01	-	-	01
Total	03	02	00	01	06

(Ref: Birmal, Nitin, Ghotale Vivek, 2010, “Matdarasanga Dalitanche, Rajkaran Prasthapeeth Jaatinche”, Parivartanacha Vatsaru , Diwali Vishesank, Pune.)

Conclusion:

The dalit castes of Maharashtra are divided in two major groups on the base of religion. First, is Buddhist and another is Non-buddhist i.e Hindu dalit. The participation and mobilization of Buddhist Dalit is more than Non Buddhist Dalit. This is duly of independent social and cultural assertion of Buddhist Dalit. Comparing to Buddhist Dalit, Non Buddhist Dalit have got little chances for their social, economic and political assertion. Assimilating with Hindu social order at low level they get rare chance to put ahead their main problem and right needs even some time these problems and need are not recognized by themselves and established main stream politics. In this way the Buddhist dalit are politically handicapped and Non-buddhist dalit socio-economically handicapped in state politics for their rapid development and both divided are far away from political power in the state.

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