

DALIT MOVEMENT IN VIDHARBHA: POST AMBEDKAR ERA**Ms. Pradnya B Gudhe,**Research Scholar, S.M.D.L. College,
Kalamboli, New Mumbai.**Guided By:****Dr. S C Lahupachang,**
Principal, SMDL College,
Kalamboli, New Mumbai.**Abstract:**

The research paper focuses on the Dalit movement in Post-Ambedkar era in Vidharbha region of Maharashtra. The Dalit movement (also known as the Neo-Buddhist movement) started by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is a religious as well as a socio-political movement. It rapidly re-interpreted Buddhism and formed a new school of Buddhism called Navayana. The movement was launched in 1956 by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar when nearly half-a-million Dalits joined him and converted to Navayana Buddhism. It rejected Hinduism, challenged the caste system in India and promoted the just rights of the Dalit community. After Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's demise, the movement has stayed alive through conversions and various form of protest that still happens today. In this paper the main focus will be the Dalit movement which has taken place in Vidharbha area (East) of Maharashtra.

Key words: Dalit movement, Buddhism, Rejected Hinduism, conversions, Vidharbha.

Introduction:

The **Buddhist movement** (Dalit) is a socio-political movement among Dalits in India which started under the flagship of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. It completely reinterpreted Buddhism and shaped a new ideology of Buddhism called Navayana. In 1956 by Dr. Ambedkar along with around five lakh Dalits got converted to Navayana Buddhism. It vetoed Hinduism, challenged the caste system in India and encouraged the rights of the Dalit community.

Dr. Ambedkar published a sequence of books and articles arguing that Buddhism was the solitary approach for the Untouchables to gain equality. Later he publicly converted to Buddhism on 14th October 1956, at Deekshabhoomi in Kamthi, Nagpur with around 380,000 of his followers. Later Dr. Ambedkar gave dhamma diksha to his followers. The ritual encompassed 22 vows given to all new converts.

Dalit Movement in Vidharbha, Maharashtra: Post Ambedkar Period

The Buddhist movement was slightly hindered by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's demise so soon after his conversion. It did not obtain the instant mass support from the Untouchable population that Dr. Ambedkar had expected for. Disunion and absence of direction among the leaders of the Ambedkarite movement ought to be an added weakness.

Today, as per the 2011 census, currently there are 08.44 million Buddhists in India, at least 06.5 million of whom are in Maharashtra. Thus Buddhism is the fifth-largest religion in India as per 2011 Census and 06% of the population of Maharashtra, but below 01% of the general population of India. The Buddhist renewal is slowly in

progress but remains focused mainly in two states i.e., Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh.

The Role of Surai Sasai:

Japanese-born Surai Sasai arose as a significant Buddhist leader in India. Sasai came to India in 1966 and came across Nichidatsu Fujii, whom he assisted in the building of Peace Pagoda at Rajgir. He later went to Nagpur and saw Wamanrao Godbole, who had well thought out the conversion ceremony for Dr. Ambedkar in 1956. In Nagpur he began to welcome people with "Jai Bhim" (victory to Ambedkar) and helped in construction of viharas.

The Role of Various Political Parties/ Organisation:

After Dr. Ambedkar's demise, formation of the Republican Party of India took place and later the Dalit Panther Movement started. It was followed by several more Dalit associations, political parties and movements. Lately, Dalit Sathya Movement, the Dalit Ranghbhoomi, the All India Backward SC, OBC and Minority Communities Employees Federation, and the Bahujan Samaj Party have emerged. Though, the Republican Party of India, The Dalit Panther's Party, and the Bahujan Samaj Party have been more effective in continuing Dalit Movement in Maharashtra.

1. Republican Party of India:

Republican Party of India was formed in 1957. Its organiser was N. Sivaraj, who continued as its President till 1964. The era 1957-1959 is measured as the Golden Age of Republican Party. During this period its leaders concentrated their efforts on recognition of the honest demands of the Scheduled Castes and protested for their rights. Its leaders like B.K. Gaikwad, Dighe, B.C. Kamble, G.K. Mane, Hariharrao Sonule, etc., were elected to the Parliament in 1957 where they raised such issues like to voice their concern against the atrocities committed to Dalits and to make them conscious. The main aim of the leaders was Revival of Samata Sainik, founded by Dr Ambedkar in 1928 and to maintain discipline in the party. Later they organized All India Women's Conference in 1957 at Nagpur. It also contributed enormously to the Dalit Sahitya Sangh, the first conference was held in 1958 under the Chairmanship of B.C. Kamble. It was mostly getting popular in Vidharbha region.

Two satyagrahas were organised in 1954 and 1964, with the request of the distribution of land to the landless under the guidance of Dadasaheb Gaikwad. Another enormous Satyagraha was propelled by the party in 1964, to force the government to allot wasteland to the deprived. The Vidharbha area again saw many protests on the issue.

In this respect, the leader, including Gaikwad, Khobragade, and Maura offered a Set of demands to the Prime Minister at that moment which included exhibiting the portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in the Central Hall of Parliament, providing the land to the tiller, distribution of wasteland to the meagre and the landless, sufficient distribution of grain, and mechanism over rising prices, upgrading of the condition of slum dwellers and Dalits, complete application of the minimum wages of Act 1948, extension of the SC and ST privileges to converted Buddhist, to stop persecution of Dalits, complete justice under the Untouchability Offence Act, etc.

In 1967, the Republican Party of India designed an association with the Congress which headed to corrosion in its base. The association led to the splitting in the party with Khobragade and Gaikwad leading the two groups. In

1974, they repaired up their differences and Khobragade was universally elected as its premier. This again results in division in the party. One group was led by Khobragade and the other group was led by R.S. Gavai. In 1975, Gavai was selected as the president of the party. It further resulted in division of the party into three factions led by Gavai, Khobragade, and Kamble, respectively.

The Dalit political figures were as much worried about civil liberties and power. They used their party banner to encourage self-centredness. The following activities and the overall discrimination against Scheduled Caste members resulted in the birth of the Dalit Panthers Movement in Maharashtra. Its activities were also seen to be increase in the Akola and Nagpur belt of Vidharbha region.

2. Dalit Panther Movement:

The Dalit Panther Movement was moulded in 1972, when the some Dalit youths came forward and took up the duty of bringing all the Dalits on to one solitary stage and to organize them for the fight for their civil rights and justice. It revealed that the lower castes were not ready to accept humiliations and their most awful conditions without protest.

The utmost vital feature for the upsurge of the Dalit Panther Movement was the suppression and fear under which the troubled Scheduled Castes continued to live especially in the rural areas. The Dalit Panther Movement later started spreading to cities such as Bombay, Poona, Nasik, and Aurangabad wherein a huge number of Dalit population is based. Since beginning, the Dalit Panther Party was exclusively built on the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar and was fairly fundamental in its nature. Later in other states the Dalit Panthers were seen motivated to the Marxist thought. Namdev Dhasal and a small number of others leaders started believing in the Marxist philosophy.

Raja Dhale was discovering some straightforward differences with the statement enlisted by Namdev Dhasal. He blamed Dhasal of getting, Communist backing. He also condemned the Communists Parties for having unsuccessful to bring any major changes in the life of the oppressed. Raj Dhale excluded Dhasal and some of his supporters for showing unfaithfulness to the Dalit Panthers. After the incidence of expulsion, still majority of the followers remained with Raj Dhale.

In 1974 the organization again saw a split. The Dalit Panther Movement still saw a success under the leadership of Prof Arun Kamble, Ramdas Athawale, and Gangadhar Gade. These leaders took the charge of fighting over the problems of reservation and other concessions approved to the Dalits in various portions of the country. However, the movement is still limited to urban areas but the problem is that with majority of the Dalits concentrated in rural areas remaining less touched. The leaders have now started focusing outside Maharashtra and are trying to build up an all India Dalit Panthers Association by starting branches in different states.

3. Bahujan Samaj Party:

Kanshi Ram established Bahujan Samaj Party in 1984. Both Kanshi Ram and Mayawati toured across the states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, etc. from their speeches, Kanshi Ram and Mayawati acquainted the

Dalits of their socio-economic, political, cultural, and educational privileges and the methods and means through which, they could attain their objectives.

Kanshi Ram organized several meetings of Mahars in Maharashtra and entirely reviewed their socioeconomic status and explained them the ways to encounter it. He continuously highlighted the part of education for advancement. He maintained for teaching technical and medical education to the young dalit boys and girls. He had organised many rallies and meeting in Vidharbha region of Maharashtra.

In Bahujan Samaj Party he prepared the youth wing of the dalits in Vidharbha area in particular and spoke out that if the cadre was solid, the party would remain tough. He said that their duty included guiding the Dalits about injustice done to them by the higher-caste Hindus for ages and to fight back for upliftment.

He stressed on women's education. He was against the dowry system also. He cautioned Dalits not to take dowry. He was by profession an advocate. He stressed the struggle of the weaker sections, which had ruined themselves under the impact of liquor. He again and again stressed on the issues in his meeting at western areas of Maharashtra where in the problems were seen in plenty.

Conclusion:

Dalit Movement, aimed for social change has played a significant role in the Vidharbha region of Maharashtra. It has begun much earlier, became intense in the 1970s and began to deem at present. Many political groups like RPI, Dalit Panthers, BSP, etc have played a significant role in bringing about the changes in socio-political and just life of the Dalits in Vidharbha region. But the present era is seeing a diversion in the core issue. Amongst many reasons the utmost reason seems that the educated class and writers are not paying much attention as it was earlier. Many articles and literature are written on Dalit Movement but are not able to reflect the actuality. Another reason would be shortage of support of people from all the groups of Dalits. In Maharashtra, the Mahars are controlling the movement. The other Dalit groups like the Chambhars, Mangs, etc were not keenly involved in the Movement. many new issues have aroused at present, but only few leaders and parties are making vocal demands and protest. The Dalits who got power became the dolls in the hands of the ruling Parties and there ideology. Even today in this globalization era Dalits are humiliated and the mentality of the people for them have not seen much change. Learn, Organize and Agitate as said by Dr. B R Ambedkar is the only medicine for such discrimination. The role of Dalit Media is also limited. Therefore the Drive for social change will flourish only when all the Dalits unite together to fight for equality. A big movement can be again intensified for the upliftment of society, especially in region of Diksha Bhumi (Vidharbha) area where people are more active, and it's a place where every year Dalit's come in large number from various parts of the state and even some parts of country.

Bibliography

Ambedkar, B.R; *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, People's Education Society, Bombay Second Edition, (1974).

Eva-Maria Hardtmann; *The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections*, Oxford University Press; Edition edition (21 October 2009).

- Jogdand, Prahlad Gangaram; *Dalit Movement in Maharashtra*, Kanak Publications, New Delhi, (1991).
- Kadam K.N; *Dr.B.R.Ambedkar: The Emancipator of the Oppressed*, B.R.Publishing, Delhi, (1994).
- Kamble, J.R.; *Rise and Awakening of Depressed Classes in India*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, (1979).
- Kamble, N.D; *Atrocities on Scheduled Castes in Post-Independent India*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, (1981).
- Murthy, B.S; *Depressed and Oppressed*, S Chand & Co Pvt. Ltd., New' Delhi, (1971).
- Murugkar, Lata; *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra- A Sociological Appraisal*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, (1991).
- R.K. Kshirsagar; *Dalit Movement in India and Its Leaders (1857-1956)*, Prints Publications Pvt Ltd; First edition, New Delhi, (2017).
- Surendra Jondhale; Johannes Beltz, eds. *Reconstructing the World: B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-566529-1. (2004).