

**Ambedkarite Thought in *Asmitadarsha* (1967-2000):
Study of a Dalit Journal from Maharashtra**

*A thesis submitted in October 2021 to the University of Hyderabad
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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

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DECLARATION

I, **Kamble Omprakash Manikrao**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled '**Ambedkarite Thought in Asmitadarsha (1967-2000): Study of a Dalit Journal from Maharashtra**' submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. M.T.Ansari, Centre for Comparative Literature**, is a bona-fide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

A) The research scholar has published articles in the following publications:

- 1) "Personal Narrative of Omprakash" in *Dalits and Religion*, ed.D. Murali Manohar (New Delhi: Atlantic Publication, 2009).
- 2) "Mukta Salve: The Early Emergence of a Protest Voice in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bombay Presidency, 1855" in *Influence of English on Indian Women Writers: Voices from Regional Languages*, ed. K. Suneetha Rani (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2017).

B) The research scholar has made presentations in the following international conferences:

- 1) "Protest Voice in Marathi Dalit Autobiographies: A Comparative Study of Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* and Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha*" in the Ninth Biennial International Conference in association with Comparative Literature Association of India, organized by CCL, University of Hyderabad and EFL University, Hyderabad, during 28-31 January 2009.

2) Responded to the session “Marathi Context” in the UGC-DSA three-day International Seminar on “*English in the Dalit Context*” organised by the Department of English, University of Hyderabad from 18-20 January 2011.

C) The research scholar has made presentations in the following national conferences:

1) “Personal Narrative” in National Seminar on “Personal Narratives of Dalits and their Religion(s)” organised by the University of Hyderabad, Department of English, during 16-18 October 2007.

2) “Emergence of a Radical Dalit Voice as a Critical Discourse in Post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra: A Debate Comparing Mainstream Marathi and Dalit Literature in *Asmitadarsha* 1970” in National Seminar on “Can Dalit Literature be a Core/ Compulsory Course in Literature Departments?” organised by the Department of English, University of Hyderabad, during 3-4 April 2014.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards the fulfilment of the coursework requirement for Ph.D.:

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Pass/Fail
HC 712	“Literatures of the Third World”	4	PASS
HC 713	“Self, Nation and Text”	4	PASS
HC 730	“Critiques of Modernity”	4	PASS
HC 617	“Reading Contemporary Indian Literatures”	4	PASS


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INTRODUCTION

Since, defining Ambedkarism through *Asmitadarsha* intellectual prose writing (*Vaicharik Likhan*) is the crux of the thesis. My attempt in the thesis is to analyse different views expressed by the authors in *Asmitadarsha*; applying Ambedkar's model of "democratic egalitarianism" as a parameter to judge their writings and to examine whether their writing possess traces of Ambedkarism or not. Articles in *Asmitadarsha* can truly be assessed applying Ambedkar's own writings and speeches which forms the core of Ambedkarism. There are several ways in which Ambedkarism can be interpreted and defined. One of the ways to define Ambedkarism is through the application of the principles of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Social Justice precisely; democratic egalitarianism which is the crux of the entire philosophy of Ambedkarism. Hence, based on the democratic egalitarianism model of Ambedkar I analyse various issues in *Asmitadarsha* as well as the chapters in the thesis.

Ambedkar's immense faith and confidence in education, consciousness and realisation that only education can bring about a dramatic change and can improve the downtrodden resulted in his outright assertion for the untouchables to Educate! Agitate! And Organize! He wished to implement a viable alternative education system, which was different from the prevailing system and therefore he found the People's Education Society at Bombay on 8th July 1945, which started a number of colleges, educational institutions and hostels in and around Maharashtra at various places such as in Mumbai, Aurangabad, Mahad, Pune, and Bangalore.

Ambedkar established Siddharth College on 20th June 1946, speaking in a programme on why he kept the name of the college Siddhartha (Buddha's name) he said, "Buddha gave the message of "truthfulness and humanity" to the world; this college has

been constructed keeping in mind the same objective.” The goal is to find out the truth and to follow the religion which will teach us humanity.¹ Ambedkar was very clear right from the beginning about his intentions; he followed the principle of democratic egalitarianism borrowed from the Buddha in every move of his life. In order to promote education various educational institutes had been established in Mumbai such as Siddhartha Arts, Science and Commerce College 1946, Siddhartha Commerce, and Economics College 1953, Siddhartha Law College 1956, Dr. Ambedkar Commerce and Economics College Wadala 1971, Dr. Ambedkar Law College Wadala, 1978 etc.²

Ambedkar considered Aurangabad his *Karmabhumi* (a working place) where he began his educational attempts. He realized the need to establish colleges for higher studies for the students of the backward region like Marathwada therefore, he established Milind College in Aurangabad. Ambedkar’s timely move and immediate educational attempt and intervention in this region made him the proponent of educational movement in Maharashtra. In Aurangabad, Ambedkar established Milind Arts College 1950, and Milind Science College 1950 in Nagsenvan premises. Ambedkar categorically defined his aim of putting the name Milind to the college he said, “I kept the name ‘Milind’ of this college because of Milind’s ‘intellectual honesty’, though he was an intellectual and a scholar he had the ability and the tendency to accept his intellectual defeat from Nagsen the Buddhist monk.”³

¹See Pradeep Latikabai Gaikwad’s article on “Dr.Ambedkari Dhammakrantichya Prerana” in *Lokrajya* October issue 58 (8) Ed. Manisha Patankar-Mheskar published by Information and Broadcasting Directorate General, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai: 2006, p. 119.

²See Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Diary 1992 published by D.G. Deshkar, Principal Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Arts and Commerce College, Nagsen Van, Aurangabad.

³Milind was a great king of Bacteria. He took pride in the scholarship and talent of the Greeks. He firmly believed that nobody can defeat the Greeks in the intellectual debate; he challenged people to come and have debate with him. The Buddhists were ashamed of themselves for not accepting his challenge; finally with great conviction and tremendous effort they prepared Nagsena for the debate. Nagsena and Milind had an intellectual debate between them in which Milind was defeated by Nagsena. Milind later took refuge in Buddhism. Ambedkar states why he gave Milind’s name to the college not because Milind lost the

The student studying in Milind College took pride in the fact that they were studying in a college established by Ambedkar. They studied there with full confidence, courage, conviction and determination. In a short while Milind College in Aurangabad became the centre of Dalit movement. Largest network of People's Education Society was set up in Aurangabad for educational emancipation of the Dalits by Ambedkar. The first generation of educated youth emerged from Milind College. Most of them later became renowned professors in different colleges and universities. Youths from Vidarbha and Marathwada region wholeheartedly joined Milind College and Nagsen Van premises full of positive energy, spirit and enthusiasm. The students studying in Milind College totally absorbed and immersed themselves in Ambedkarite and Buddhist atmosphere in the college premises. The youth later began expressing themselves openly through Milind College literary platform.

In post Ambedkarite period, several other branches of People's Education Society were established in Aurangabad such as Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Arts and Commerce College 1960, Dr.Ambedkar Law College 1968, Physical Education College 1984, Milind Multipurpose High School 1955, Milind Primary School 1975, Matoshree Ramabai Ambedkar High School 1965. Several other colleges, schools and educational institutions were also established under the rubric of People's Education Society in and around Maharashtra.⁴

battle, and accepted Buddhism; I gave his name because of his "intellectual honesty" that he has shown accepting his defeat. I think this is a perfect example for the student community in future. Milind as a good student and Nagaesna as a good teacher will be ideals for them. Therefore, I kept the name Milind of this college and Nagasen Van of this campus or premises. See *Milind Prashna* translated from the original Pali language by Vimalkirti Kshitij Publications, Nagpur 2010.

⁴To commemorate Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Birth Centenary celebration year in 1992 a diary was launched titled *Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Diary* which provides essential details on the life and times of Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar. The diary provides ample information about Ambedkar's various educational initiatives, projects and plans etc. The P.E. Society or the People's Education Society was established on 8th July 1945 by Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar himself was one of the most significant branch or wing for the enhancement, promotion, expansion and development of educational endeavour in Maharashtra. Several

To facilitate the working students, Ambedkar established Siddhartha College which functioned in the morning. Multiple projects were started in this college for the welfare of the students. The students from this college contributed heavily for Dalit literature thus, the educational revolution began in Milind college spread world-wide. These institutions later became famous international centres for Buddhist knowledge and ideology. The first-generation youth from many of these colleges were highly influenced by Ambedkarite thought and action. The powerful expression of their thoughts could be seen in the annual issues of Milind Sahitya Parishad, around 1970 by the students at the Milind College. One of the significant steps in an Ambedkarite movement was higher education which would take the Dalit movement ahead. Milind Sahitya Sabha was established not only for the literary contemplation and to publish or popularise their views but also to provide a literary and cultural platform to the poor and the needy students from far flung areas of Maharashtra who had come to Aurangabad to seek education.

The students along with the teachers and colleagues started Milind Sahitya Sabha (Milind literary assembly) later it got converted into Milind Sahitya Parishad (Milind literary conference). With the initiation of Milind Sahitya Parishad the students began a literary and cultural forum for themselves. In fact, *Asmitadarsha* and “Milind Sahitya Parishad” was the need of the hour. Both these objectives could be achieved due to constant encouragement and guidance of scholars like M.N. Wankhede, Gangadhar Pantawane, R.G. Jadhav, L.B. Raymane, Sukhram Hivrane and Waman Nimbalkar etc. The discussion and deliberation began in Milind College on Dalit literature grabbed world attention today. Ambedkar’s movement of human liberation is largely responsible for the establishment of Milind College, Milind Literary Conference, and *Asmitadarsha* in

educational institutes, colleges, high schools and hostels for the poor and the needy students were established in and around Maharashtra. See *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Diary* 1992 published by Principle Dr.D.G. Deshkar, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Arts and Commerce College, Nagsen Van, Aurangabad.

totality have truly mobilized and galvanised Ambedkar's emancipatory movement giving it cultural consciousness of a kind. Thus, the birth of *Asmitadarsha* can be traced back to the spread of education in and around Maharashtra.

Keeping Ambedkar's educational reforms (Marathwada region) in mind it was decided and desired by the Bhartiya Dalit Panthers to put Ambedkar's name to the existing Marathwada University in Aurangabad. The agitation that began in this regard in 1976 went on till 1994 almost for 18 years in Marathwada this agitation is called *Namantar* (name change) agitation which became crucial in Dalit socio- political movement in post Ambedkarite period. The goal of the agitation was to rename Marathwada University with Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar's name.

The *Namantar* issue later triggered due to Gautam Waghmare's self-immolation case from Nanded resulting in the expansion of the name of the Marathwada University to Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University on 14 January 1994.⁵Pantawane writes in his editorial in *Asmitadarsha* after a prolonged struggle finally, Marathwada University was renamed as Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University. He discusses the amount of pain and sufferings the Dalit had to undergo during the course of the agitation in Maharashtra. The entire episode of *Namantar* agitation has been thoroughly discussed in chapter third of the thesis.

The Dalit youth continued their writing spirit despite vulnerable and awkward conditions. Amidst the spread of education, on-going Dalit movement and their individual struggles, he was caught up in a quagmire. He expressed his anger, frustration and anxiety against the established and oppressive social system this writing later known as Dalit literature.

⁵See S.G. Jadhav's. *Adhunik Maharashtra Itihaas (1818-1960)* Sanskuti Publication, Nanded, pp. 341-342.

Pain, rebellion and rejection play a significant role in Dalit life and literature. “Rebellion and Rejection” in Dalit literature comes from Dalit “pain.”⁶ The rejection is against the imposed social system upon him/her. It is against the oppressive social system. The nature of rejection is multiple, on one hand, it rejects unequal social system and on the other hand it demands for an egalitarian society. The egalitarian thought is nothing but a democratic thought and the democratic thought is nothing but an Ambedkarite thought. After the pain and the rejection, Dalits further go for the rebellion. The rebellion is born in Dalit society out of pain and rejection and his demand to treat him like a human being, and to acquire all human rights. Even after the intellectual and literary revolution there are ideological differences among Dalits.

In post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and several others began the Dalit Panthers, an organisation established in 1972 on the lines of the Black Panther Movement in the United States. Raja Dhale was a prominent Dalit writer who carried forward Ambedkarite thought in his writing and speeches. *Astitvachya Resha* (The Marks of Existence) comprises his major writings devoted to Ambedkarite thought and philosophy. Being a founding member of the Dalit Panthers and an activist, the writer published many little magazines. Similarly, Namdeo Dhasal was awarded with the Padmashree in 1990 for his rebellious writings and Baburao Bagul’s fictional works focuses on the social and economic deprivation caused by the caste system. He was also conferred the Harinarayan Apte award. The award is given to the Marathi writers for producing effective novels and short stories which faithfully reflect different aspects of contemporary society.

The Dalit Panthers were inspired by the Black Panther Party in America which

⁶Limbale 2007, p. 134.

sought to fight the racial and economic discrimination against African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement in America, which occurred in the mid-20th century. The initiative to form the Dalit Panther movement was taken up by Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and others in Bombay. Though these Dalit Panthers' founders and pioneers were staunch followers of Ambedkarite thought, they developed ideological differences between them regarding Marxist, Ambedkarites and Buddhist Ambedkarites, resulting in a split in the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra.

I came across the dilemma of the Panther leaders through the pages of *Asmitadarsha* (mirror of identity) during the course of research. It is also observed that there are ideological differences between the writers who were well known followers of Ambedkar. Namdeo Dhasal, Baburao Bagul, and Raja Dhale are the first-generation Dalit writers in post Ambedkarite Maharashtra. They were not officially the students from Milind College most of the leaders were Neo-Buddhists. Most of them were literary figures whose academic qualifications ranged from not having a basic education to master's degrees.

The Dalit writers and intellectuals strongly felt that the upper caste mainstream Marathi writings lack the presence of Dalit life in it. Moreover, they thought that they should emphatically express themselves through their own literature. Eventually, what they wrote became Dalit literature. It is seen that the Dalit writers consciously made an attempt to develop and enhance Dalit literary movement. They formed various organisations, such as Dalit Sahitya Sansad, Dalit Natya Parishad, Phule-Ambedkar Panchayat, Dalit, Adivasi, Gramin Sahitya Maharashtra, Purogami Vichar Manch, Parivartan Sahitya Mahamandal, etc. The Dalits also organized Dalit Sahitya Sammelane, Bauddha Sahitya Sammelane, *Asmitadarsha* Sahitya Sammelane, Dalit Natya Sammelane, etc. Organizing such events, the Dalit writers and activists strengthened Dalit

literary movement in Maharashtra.⁷

Asmitadarsha prioritized and believed in social transformative philosophy therefore, it has welcomed writers from all walks of life. Apart from publishing and popularising the views of different authors through different genres *Asmitadarsha* has upper hand organising *Asmitadarsha* literary conferences every year at various places in Maharashtra. The first *Asmitadarsha* literary conference was held in Aurangabad in 1974. *Asmitadarsha* continued its legacy conducting conferences at different places in Maharashtra such as Nanded, Bhusaval, Mumbai, Kolhapur, Osmanabad, Indur, Pune, Chandrapur, Nagpur, Sangali, Kalamb, Jalgaon etc. So far 32 *Asmitadarsha* literary conferences have been conducted in and around Maharashtra. Debates and discussions were conducted on various issues concerning literature, society and culture. Chapter four profusely talks about *Asmitadarsha* literary conferences etc.

Asmitadarsha established its ideological base through a vibrant symposium on, “Maharashtratil Aaj Udyacha Sanskrutik Sangharsha Ani Vangmayin Samasya” (Day-today Cultural Conflict in Maharashtra and the Question of Literature)⁸ on 16th November, 1967. Through such debates and discussions, the Dalit literature established its theoretical base in Maharashtra. There was emergence of many Periodicals and non-periodicals all over Maharashtra after the publication of the symposium 1967 in *Asmitadarsha*. Through the systematic presentation of the Dalit issues the Dalit literature acquired a definite and particular direction. From 1967-68 onwards *Asmitadarsha* began its journey and Gangadhar Pantawane became its chief editor.⁹

⁷Limbale 2007, p. 138.

⁸*Asmita*, a souvenir has been published commemorating the 32nd *Asmitadarsha* literary conference in Nanded, Maharashtra. Jairaj Khune’s article “*Asmitadarsha*: Sahitya Nirmaticha Urjastrot” explain how *Asmitadarsha* is the source of energy for the literary creation. See Gaikwad 2015, p. 38.

⁹See Prakash Kharat’s article, “Dalit Sahitya” in *Satthotari Marathi Vangmayatil Pravah*.ed.Sharankumar Limbale, 2007, p. 118.

As a matter of fact, in post Ambedkarite Maharashtra many periodicals had to stop (unwillingly) despite having quality and worth due to lack of financial constraints such as *Ata*, *Tapasi*, *Yeru*, *Timba*, *Abakadae* etc. *Asmitadarsha* is the only periodical, in post Ambedkarite Maharashtra which has been in circulation for more than five decades now. The credit goes to Gangadhar Pantawane the editor of *Asmitadarsha*, who relentlessly and painstakingly worked for constantly and consistently running the periodical despite heavy odds. It has become a part of cultural history, a great source of knowledge, treasury and a living reality of Maharashtra today.

Through the pages of *Asmitadarsha* Pantawane kept pleading and urging people to contribute and subscribe to it wholeheartedly. The overall success of *Asmitadarsha* lies in the fact that the much-needed platform or break for the novice educated youths in the 1970s found place in *Asmitadarsha*. Making most of this opportunity they profusely contributed to *Asmitadarsha*; their writing is full of energy, experience, substance and it is a voice of their own. Thus, it worked both ways i.e., the most essential breakthrough or platform the youth in the 1970s required found in *Asmitadarsha* and vice versa.

A concise summary of *Asmitadarsha* will illustrate major concerns of the periodical. I chose the periodical *Asmitadarsha* for research and analysis for a number of reasons. It provides a wider scope for research and analysis on different dimensions. It is basically invented to contribute to Dalit literary movement and to Ambedkarism in particular. The tri-monthly magazine *Asmitadarsha* started in 1967 by Gangadhar Pantawane and others from Aurangabad, Maharashtra. It was first statred as *Asmita* (identity) but refused registration, subsequently registered as *Asmitadarsha*. It has recognized evaluated and published Dalit writings for more than fifty years now. *Asmitadarsha* provided an outlet for Dalit writings, especially when the mainstream Marathi literary circle refused to publish it.

Asmitadarsha is perhaps the only periodical which has supported and provided a strong and solid platform for Dalit literary activities, as well as Dalit literary movements to flourish in Maharashtra, covering almost all genres i.e., prose, poetry, short story, drama, autobiographies, criticism and notes etc. It is the only Dalit periodical which has been consistently publishing issues in a year along with annual special issue the journal has a wider audience and greater reach in terms of its circulation and subscription. It has also found place in academic discourse as well. Glancing through the larger scope and dimensions of *Asmitadarsha* I chose to work on it moreover; it is the periodical dedicated and committed to Ambedkarite thought and philosophy.

As Gangadhar Pantawane rightly pointed out, “*Asmitadarsha* is a child of Ambedkarism.” Incultation, cultivation and propagation of Ambedkarite thought digging into the distorted tendencies against Ambedkarite thought has been the mission of *Asmitadarsha*. *Asmitadarsha* strongly recommends and asserts that it wants rebellious literature, it wants literature with Ambedkarite consciousness and it does not want masked or artificial literature. As per its dictum the periodical acts and tries to fulfil its promises, claims and concerns over the years. Writers in *Asmitadarsha* are committed wholeheartedly to Ambedkarite cause and work relentlessly for the fulfilment of Ambedkarite goal and vision. Gangadhar Pantawane worked extensively on Ambedkar’s journalistic writings, which paved the way for him to think through initiation of some kind of a journal to address Dalit issue and to propagate Ambedkarite thought in particular.

Asmitadarsha not only talks about Dalit issues but also propagate Ambedkarite thought providing solution to the contemporary socio- political issues. Pantawane always wanted a comprehensive and a wholesome journal which include Dalit as well as non-Dalit writers and literature across the globe. Therefore, literary writers (across the globe)

such as James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Aijaz Ahmed, Tony Morrison, Jean Paul Sartre, and Eleanor Zelliot as well as the non-Dalit writers such as Sada Karhade, Sharadchandra Muktibodh, Bhalchandra Fadke, Kumud Pawade, Vasant Dahake, Kusumagraj, and Nalini Pandit etc have been placed in *Asmitadarsha*. In fact, the writings of these world-renowned thinkers contributed enlarging the scope, progress and development of *Asmitadarsha*. *Asmitadarsha* being “a child of Ambedkarism” follows its footsteps and covers many dimensions such as social, constitutional, political, democratic, feminist, educational, cultural, historical, literary and religious etc.

Interestingly, Gangadhar Pantawane had his Ph.D on Ambedkar’s journalism and later published it and achieved prominence titled “Journalist Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar.”¹⁰ Pantawane explored Ambedkar’s dimension as a “journalist” in his research to which the mainstream society paid no attention. Moreover, Pantawane’s extensive work on Ambedkar’s journalism paved the way for him to think through initiation of some kind of a journal to address the Dalit issues to propagate Ambedkarite thought in particular. His vision materialized in the form of *Asmitadarsha* in the real sense which has successfully completed fifty years now, the periodical began in 1967 and is still continuing today.

Asmitadarsha is basically a literary movement. It is a literary University in itself. It is a gazette of Dalit literature. The periodical has enormously contributed to Dalit literary movement. It has received enough attention and recognition in Marathi academia as far as the periodical is concerned. The periodical has a wider audience and a greater reach in terms of its contribution (academic as well as non-academic) is concerned. Marathi scholars wrote extensively on Gangadhar Pantawane and *Asmitadarsha* individually in Maharashtra. For instance, Krishna Kirwale has his article on

¹⁰ See Yashwant Bhandare’s thought provoking article on Gangadhar Pantawane, “Dalit Sahityacha Adharwad” *Lokrajya* 69 (10) 2018, p. 58.

Asmitadarsha titled “Asmitadarshache Aitihāsik Karya” where he discussed the historical contribution of *Asmitadarsha* in detail in his monumental work *Dalit Chalval Ani Sahitya*,¹¹ G.M. Kulkarni has published a brilliant text *Dalit Sahitya: Pravah Ani Pratikriya*¹² compiling interviews of Dalit scholars on Dalit literature in the form of a Questionnaire in which he interviewed Gangadhar Pantawane and discussed at length the Dalit Question. Chintaman Kamble achieved doctorate working on *Asmitadarsha* later he published his thesis individually titled *Asmitadarsha: Sahitya Ani Sanskruti*. *Asmitadarsha* movement acted as a culture industry in a way producing poets and writers of immense significance and worth. Baban Londhe and Sudhakar Gaikwad edited text *Ambedkari Vichardhara*¹³ focus on the thought-provoking writings in *Asmitadarsha*. Baban Londhe and Sudhakar Gaikwad set out to make three volumes of select writings in *Asmitadarsha* for which they already sought permission from Pantawane while he was alive. In the same text in an appendix Baban Londhe and Sudhakar Gaikwad published a remarkable interview of Pantawane which help us understand various aspects of *Asmitadarsha* in particular.

Ambedkar began *Bahishkrut Bharat* (boycotted India) a fortnightly to depict the precarious condition of the untouchables in the caste-ridden Indian society keeping in view the goal of social transformation Pantawane began *Asmitadarsha* through which he gave a significant and honourable position to Dalit literature. Pantawane provided (moral and ethical) support and encouragement to Dalit writers from early 1970s. *Asmitadarsha* help solidify the bedrock of Ambedkarite thinking and philosophy through its pages.

Asmitadarsha left no stone unturned carrying forward the legacy of Ambedkarite democratic thought. The uncompromising Ambedkarite stand paved the way for

¹¹See Kirwale 2006, p. 120.

¹²See Kulkarni 1997, p. 46.

¹³See Londhe and Gaikwad 2012, p. 569.

Asmitadarsha to look into the crucial issues and to deal with them individually in India. A profound engagement in different socio-political issues in *Asmitadarsha* provides a substantial platform for Dalits, Non- Dalits to express themselves. Chapter four largely discuss the significant literary events in India in the light of Ambedkarism in *Asmitadarsha*.

I discuss here some major periodicals and the studies conducted on the periodicals in different languages and regions in India contributing and enhancing beauty and aesthetics of languages and literatures thereby influencing and creating difference in socio-political outlook and ideology of the masses. Like Marathi thousands of magazines, pamphlets, periodicals have been published in West Bengal as well. There are various periodicals devoted to women, children and issues based on popular periodicals in Bengal. For instance, *Anand Bazar Patrika*, *Desh*, *Vartamaan*, *Aajkal*, *Sananda* etc. The *Durgapooja* issues are very famous in Bengal like that of *Diwali* issues in Maharashtra. These issues are published occasionally in both the regions.¹⁴

Hyderabad based *Panchdhara* (a trimonthly magazine) from January-March 1995 to July-September 1997(four issues) published the translated version of the introduction on Indian Women's Writings by Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha in Marathi.¹⁵ The introduction provided a broader perspective towards looking at women's writing in India. The whole attempt of the publisher and the editor was to confront and tackle decisively various socio-political issues in Indian society.

K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu have done a brilliant job in terms of bringing out a highly informative, insightful volume titled *No Alphabet in sight*. It is a collection of

¹⁴See Sumit Sarkar's article, "The Kalki- Avtar of Bikrampur: A village scandal in early twentieth century Bengal" in *Subaltern Studies* Vol. VI.1989, p. 27.

¹⁵See Vasant Abaji Dahake, 2011, p. 71.

Dalit writings from south India particularly from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The volume depicts how the Dalit writers have exposed themselves through different literary genres. The volume deals with the English translations the work of over forty intellectuals from Tamil Nadu and Kerala which provide a textured feel of the new settings in which Dalit themselves are addressing the Dalit question today. The volume captures Dalit experience of caste and affirmation of Dalit life and community. Interestingly, the dossier I include the much-acclaimed work of the little magazines which were widely popular for its literary production and activities in Maharashtra in the 1970s.

I highlight some periodicals here which have made a remarkable difference in socio-political, cultural life of the people. Among the earliest popular journals *Nirapirikai*, holds popular distinction. It was published in October 1990. It was not just a magazine; it was a movement which created a great sensation and inspired several new writers in the 1990s. In 1994, a special Dalit issue of *Nirapirikai* came up with the translations from Marathi Dalit writing selections from *Poisoned Bread* by Arjun Dangle.

Dalit Mirasu published in 1987 holds an important position in the literary circle edited by Punita Pandian, the journal paved the way for other journals. It inspired the other journals through its rich and varied content. The journal functioned within the broad ideological framework of an anti-caste radicalism of Periyar and Ambedkar and it was critical of identity politics that brought division into the movement. Sivakami, Pratibha Jaya Chandran and a well-known artist Chandru started a Quarterly journal in 1995 titled *Puthiya Kodangi*. Other significant writers contributed to the Dalit journals are K. Daniel, Poomani were critical of caste, they wrote from Marxist perspective.¹⁶

Like SEEDIAN (Socially, Economically, Educationally, Depressed Indian

¹⁶See K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu 2011, pp. 27-28.

Ancient Natives) group in Kerala. In 1970s itself, this group developed a new theoretical perspective for India, drawing on Marxism and Ambedkarism. K.K. Koch, Baburaj, K.K.S. Das, K K.S. Ambirajan, Sunny Kapikkad and others were the prominent members in it.¹⁷ Similarly, *Asmitadarsha* has also given space to authors to write on literature across the globe. For instance, Janardan Waghmare wrote extensively on Afro-American literature, culture and movements since the inception of *Asmitadarsha* 1967-68 onwards. Marathi authors also contributed profusely writing on western scholars in *Asmitadarsha*. Sada Karhade, Sudhakar Gaikwad, Kashinath Ranveer, R.G. Jadhav, and Vidyagauri Sakrikar etc are few of them. *Asmitadarsha* has been playing a proactive and dynamic role in terms of educating the readers providing the best material and stuff required for the intellectual growth and development of society.

Renowned American scholar like Eleanor Zelliot came all the way from Pennsylvania University to India and Maharashtra in particular to do her doctoral research on Ambedkar. She interviewed several Dalit intellectuals, activists and leaders such as Satish Adsul, U.R. Amrao, Yashwant Ambedkar, D.M. Arolkar, H.D. Awade, R.D. Bhandare, K.D. Bhinger, K.N. Kadam, M.B. Chitnis, S.V. Dahat etc. from November 1963 to April 1965.¹⁸ Zelliot met Gangadhar Pantawane, taking stalk of Dalit movement and literature, she wrote thought provoking articles in *Asmitadarsha* in 1976 titled “Dalit Sahitya” comparing Black literature and Dalit Literature.

Asmitadarsha in a way presented a parallel history of Dalit literature establishing itself in the literary and academic arena in Maharashtra. It has become a great document of Dalit life. *Asmitadarsha* periodical has presented a systematic and chronological account of the issues in *Asmitadarsha*. It has developed its broader, independent

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 28.

¹⁸ See Eleanor Zelliot 2004, pp. 225-226.

Ambedkarite base since 1968 onwards in Maharashtra.

Asmitadarsha is not confined to discuss only the Dalit issues as it goes beyond and equally discussed the wide ranging, vibrant, and burning issues in India as well. I give a gist of the some of the crucial issues that have been discussed in *Asmitadarsha*. December 6, 1992, Babri Masjid was demolished and the entire country swept into a traumatic phase; the religious fundamentalist forces and the casteist elements challenged the secular ethos and credentials of the nation. *Asmitadarsha* covered an entire Ayodhya issue through it. The writers in *Asmitadarsha* protested against the Hindutva forces. Probing deep into the Ayodhya issue the editor Gangadhar Pantawane enquires why on December 6 only the Ayodhya episode happened? Stating the reason he remarks that it is nothing but a deliberate and cruel attempt by the Hindutva forces to demean the Indian Constitution, Judiciary, Secular values, and the Unity and Integrity of the nation.

The renowned Dalit activist writer, Namdeo Dhasal in his presidential speech in *Asmitadarsha* 1995 issue, vociferously argued against the demolition of the Babri Masjid. According to him, it is nothing but the beginning of yet another “civil war” creating an atmosphere of terror and anarchy in the country the Hindutva forces are constantly trying to pose danger to our own existence. Explaining further, the strategic moves of Hindutva forces, Dhasal highlights that the decision of the state government to drive away the Bangladeshi’s from the state, the daring act of cow slaughter, unilaterally speaking the language of bringing the Uniform Civil Code or Act speak volumes about their policies for the minorities. After the Muslims, Dalits have become their next target according to him. One can see Dhasal’s proposition coming true today in the form of the recent debate on CAA–NRC, NPR issue in the state.

While researching on *Asmitadarsha*, it is observed that there are deliberate attempts from the authors to assimilate one ideology with the other serving vested

interests of a few. The same has been happening with Ambedkarite philosophy in *Asmitadarsha*. Different writers in *Asmitadarsha* have been clubbed and compared with Ambedkar such as Marx and Gandhi in terms of their ideology. There is nothing wrong in this as long as the different ideologies are not messed up with each other to fulfil the vested interests of a few.

Despite Ambedkar's firm submission and strong assertion that he had borrowed the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice from the Buddha, some authors do not buy his argument. They continue to believe and argue that he had borrowed these principles from French Revolution and not from the Buddha. Ambedkar in his speech at Kathmandu (Nepal) on "Buddha and Karl Marx" clearly demarcated the difference between ideologies of Buddha and Karl Marx. Debates and discussions began in Maharashtra, revolving around Ambedkar and Marx philosophy precisely, due to Baburao Bagul's presidential speech in a Buddhist literary conference 1971 and the debate in *Asmitadarsha* symposium on "Marxism and Ambedkarism."

Debate began on the crucial question that what should be the inspiration for Dalit literature? Questions were also raised whether to accept Ambedkarite or the Marxist ideology or stick to either of the two. The reflection of the debates and discussions on Ambedkar or Marx ideology continued from 1967 to 1970 through the pages of *Asmitadarsha*. After the fall of the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra attempts have been made to bring about co-ordination between Amedkarism and Marxism. Raosaheb Kasabe took lead in this regard. He seems to have inclined towards the Marxist ideology talking about the fundamental principles involved in an Ambedkarite philosophy. Kasabe needs to present Ambedkarite ideology without merging or mixing Marxian or Gandhian philosophy into it.

Clubbing Gandhism and Ambedkarism together Kasabe further introduces

Rousseau in his discourse stating that Ambedkar had Rousseau's influence on him. Kasabe's ways of clubbing the philosophies of people who clearly differ from each other create confusion. For instance, Ambedkar clearly denounced Gandhism and Rousseauism, which eventually denounced the philosophy of inequality created by the industrial and cultural modernisation which means he also rejects Rousseau's relation between a person and society. He also rejects Rousseau's philosophy of republic egalitarianism. Hence, Kasabe's proposition and claim that Ambedkar had the influence of Rousseau upon him seems unconvincing and illogical for the simple reason that Ambedkar had Buddha's influence on him moreover he considered Buddha to be one of his masters.

Ambedkar's philosophy is primarily ethical and religious. He explored the Indian philosophical system and tradition in his own unique way. He developed political concepts like democracy, justice, state and rights from his own understanding of Indian society and the functioning of its institutions on moral and ethical grounds. The methodology he used is very specific rather than speculative. He was influenced by the assumptions of modernity. Religious philosophy basically analyses the relevance of religion, its social and moral norms, thus to save humanity from all kinds of religious beliefs, practices, traditions which are detrimental to society.

Recently, an intellectual binary has been essentialised between Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar which treats the two ideologues as mutually incompatible in their explorations of the coexistence of socio-economic and cultural hierarchies within formal notions of political equality and existing struggles towards freedom. Simultaneously much of the debate has come to be located within the domains of Indian political thought. Aishwary Kumar explicitly wants to explore "universal" tensions between equality and freedom as well as the "political" and the "social." "The very terminology of Gandhi's "truthfulness" that Aishwary Kumar uses in his seminal text *Radical Equality: Ambedkar*,

Gandhi, and the Risk of Democracy cannot suffice all kinds of pains and sufferings of humanity which has been there for centuries together.

Gandhi and Ambedkar do differ from each other in terms of addressing social and political issues in India. The religious minorities such as Muslim and Sikh in India vociferously demanded for a separate nation state for themselves in colonial India. Gandhi had no issues with them. Their demand emerged from the sense of insecurity they felt from “Hindu” Indian nation state. Ambedkar was also equally concerned with the betterment of his own community therefore, he demanded for a separate electorate for the untouchables to which Gandhi opposed tooth and nail.

No doubt, Ambedkar like Gandhi was a great nationalist and a patriot of a sterling worth. Ambedkar expressed anxiety over the future of the nation as well as the untouchable community many a times in colonial India. He demanded for the social liberty first than the political liberty of the nation. His yearning for the social liberation seems rational and convincing on the contrary Gandhi’s adamant stance over the separate electorate for the untouchables seems unconvincing and illogical. Gandhi demanded political liberty first from the colonial rulers than the social liberty on the pretext of preserving the credibility of Hinduism in India. Gandhi believed that all kinds of social maladies and ailments will be categorically addressed and solved in the post independent India. At the same time the fear and anxiety expressed by Ambedkar regarding the future of the untouchables in an independent India was genuine and equally significant.

Though Gandhi and Ambedkar were concerned for the untouchables and the future of India they do differ from each other in their ways and means. In this sense there is ideological difference between them which in no way could be equated and considered the same. Therefore, the best way to understand Gandhi and Ambedkar is by analysing them independently and not by combining them together especially when they have

remarkable difference in their ideologies. Similar is the case with Karl Marx and Ambedkar, therefore, similar criterion or parameter can be applicable evaluating Marx and Ambedkar ideology.

A constructive and rigorous criticism on traditional, orthodox, rigid, rituals and customs of the Indian philosophy is necessary to dismantle the barricade of conservative caste structure in India in my view. Ambedkarite philosophy has the capacity to wipe out the stagnated residue of orthodox mentality from people's mind therefore, instead of treating it aligning with the Gandhian philosophy; it should be treated separately in a more nuanced and objective manner. In my estimation, an objective outlook is necessary to solve all kinds of religious deformities and dogmas in society. It is the consciousness in the mind of the people which lead to religious revolution or reformation in society in the real sense.

The scope of Dalit literature produced in *Asmitadarsha* is enormous and even the writings produced in it is diverse and vast on numerous subjects. I got an opportunity to study all of them together under a common umbrella of *Asmitadarsha* moreover, it provides enough space for research and analysis therefore, I chose *Asmitadarsha* to work on. Since, it is a multidimensional periodical which covers different literary genres one can delve into different literary streams in it. It is the only periodical of the 1970s which is so dynamic, ingenious, and versatile in nature. From the topmost to the local (unheard, unseen and subaltern writers) writers contribute into it.

Going through the vast amount of literature that is produced in *Asmitadarsha*, I strongly feel that it should be exposed to the digital media so that it would reach every nook and corner of the world. Not only this but the literature produced in it needs to be translated into English so that it would be available for all. Enormous amount of writing has been produced through *Asmitadarsha* over the years in Marathi. Unless it gets

translated in English the literature, the debates and the discussion that has happened in it over fifty odd years will confine to Maharashtra only.

Asmitadarsha has a lot of scope to explore and to work on. Due to research limitation, I concentrated only on the prose writings in it. I took up only the intellectual prose writings and analysed it applying Ambedkarite democratic egalitarianism parameters. There are other literary genres such as poetry, drama, novel, short stories, criticism and other intellectual writing such as presidential speeches etc available in *Asmitadarsha* which desperately need attention and exposure.

The thesis would comprise of an introduction, four chapters, conclusion and an appendix. The first chapter focuses on the fundamental premises of Ambedkarism and locates it in the historical and the political context of the socio-cultural and literary movements in Maharashtra. In this case, it is argued that the entire philosophy of Ambedkar revolves round the egalitarian principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice, thus, this chapter analyses the writings and speeches of Ambedkar, so as to foreground his thought and theorize it as a paradigm.¹⁹

In this attempt, subjects such as Buddhism, ideas such as Democracy and texts such as the Indian Constitution which are intricately linked together and are very closely associated with Ambedkar are discussed and defined. The chapter engages with various Ambedkarite initiatives across India; not only commenting on various significant websites on Ambedkar, but also engaging with Dalit discourse as well as enunciating multiple points of views and perceptions on Ambedkar's thought, while also highlighting

¹⁹Yashwant Manohar spoke profusely on the concept of Ambedkarism in his thought-provoking text *Ambedkarwadi Marathi Sahitya*. According to him, "Each and every text written by Ambedkar is an agitation for social revolution in India." Ambedkar established a plethora of Ambedkarism through his writings and Speeches. Ambedkarism is a revolutionary philosophy. Ambedkarism believes in the democratic principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice. Morality has the highest place in Ambedkarism. See Manohar: 2012.

its significance and relevance now. Overall, the attempt is to broadly and comprehensively draw the picture of Ambedkar's thought covering a wide spectrum of literature available on him and by him.

In second chapter I analyse historically the Marathi literary Periodicals in Maharashtra. I attempt to study both the Marathi and the Dalit periodicals to conduct a comparative assessment by comparing and contrasting the Marathi and Dalit literary periodicals in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. This chapter will focus on the contribution, significance, aims and objectives of both the Marathi as well as the Dalit literary periodicals in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. The chapter exclusively and largely focus on *Asmitadarsha* Dalit literary Marathi periodical in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra; it deals precisely with the intellectual prose writings or *Vaicharik Likhan* and tries to locate it within the ambit of "Ambedkarite perspective." Since, Ambedkarite thought is the base and the crux of the thesis, an attempt has been made to critically analyse Ambedkar's journalistic prose writings in this chapter.

Focussing primarily on the Marathi Periodicals and *Asmitadarsha* in particular, I take a brief look at Ambedkar's journalistic contribution as a part and parcel of his socio-political emancipatory agenda. In the process, I attempt to explore Ambedkar's journalistic dimension in the chapter. The reason is to explore different dimensions attached to Ambedkar's multifaceted personality which has not been discussed openly for confining and defining Ambedkar to a particular realm. Since, the crux of the thesis is Ambedkarite thought and the discourse relating to it, I largely concentrate on it keeping the common thread of Ambedkarite thought running throughout the thesis.

Under the larger domain of literature, society and culture I attempt to study different articles in *Asmitadarsha* in the third chapter. The chapter will look at the literature that was produced in *Asmitadarsha* from the beginning, and the society and the

culture evolved during 1967-2000. It will highlight various socio-political, cultural, literary and historical issues in Maharashtra from an Ambedkarite perspective. The chapter has been divided into four sections *A*, *B*, *C* and *D* to concentrate and study individual articles in *Asmitadarsha*. Section *A* and *B* will focus on various Socio-Political and Cultural issues in *Asmitadarsha*. Section *C* and *D* will focus on the Literary and Historical issues. The best way to judge or justify articles in *Asmitadarsha* in my view (whether they have elements or traces of Ambedkarite thought or not) is to apply the parameters constituting Ambedkarite thought to it such as Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice because it forms the crux of Ambedkarite thought in a nutshell.

Ambedkarism is the crux of the thesis and therefore each segment in this chapter has been studied from an Ambedkarite perspective. Glancing through Maharashtra's dynamic and sensational history it is seen that every year the socio-political, cultural, literary and historical issues changed in Maharashtra; the reflection of it is seen in *Asmitadarsha*. *Asmitadarsha* focus on the progressive aspect of the socio-political, cultural, literary and historical developments. Right from the beginning till today various issues have been dealt upon by the writers in *Asmitadarsha*. *Asmitadarsha* covered all these socio-political equations and the ups and downs which have happened in Maharashtra from 1967-68 onwards.

I argue that these articles explicitly present Ambedkarite thought and ideology. It is a daunting task to categorize and conduct individual study of the issues in *Asmitadarsha* like the way I attempt to do because the issues merge with each other so often that it becomes difficult to compartmentalize them in a specific category. The categorization or classification of these articles has been done simply for the sake of an in-depth analysis and focus on the individual issues in *Asmitadarsha* and to maintain a compactness and rigour in the thesis. In fact, all the articles (on different and diverse

subjects, titles and genres) represent Ambedkarite thought in their own ways. The articles have been selected based on their potentiality and strength and their relevance to Ambedkarite thought in the contemporary times. In a way, the articles represent Ambedkarite thought and ideology. My attempt in the thesis is to trace Ambedkarite thought through them.

The chapter intends to study and focus on the significant and the most essential writings produced in *Asmitadarsha* over the years. It attempts to cover all the major and minor developments in terms of issues of social concerns. This chapter will pave the way for the research aspirants to look through the issues involved in it which forms a base for further analysis. It will familiarise the readers and the researchers with the prolific and prominent scholars, writers, activists and their writings in *Asmitadarsha*. The articles produced in *Asmitadarsha* are highly intellectual, thought provoking and scholarly and, therefore, they are considered to be an important source and documents for research and analysis. In this sense, *Asmitadarsha* happens to be a time tested and time proven periodical in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra.

The fourth chapter will predominantly focus on the discussion and deliberations over wide ranging contemporary issues in *Asmitadarsha* Symposium. Initiating discussion via symposium is a peculiar feature of *Asmitadarsha*. The discussion revolves round literature, society and culture in Maharashtra. The issues in *Asmitadarsha* symposium carry same importance as that of the special and the Diwali issues. Since channelizing and promoting thought provoking writing has been the feature of *Asmitadarsha*, it has given impetus to thinkers and philosophers to think through various issues and give their opinions. The philosophers and thinkers vary from different and diverse knowledge backgrounds which helps in the expansion of discussion in the symposium. Maharashtra is well equipped with the rich history, culture, literature and

tradition of its own. Going through the discussions and debates in the symposium, one gets a glimpse of the rich and the varied intellectual legacy that the state of Maharashtra has in particular. The symposium is inclusive in nature; it includes both the subaltern as well as the dissenting intellectual voices.

Asmitadarsha symposium revolves round Ambedkarite thought which is the crux of the thesis. This chapter looks at Ambedkarite egalitarian thought of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice and how it has percolated through the discussions and debates in *Asmitadarsha* symposium. At the same time this topic will also highlight the intellectual stand and legacy of Dalit literature, society and culture in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. The topic also highlights the fundamental issues related to Marathi literature. *Asmitadarsha* in fact has indirectly launched a literary movement in Maharashtra.

Chapter One

Ambedkarism as a Paradigm

This chapter focuses on the fundamental premises of Ambedkarism and locates it in the historical and the political context of the socio-cultural and literary movements in Maharashtra. In this case, it could be argued that the entire philosophy of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar revolves around the egalitarian principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice thus this chapter analyses the Writings and Speeches of Ambedkar, so as to foreground his thought and theorize it as a paradigm.¹

In this attempt, the subjects such as Buddhism, ideas such as Democracy and texts such as the Indian Constitution which are intricately linked together and are very closely associated with Ambedkar are discussed and defined. The chapter engages with various Ambedkarite initiatives across India; not only commenting on various significant websites on Ambedkar, but also engaging with Dalit studies as well as enunciating multiple points of views and perceptions on Ambedkar's thought, while also highlighting its significance and relevance now. Overall, the attempt is to broadly and comprehensively draw the picture of Ambedkar's thought covering a wide spectrum of literature available on him and by him.

Childhood, Early Experiences and Influences of Little Bhim

¹The term "Ambedkarism" is used to describe the organized struggles for justice against all odds and social discrimination that is being faced by all oppressed and excluded (by all means) communities in India. The term was proposed by D. Vijay Mankar exclusively in his writings and speeches. See Mankar 2015, p. 135. Mankar states that Ambedkarism is not just an ideology and philosophy, but it is also a policy of human life. Prakash Kharat states, "It is an intellectual thinking of India's history, culture, society, the tribals, untouchables, minorities and the Buddhists." See Kharat 1999, p. 91. However, the term itself was popularized by Ambedkarite followers posthumously so as to materialize his ambition to create an egalitarian society based on democratic principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice, which apparently is the premise of this thesis.

Bhimrao's inclination towards religion and spirituality in general, and Buddhism in particular, could be traced to his family background. Ramji Ambedkar, his father, not only strictly adhered to the observance of all kinds of Hindu religious rituals and rites; but also recited *Bhajans*² and narrations of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*³ in a captivating and graceful manner. It was mandatory for each of the family members to follow the head of the family. Ramji saw to it that Bhimrao and others immerse themselves in these saintly proverbs, idioms and thoughts of saint poets from Maharashtra such as Moropant, Mukteshwar, Namdeo and Tukaram. Maharashtra has a great tradition of devotional poets. The grooming and churning of little Bhimrao Ambedkar's mind was largely done in his childhood by the teaching of these great saint poets in Maharashtra.

Thus, Ramji played a pivotal role in moulding and shaping Bhimrao's life and career very early. Besides, the *Kabirpanthi*⁴ (one who believes in saint Kabir's philosophy) family influenced young Bhimrao while listening to Kabir's *Dohas* (poetic couplets) on equality, which left an indelible mark on his mind. There was a great impact of the Buddha, saint Kabir and Mahatma Phule's ideological thoughts on Ambedkar; in fact, his life was shaped and inspired by the teachings of Lord Buddha, Kabir and Mahatma Jotiba Phule.⁵ Ambedkar's own religious interests had leaned him towards Buddhism for many years. His early heroes were the Buddha, Kabir and Mahatma Phule, all religious reformers who advocated castelessness.⁶ Hence, it could be stated without

²It refers to any devotional song with religious theme or spiritual ideas, especially among Indian religions.

³Hindu religious texts (epics) in India.

⁴The term *Kabirpanthi* (followers of saint Kabir's philosophy) was used by Dhanraj Dahat to emphasize that Ambedkar was a Kabir follower. Dahat 1995, p. 9; Khairmode 1992, p. 47; Machwe 1968, p. 28.

⁵Nanak Chand Rattu was one of the close associates of Ambedkar. He was one of those who had the privilege to live during Ambedkar's era. Talking about Ambedkar in his moving text he says, "I consider myself the luckiest who have had the honour, privilege and distinction to be his close associate for over 17 years and his private secretary for six years, till his last breathe". Therefore, his account on Ambedkar's life is considered to be authentic, realistic and most reliable. See Rattu 2001, p. 9.

⁶Eleanor Zelliot's Ph.D dissertation and early writings focussed on the Ambedkarite movement and the Buddhist conversion, her later research on untouchable saints and the *bhakti* tradition has extended her

exaggeration that Ambedkar's life was devoted to the upliftment and betterment of the untouchables, which had an ethical dimension and moral implication to it which is largely not studied. Therefore, it becomes inevitable to recount the early life (religious and spiritual) experiences of Ambedkar in order to understand him thoroughly. Though born in an untouchable household with a military service background Ambedkar was fortunate enough to have such a conscious (education oriented and religious) father who took keen interest in providing a better future for the kids. Since education was compulsory for children of army personnel, women in the family were even literate, which was highly unusual at that time.⁷

So long as Ambedkar stayed within the protected walls of the military cantonment, he was the most protected boy unaware of the wretched face of untouchability and discrimination faced by his caste people. The moment he came out of his comfort zone he experienced the harsh realities of an untouchable life outside. The painful incidents of humiliation and insults resulted in sowing the seed of rebellion in the tender mind of little Bhim. He recounts his early life experiences later in his writings and speeches:

I knew that I was an untouchable and the untouchables were subjected to certain indignities and discriminations. For instance, I knew that in the school I could not sit in the midst of my class students according to my rank but that I was to sit in a

interest in the critical differences between the untouchables and the Hindu Orthodoxy. See Zelliott 1996, p. 72.

⁷Narendra Jadhav's text is the first ever intellectual biography on Ambedkar. Dhananjay Keer published first English biography on Ambedkar in 1954. There are two other notable biographies on Ambedkar in Marathi in 1960s by C.B. Khairmode and B.C. Kamble. Interestingly and importantly all the three biographers were closely associated with Ambedkar and had a great advantage of being able to meet and interact with him in person. On the other hand, these biographers did not have the benefit of accessing all writings and speeches of Ambedkar, which became available only in the subsequent period. Jadhav's intellectual biography incorporates all of Ambedkar's writings and most important speeches that he delivered from time to time. See Jadhav 2014, pp. 7 and 17.

corner by myself.⁸

These (painful) “lived experiences”⁹ as a starting point not only left an indelible impact on young Bhimrao’s mind but also prepared him for the gruesome challenges ahead in life. The sensitive mind of Bhimrao became tough with the tougher experiences, and rigorous struggles of life. Moreover, his humiliations, social disabilities and childhood experiences as an untouchable hardened his feelings towards caste. Gopal Guru brilliantly analysed Ambedkar’s dynamic moves under the rubric of “dialectics of rejection” according to him Ambedkar, along with his people sought to walk out from the given image of walking carrion and went on to become the walking storm and it was precisely against this backdrop emerged, as a leader for the oppressed. In the same article he further adds hence, it would not be an exaggeration to attribute this identity to Ambedkar, for he acquired storm-like qualities,¹⁰ both political and epistemological, to explode into the structures (caste, class, colonialism and patriarchy) of rejection.¹¹ Ambedkar, with his

⁸See Ambedkar 2007, p. 11.

⁹“Lived experience” is a catchy term popular primarily among phenomenologists. In the debate about experience and theory, the notion of lived experience also plays important role, very often we find it in Gopal Guru’s arguments. According to Sundar Sarukkai Lived experience is not just about living any experience in the sense that we participate in an experience. If lived experience has to play an ethical and epistemological role, if it has to be the adjudicator of some notion of authenticity, then lived experience should be used only for those experiences that are seen as *necessary*, experiences over which the subject has no choice of whether to experience or not. In short, lived experience should be seen as the experience of *being* a subject not an experience *by* a subject or about a subject. Gopal Guru argues that both Ambedkar and Gandhi draw fundamentally upon lived experience in order to build theoretical insights and one could argue that it is entirely due to their different lived experiences that their theoretical formulations differ. See Guru and Sarukkai 2012, p. 35 and 75.

¹⁰Ambedkar acquired multiple attributes like this to his dynamic and stunning personality. In Maharashtra the Dalit cultural valorization is being done to a large extent through Ambedkar’s songs and Shahiri wherein Ambedkar is referred to by Anand Shinde (the poet and singer) as “Dhagdhagata Jwalamukhi” (blazing volcano) etc.

¹¹According to Sharankumar Limbale ‘Rejection’ and ‘Revolt’ in Dalit literatures have been birthed from the womb of Dalits’ pain. They rebel against the inhuman system that was imposed on them. The anguish expressed in Dalit literature is in the nature of collective social voice. Similarly, the rejection and revolt are social and collective. The Dalits reject the unequal order, demanding equality, liberty and fraternity and justice. See Limbale 2004, p. 31. The Dalit writers presented the concept of ‘Pain’, ‘Rebellion’ and ‘Rejection’ continually through their literature. The pain is the pain of the mind of the dejected human being by ‘Caste’ dalit autobiographies in Marathi in particular such as *Akkarmashi* by S. Limbale, *Kolhatyacha Por* by Kishor Kale, and *Baluta* by Daya Pawar etc. The protest literature emerged in Dalit literature as a result of Pain Rebellion and Rejection. See Limbale 2007, p. 134.

intellectual power and moral ability to lead from the front, imposed dialogue on the recalcitrant tradition in India.¹²

Due to Ambedkar's constant intervention, inquisitive and critical enquiry of the bad deeds of the Hindu society the Hindus became much more alert and attentive. It was indeed an arduous task for the Hindus to confront Ambedkar. Accepting the gigantic challenge of reconstructing the Indian society Ambedkar moved forward to establish an egalitarian society. Discussing the tenets of social movements hinting at Ambedkar's vision of an ideal society Harish Wankhed comments that Ambedkar prioritised a society, based on the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, against the cherished Varnashrama of Gandhi.¹³

Throughout his life Ambedkar followed these values borrowed from the Buddha. The principles of equality, liberty and fraternity later became an integral part of his life rather it became a core of his philosophy. Gandhiji wrote three articles in his *Harijan* in which he remarked: "Dr.Ambedkar is a challenge to Hinduism." He further said:

Religion does not live by learning. It lives in the experience of saints and seers, in their lives and sayings. Caste has nothing to do with religion. Varna and Ashrams are institutions which have nothing to do with caste. The law of Varna defines not our right, but our duties.... There is nothing in the law of Varna to warrant a belief in untouchability.¹⁴

Debunking Gandhi's propositions and claims Ambedkar categorically states that none of the saints ever attacked the caste system in India rather they took pride maintaining it

¹²Guru 2009, p. 221. It is precisely due to Ambedkar's strong belief in the "moral and the ethical ideals or dimensions" that he could muster up enormous amount of courage and conviction to fight against the socio-political inequalities in society and vice-versa. Moreover, they act as a catalytic agent to accelerate his emancipatory moves in India.

¹³See Harish Wankhede, "The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9 February 2008.

¹⁴ See Kuber 2001, p. 49.

intact. They never bothered to annihilate the pernicious caste system or carried a campaign against the abolition of untouchability. All the time they were involved in making people believers negating the fact of maintaining amicable relation between them. According to Ambedkar, Varna and caste were evil ideas and it mattered very little whether one believed in Varna or in caste. Varna was infallible like the *Vedas*¹⁵ Ambedkar severely criticized the Hindu *Dharmashashtra* as throughout his life. He launched a crusade against them to set them right. He touched upon the real nerve of the Hindus critiquing the root cause of all kinds of evils in society. He was convinced and believed that unless the Hindu *Dharmashashtra* as are not critically examined and severely attacked the Hindus will not understand what they have done to the untouchables.

Much before Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule blatantly spoke against the Hindu *Dharmashashtras* (religious scriptures) in his thought provoking and revolutionary writings in the mid- nineteenth Century Bombay Presidency. In order to understand the emancipatory Dalit struggle during Phule's time, we must refer to history and analyse the socio-political developments during Jotirao Phule's time. Jotirao and Savitribai Phule began their mission of social emancipation of the *Shudratishudras*¹⁶ (the untouchables) amidst socio-political, cultural and religious tensions and turmoil. The Dalit communities underwent severe crisis in terms of poverty, untouchability, lack of education, superstition, violation of human rights, and so on, underwritten by

¹⁵One of the most ancient writings of the Hindus, in theory four in number, and supposed to have been uttered by Brahma, and preserved by oral tradition. See O' Hanlon 1985, p. 319.

¹⁶Jotirao Phule used the term for the lower castes Shudra (today's OBC's) and *Atishudras* (for today's Dalits) castes and communities in mid-nineteenth century (1855) Bombay Presidency. Broadly speaking Phule included all the marginalized castes and classes including women in this category. See Rani 2017, p. 74.

“*Varnashramdharma*.”¹⁷ Although the rule of the tyrannical Peshwa had ended with the British defeat of the Maratha Confederacy in 1818, the roots of caste prejudice implanted by the upper castes remained intact.¹⁸ Alexander Robertson discussed at length about the Mahar (untouchable) community in his influential text *Mahar Folk* describing the memory of the fierce battle between the British and the Peshwa in which the Peshwa’s were defeated he remarks,

The Mahars cherish the memory of the fight at Koregaon on the 1st January, 1818. The victory lay with the small British force. The heroism of the day is commemorated on the monument which stands on the bank of the sacred Bhima where the Poona –Ahmednagar road crosses the river.¹⁹

Interestingly, the incident of Bhima Koregaon is in the limelight and is being discussed amidst growing awareness and consciousness of Ambedkarite thought in the recent times. To commemorate the event and to depict the victory and valour of mere five hundred Mahar’s over a massive army of twenty-eight thousand Peshwa a movie titled Bhima Koregaon is going to be released on September 17, 2021 in India.

According to K. Jamanadas the battle of Bhima Koregaon is significant for many reasons. It was one of the most important events which helped tear down the oppressive Peshwa regime and subsequently the Peshwa had to abdicate thereafter. Citing another

¹⁷ One of the four hierarchically arranged categories into which all Hindus, with the exception of untouchables, are in theory divided according to their castes. See O’ Hanlon 1985, p. 319.

¹⁸ In her thought provoking and influential article Mukta Salve who was an untouchable (Mang/Matang) girl from Maharashtra, who was a student of Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule launched and lodged a strong protest against the Brahminical social order in mid-nineteenth century Bombay Presidency, 1855 by writing a scholarly essay on the “Pain and the Sorrows of the Mahars and Mangs” in Maharashtra. Salve’s essay is used as a point of reference to understand the educational discourses and hegemony that became instrumental in colonial modernity. The essay stands for a significant point in the Dalit movement as well as for modern education in India. See Rani 2017, p. 75.

¹⁹ Cited in Robertson 2005, pp. 88-89; Surwade 2010, p. 204. It is essential to mention that Babasaheb Amedkar used to visit Bhima Koregaon every year on the 1st January to commemorate the victory of the Mahar’s and to pay homage to the chivalry and the courage of the Mahar’s and to exhort the untouchables to show similar courage and determination to end Brahminism from the entire country. Today, Ambedkarites visit Bhima Koregaon in large number on January 1st every year.

reason he says, it was an attempt by the untouchables of Maharashtra to break the shackles of the age-old caste order.²⁰ The second reason seem to be valid because the Mahars were given the worst (inhuman, barbaric and exploitative) treatment by the Peshwas during (1713-1818). Taking cue from G.S. Ghurye's remarkable sociological text *Caste and Race in India* Anil Kathare remarks:

In the Maratha country a Mahar one of the untouchables might not spit on the roads lest a pure caste Hindu should be polluted by touching it with his foot, but had to carry an earthen pot, hung from the neck, in which to spit. Further he had to drag a thorny branch with him to wipe out his footprints and to lie at a distance prostrate on the ground if a Brahmin passed by, so that his foul shadow might not defile the holy Brahmin.²¹

Such was the brutal fate of the untouchable community called Mahar in Maharashtra which had no parallel in history in terms of the heinous, disgusting and mean treatment meted out to them by the so-called upper castes in Maharashtra. The Mahars lived in this wretched condition for thousands of years till the birth of Ambedkar, who brought a dramatic change in the lives of the Mahars taking initiative confronting the socio-political condition prevailing in society at that point in time.

Both Ghurye and Kathare provide a comprehensive vision of how caste system operated in the Caste ridden consevative Indian society and how the Mahar's in particular were discriminated because of their lower caste. Ambedkar being a Mahar by caste felt its pangs in the early stages of his life and therefore decided to confront the caste question tooth and nail. Ambedkar's efforts of Caste annihilation in India began in the West where he was grappling seriously with the Caste issue. Ambedkar presented a paper at an

²⁰See Jamanadas 2014, p. 196.

²¹Cited in Kathare 2011, p. 52; Ghurye 1969, p. 12.

Anthropology seminar of A.A. Goldenweizer organized by Columbia University, U.S.A on 9th May 1916 titled “Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development.”²² Aishwary Kumar commenting on Ambedkar’s “Castes in India” 1916 remarks, “it was the most brilliant essay ever written by an M.A. student.” Emphasising the concept of “rumour” and Ambedkar’s own way to deal with it Kumar explains according to Ambedkar it is the rumour which often take the place of truth in Indian society. The caste society is largely governed by rumours. Rumour gives rise to new castes. Crises are produced in society when hearsay takes the place of facts. Rumour creates order of oppression. According to Kumar Ambedkar had the courage to go beyond the rumours and was vocal enough to talk about the political emancipation of the untouchables. It is the courage which led society towards solidarity and the solidarity resist the government or the regime to stop from wrong doings. Traces of these remarks are found in Ambedkar’s brilliant essay Castes in India according to Kumar. Kumar wants to highlight the fact that it was because Ambedkar had the innate courage that he could raise his voice against the oppressive social system. Ambedkar’s personality traits helped him achieve success in his movements and activities in the social sphere. Ambedkar’s entire struggle in fact was against all kinds of social evils, misconceptions, misrepresentations, negativities and rumours attributed to the untouchables by the uppercasts in society. He was highly critical of the notions of purity and pollution in terms of caste and religion due to which the untouchables had to suffer endlessly. His constant engagement with painful experiences of life actually made him “The strongest man” a man who is prepared to face any eventuality in life with utmost courage, conviction and determination.

²²BAWS Vol.1.1979, pp. 3 and 22.

Ambedkar spent considerable amount of time and energy advocating core issue of caste; in fact, it became a significant and an integral part of his life (project) partly because of its own victimhood and partly due to his community suffering. He began dealing with the issue of caste right from his formative years during his study abroad. Ambedkar's life experiences consolidated and concretized his belief in caste system which later prompted him to write about it. Ambedkar time and again realized that the best way to emancipate the untouchables is to write about caste. Ambedkar saw the root of all social and political evils in caste. Hence, he firmly believed the fact that one cannot build anything on the foundation of caste; even if one builds anything it will crack and will never be a whole.²³ Engaging with caste Ambedkar touched the nerve of Hinduism. Therefore, the entire Hindu community considered him to be a great challenge.

We often see Ambedkar recollecting Kabir's Doha's and sung it even in the last phase of his life. *Chalo Kabir Tera Bhavsagar Dera*.²⁴ In fact, Ambedkar's subconscious mind might have got the sense that he is entering into the last phase of his life. Kabir belongs to the "*Shramana*"²⁵ (ascetic) culture and tradition. Kabir was a great religious teacher of the fifteenth century. He tried to forge cordial relationship between Hinduism and Islam criticizing and attacking the meaningless rituals and customs of both as one and identical. His practical teachings emphasize the strict observance of moral conduct and refute all kinds of superstitious beliefs. Guru Nanak and other great Sikh gurus also had a very high respect for him.²⁶ Kabir valiantly fought and bitterly criticized the social evils, customs and traditions of his time writing thought provoking couplets.

The Brahmins deliberately suppressed the subaltern history and the thought of

²³BAWS Vol.1, p. 66.

²⁴See Keer 2006, p. 569.

²⁵ See Dahat 1995, pp. 8-9; Sahastrabuddhe 2009, p. 145.

²⁶See Machwe 2009, p. 5.

Kabir therefore, he remained aloof from the world of the untouchables. Later, in the twentieth century Ambedkar reviewed Buddha and Kabir accepting them to be his gurus and bring them to light to uncover and unfold the real face of history in a new perspective. The whole thrust of the Subaltern historiography is on the reconstruction of history of the “other”, i.e., the history of people’s politics and movements and their attempt to make their own (Subaltern) history.²⁷

The entire trajectory of social reformers, egalitarian thinkers and philosophers in India has been phenomenal from Buddha to Phule and then to Ambedkar. Jotirao died in 1890 and Ambedkar was born the next year in 1891.²⁸ This may just be a coincidence but it is also true that Ambedkar carried forward the social emancipatory work began by Phule in mid-nineteenth century later in his life to whom Ambedkar considered his third Guru along with Buddha and Kabir. Mahatma Gandhi also glorified Phule calling him the “real Mahatma.”²⁹ A quick glance at the Indian history entail us the fact that it is replete with a plethora of social crusaders, who played crucial role mobilizing and galvanizing society through their radical thoughts and transformative deeds. The charismatic personalities such as the Buddha, Kabir and Phule influenced Ambedkar who never knew would join them contributing into the social emancipatory project, later in the twentieth century.

A society or a community progresses and develops with the birth of a charismatic

²⁷The word “Subaltern” as given in the Oxford Dictionary stands for the general attribute of subordination, which is expressed in terms of a caste, class, age, gender, office or any other way. It includes the characteristics of defiance and submission. Thus, in literal sense, it conveys ‘view from below’, i.e., a view or understanding from the bottom of society or the flow of knowledge from below. The Subaltern perspective seeks to restore a balance by highlighting the role of politics of the ‘masses’ as against the elite politics. The whole thrust of Subaltern historiography is on reconstructing the other history of people’s politics and movement and their attempt to make their own history. The prominent proponents of this approach are Mahatma Phule, Ambedkar, David Hardiman, Kapil Kumar and Ranajit Guha etc. See Nagla 2008, pp. 303-04.

²⁸See Narke 2006, p. 252.

²⁹See Surwade 2010, p. 78.

leader because he has the capacity and power to uplift the society from tribulations and chaotic situation giving a proper guidance and direction to it. Ambedkar in fact, became an “Organic intellectual”³⁰ in the real sense for the betterment of society. Unfortunately, his “charisma” has been intentionally undermined, denied and declined by the so-called upper caste intelligentsia in India.

The gigantic task and legacy of annihilation of caste (to reform society) began by the Buddha two thousand five hundred years ago (launching crusade against it) later continued by saint Kabir and then carried forward by Mahatma Jotiba Phule. In his battle against discriminatory Brahmanism, Phule was inspired by the egalitarian philosophy of the Buddha and Kabir. He was an admirer of the emergent liberal democracies of the West Phule hailed Buddha as the saviour of the masses and accused the Brahmins of “nursing a grudge against the Buddha” for their defeat at his hands. Phule and his colleague such as Gyanoba Krishnaji Sasane also felt a deep bond with Kabir.³¹

Thus, all unfinished tasks, incomplete projects and other pending issues and assignments of socio-political reforms were, carried forward, implemented thoroughly and completed earnestly by Ambedkar later in the twentieth century.

The plethora and the scope of Ambedkar’s work his writings and speeches and other unpublished writings are gigantic indeed. What is remarkable about these writings is he could produce these incredible texts while being fully engaged in politics and in

³⁰Gramsci Antonio (1891-1937) was an Italian Marxist whose aim was to reconstruct Marxism as a political philosophy, a philosophy of praxis, and thus to move away from the Historical Materialist conception of Marxism as a scientific theory of economy and society. The central argument of Gramsci’s essay on the formation of the intellectuals is simple. The notion of “the intellectuals” as a distinct social category independent of class is a myth. All men are potentially intellectuals in the sense of having an intellect and using it, but not all are intellectuals by social function. Gramsci talks about another category of intellectuals called the “Organic Intellectuals” the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong. See Gramsci 1973, p. 3.

³¹Mani 2008, p. 254.

drafting the Constitution of India! Hence, it is a herculean task to confine Ambedkarite thought within a fixed frame or boundary because it pervades and percolates in every walk of life. It has “universal appeal” and it vows for the reconstruction of society on egalitarian grounds. Ambedkar strove hard to materialize his aspirations and dreams of equalizing society. His thought and philosophy is dynamic and encouraging; it speaks volumes.

Gopal Guru’s talk on “the idea of ‘Ideal’ in Ambedkar” in Columbia University America,³² He discuss at length on Ambedkar’s philosophy trying to locate it into a larger framework of universal humanism. Guru criticizes both the upper caste Brahmins as well the lower caste Dalits for confining/owning universal figure such as Ambedkar and his philosophy. Guru’s contention is that despite making such an enormous contribution to the Indian subcontinent Ambedkar and his ideology has been reduced merely to the *Maharwada*’s (lower caste localities or dwelling places) only.

This has been the policy of the state. Similarly, the post-Ambedkarite Dalits without understanding the larger implications and connotations of the multiple meanings and the dimensions attached to the political terms such as Liberty, Equality and Fraternity own him because he belongs to the “Mahar” (bold and courageous dominant) community in Maharashtra. Problem lies in the psyche of the people and the deep-rooted “caste obsession” or consciousness that people possess in the Indian context so much so that they cannot come out of it.

Therefore, despite Ambedkar’s tremendous erudition, talent and scholarship his humanistic ideas have been deliberately rejected for which he argued throughout his life. As Guru rightly pointed out in his thought-provoking article “Liberal Democracy in India

³²See Gopal Guru’s addresses Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Conference on “Caste and Contemporary India” Day -2 closing plenary session Columbia University. The South Asian Institute October 16-17, 2009.

and the Dalit Critique” quoting Tony Morrison he says, “As, American Blacks do not grow in the eyes of the White Americans similarly the Dalits do not grow in the eyes of the upper castes in India.”³³

Ambedkar in a Nutshell

The period from (1920-1956) is considered to be the most crucial, sensational and happening period in the life of Ambedkar. He proved his credentials and achieved what he desired for all through his life. What basically he wanted was the establishment of an egalitarian society based, on the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, and social justice in order to put this into practice he relentlessly worked hard with sheer conviction and determination. What makes Ambedkar different and unique from the rest of the social reformers and thinkers is the fact that the socio-political struggles and the movements he led became successful in his own lifetime and not posthumously; Ambedkar became a real warrior who left no stone unturned battling out the fiercest of battles, emerging victorious all the time. Thus, Ambedkar left an indelible mark in the world history because of his great intellect courage, and conviction.

Before analysing Ambedkar’s social thought, one has to see the impact of major philosophers and philosophies on him. Right from the childhood, Ambedkar had a great fascination and a profound impact of humanitarian thoughts of equality, liberty, fraternity, and social Justice on him. He profusely contemplated upon it later in his life. Commenting in the Constituent Assembly of India about the Buddhist institutions he said, Buddha was the torchbearer of democracy and an ardent exponent of liberty, equality and

³³Gopal Guru, “Liberal Democracy in India and the Dalit Critique” *Social research* vol.78: No.1 *Spring* 2011, p. 99.

Fraternity.³⁴ According to Ambedkar equality has both social and political implications the absence of which will not only bereave the Dalit communities (from exercising their social and political rights) but also pull them down. Therefore, he considered it to be the starting point of any democratic process. Ambedkar's political and social ideas are based on these democratic principles. He reposed his faith on democratic means to resolve the problem of the untouchables. His speech in the "Constituent Assembly Debates" makes this very clear:

We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life.³⁵

The goal of Indian democracy was not only political equality but also of social equality. Ambedkar viewed that, "unless social and economic democracy will not be achieved political democracy will be in peril." In short, the politics of equality lies in the social, economic and political recognition of individuals. To substantiate his argument, he endorses recognition of the individual as an important citizen as well as an important human being in order to construct an egalitarian society. Ambedkar sees equality, liberty and fraternity the "union of trinity" essentially required and necessary for the democratic society. In other words, these human values cannot be separated in order to achieve democracy. For Ambedkar, democracy is next to fraternity.³⁶ Ambedkar had derived the principle of Fraternity from Buddha's philosophy he asserts:

Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words:
Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Let no one however say that I have borrowed it

³⁴See, Ilaiah, 2004, p. 119.

³⁵See BAWs Vol.13 *Constituent Assembly Debates* 1994, p. 1216.

³⁶BAWS 1994, p. 1216.

from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha.³⁷

Elaborating further, Ambedkar adds in his philosophy, liberty and equality had a place; but unlimited liberty destroys equality, and absolute equality leaves no room for liberty. In his philosophy, law had a place as a safeguard against the breaches of liberty and equality; he did not believe that law can be a guarantee for breaches of liberty or equality. Ambedkar gives highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality. According to him fraternity is next to brotherhood or humanity, which was again another name for religion. Ambedkar provides a brilliant and a comprehensive vision of his ideas of an egalitarian society through his philosophy.

In this way, Ambedkar gives a clear idea and a vision towards his concept of egalitarianism, which is nothing but a democratization of society. This quote also reveals in a nutshell the freedom and the limitations his egalitarian thought can exercise in society. Ambedkar has put it so beautifully that one could see his profound thinking on the concept of equality, liberty and fraternity perfectly synchronised and are accountable to each other for their actions and consequence.

Ambedkar's Views on Buddhism

Though Ambedkar had his training in the West and was well aware of the philosophies thereof, he sought Buddhist thought by comparison and contrast with other major philosophies of the world. Ambedkar draws, heavily from the Buddhist philosophy and literature in his writings and speeches. His serious implementation, engagement and

³⁷Keer 1971, p. 459.

engrossment with the Buddha revered and earned him as the *Bodhisatva*³⁸ by the people in Maharashtra and by Buddhists across the globe. Ambedkar was not a born Buddhist but his mind was inclined towards the Buddha's *Dhamma* from his very childhood.

Ambedkar was a deeply religious man³⁹ who wanted to create an ideal Buddhist society based on Buddhist principles, ethics, morals, norms and values.⁴⁰ He wanted to bring a radical change in Indian society inculcating, cultivating percolating, assimilating and advocating moral behaviour in them. Ambedkar borrowed extensively from the Buddhist literary canon and quoted profusely and interpreted every aspect of Buddhist thought thoroughly in his life. In fact, Buddhism became an integral part of his life. This is evident from his Writings and Speeches Volumes published by the state of Maharashtra. For instance, Babasaheb Ambedkar's "Writings and Speeches" Volume 20 (in Marathi) is dedicated to his Journalistic Writings from 1929-1956 in which he embarked upon the need and necessity of law and ethics in order to maintain and regulate any social system intact according to him:

In order to regulate any social system it has to take support of either law or ethics. Lack of either of these two create imbalance in society eventually leading it towards chaos and confusion. In any society, ethics is a normative resource is preferable to law since the former creates a much larger sphere of social harmony in Society.⁴¹

To put it in simple words Ambedkar equivocally suggests that it is the ethical moral

³⁸I use the term *Bodhisatva* to refer to Ambedkar who aspires to be the Buddha. *Bodhisatva* is a person who aspires to be the Buddha and to attain it through two significant virtues such as *Mahamaitri* (universal friendship) and *Mahakaruna* (universal compassion). The *Mahamaitri* gives him the strength required for the emancipation of all beings by self-sacrificing whereas the *Mahakaruna* allow him to be always active, efficient and effortful towards all beings, freeing them from all sorts of sorrows and pains. See Sahastrabuddhe 2009, p. 162.

³⁹Namishray 2003, p. 78.

⁴⁰BAWS, Vol.20.2005, p. 385.

⁴¹BAWS, Vol.20. 2005, p. 382.

domain rather than the legal domain that provides a stable condition for the effective regulation and proper functioning of societal affairs. Adding further Ambedkar says, “It is not enough to have religion enmeshed with morality; it has to pass the test of liberty, equality and fraternity without which any religious exercise is futile.”⁴² Ambedkar commented on Hindu society after a thorough and critical study of Hinduism. He believed that the most important point in Buddha’s philosophy was the individual and the morality. Therefore, he emphasized on one’s moral behaviour and ethical conduct in society. In fact, Ambedkar maintained *Sheel* (one’s own moral character and conduct) intact very seriously in his life along with *Pradhnya* (wisdom) and *Karuna* (compassion). In this sense, one can see Ambedkar following Buddha’s principles (knowingly/unknowingly).

Ambedkar devoted the later part of his life especially after 1950 for the propagation and spread of Buddhism. He began expressing his views on “Why only Buddhism?” He insisted that if the untouchables want to live peacefully, contentedly and amicably they have no choice but to convert into Buddhism.⁴³ Addressing a mammoth student community in Milind College, Aurangabad on 12 December 1955 he said, “The students in Milind College should lead their life with a perfect assimilation and adoption of the principles of *Vidya*, *Pradhnya*, *Karuna*, *Sheel* and *Maitri*. Following these precepts, they should build their character even if they have to walk alone along this line of thinking they should do so with utmost courage and conviction.”⁴⁴

For Ambedkar, “morality is *Dhamma* and *Dhamma* is morality.” In other words, morality is the essence of *Dhamma* he believed; without which there is no or there cannot be *Dhamma*. He further adds morality in *Dhamma* arises from the direct necessity for man to

⁴²BAWS, Vol.20. 2005, p. 382.

⁴³See Kharat 2006, p. 173.

⁴⁴Ambedkar 2011, p. 115.

love man.⁴⁵ He remarks that after a prolonged and profound study of Hinduism it is observed that “morality” is not the basis of Hinduism on the contrary it is the first and the foremost principle in Buddhism.⁴⁶

By conferring *Dhamma* to the Dalits Ambedkar has given a new lease of life for them. Buddha’s *Dhamma* has the strength and the capacity to galvanize the world. Ambedkar’s central claim is that at the fundamental level all people should be guided by principle of equality, liberty and fraternity as found in liberal political theory. Ambedkar always found strength in common fundamental principle of equality for all human beings. Glancing through the twenty-two vows taken at the Buddhist conversion ceremony held in Nagpur on 14th October, 1956 which Ambedkar had penned he clarifies his stand and objectives convincingly stating what he shall and shall not do.

The initial vows from first six, the eighth and the nineteenth aimed directly at Hinduism. The rest of them talk about the acceptance of Buddhist way of life.

1. I shall not recognise Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as Gods, nor shall I worship them.
2. I shall not recognise Ram and Krishna as Gods, nor shall I worship them.
3. I shall not recognise Gauri and Ganapati as Gods, nor shall I worship them.
4. I do not believe in the theory of incarnation of God.
5. I do not consider Buddha as the incarnation of Vishnu.
6. I shall not perform Shraddha (A Hindu Rite that one carries out for the safety of the deceased) nor shall I give offerings to God.
8. I shall not perform any religious rites through the agency of a Brahmin.
19. I thereby reject my old religion, Hinduism, which is detrimental to the prosperity

⁴⁵ Jadhav 2014, p. 589.

⁴⁶ BAWS Vol. 20 2005, p. 375.

of humankind and which discriminates between man and man and which treats me as inferior.⁴⁷

From his historic pronouncement of the twenty-two pledges at Nagpur Buddhist conversion ceremony (*Deekshabhumi*) Ambedkar made it very clear why he wanted to convert from Hinduism to Buddhism. Ambedkar gives logical and convincing reasons for his conversion. In order to reach Buddhism Ambedkar had to cross or confront the most difficult terrain of Hinduism as well as other ideologies and thought processes existing in the contemporary Indian society.

Before Muslim invasion to India, the Buddhists were the first and the biggest threat to Brahmins. The Buddhists almost become a challenge for them to tackle with. Therefore, the Brahmins decided to uproot Buddhism. In the process, the Brahmins left no stone unturned wiping Buddhism out from India. It was so meticulously engineered and cleverly done by the Brahmins that hardly anybody could believe that the Buddhism ever existed on the Indian sub-continent. It was precisely due to Ambedkar's efforts to dig deep into the original history of India, he discovered that Buddhism existed in India much before any other foreign religion and Buddhists had a glorious history in the past. In fact, Buddhism encompassed a huge area in the Asian subcontinent. It was precisely due to this reason that Ambedkar came up with the notion that he wanted to make India a "Buddhist" nation.

Ambedkar, the greatest Indian of modern times, gave Buddhism to India when it had disappeared about thousand years ago. Millions accepted this "new" religion. Ambedkar had said he would make India Buddhist again *Mi Bharat Bauddhamay*

⁴⁷Jaffrelot 2008, p. 135.

Karen.⁴⁸This is a famous clarion call Ambedkar gave to the people of India. Prior to his Buddhist conversion Ambedkar tried his best to reform Hinduism through the introduction of his much-cherished Hindu Code Bill but the bill met with a stiff opposition and strong resistance from the Hindu orthodox people. Ambedkar realized that it was difficult to change the Caste-ridden conservative mind of the Hindus therefore, eventually, he resolved to renounce Hinduism. Ambedkar fulfilled his Yeola pledge of 1935 by embracing Buddhism in 1956 at Nagpur along with his five lakh faithful followers. Immediately, after the conversion Ambedkar described the “enormous satisfaction” and “pleasure unimaginable” of the conversion he remarked that he was overjoyed, he was exalted. He felt that he had been liberated from the hell.⁴⁹Ambedkar heaved a great sigh of relief after his conversion. These words must have come from the bottom of his heart given the number of efforts and struggles he has done for reforming Hinduism and for giving unique “Buddhist identity” for the untouchables in India.

The early efforts of Ambedkar to reform the condition of the untouchable could be seen. It was indeed herculean task to motivate and mobilize the uncivilized, uncouth and illiterate people of his own community. Ambedkar took it as a challenge and began efforts relentlessly galvanizing them making the dumb, unheard, unspoken untouchables into thinking, logical and rational beings.

Ambedkar took two decade and a year for his historic religious conversion. He was busy seriously grappling with all other religious faiths in India. He firmly believed in having religion. We can say this given the kind of religious attachment and intimacy he had developed in his childhood about religion and spirituality. From this one thing is clear that Ambedkar wanted a “religion” but which one too choose for which he contemplated

⁴⁸K. Jamanadas 2014, p. 251.

⁴⁹BAWS Vol.17 part one 2003, p. XX; Rao 2011, p. 119.

for such a long time after his declaration at the 1935 Yeola conference.

Finally, Babasaheb wanted a rebellious religion favourable to social morality. Babasaheb had an in-depth study of all religious communities in India for more than two decades or so. From his indications everybody felt he would convert finally into Sikhism. But due to the various kinds of religious compulsions and the violent element in it Babasaheb stopped there. He wanted a religion which fulfils the aspirations of common man. Ambedkar was looking for such religion which gives the untouchables all kind of liberty, which guaranteed a wholesome development and progress of the marginalized. Thus, Ambedkar had a larger purpose in his mind behind conversion. He wanted to give a new and novel identity, new inspiration, a sense of self respect to the untouchables. He had a rational and humanitarian perspective towards religion. He envisages a logical and an egalitarian society in his perception.

Development of human being should be the real aim of religion Ambedkar believed. Gradually, he developed the notion that the untouchables can never progress in Hinduism. He further asks, is there equality in Hinduism and further explains that the untouchable themselves are solely responsible to have such pathetic, vulnerable and miserable condition because they remained in Hindu fold since their birth and never tried to revolt against it. Ambedkar at times has angry tone in his dialogue with the untouchables. He asserts what is the use of the religion in which there is no value to human beings. Launching severe critique on Hinduism he remarks, you do not have respect in Hinduism. Not only the Hindus but the Muslims and the Christians as well consider you lowly and mean. Ambedkar further comments,

We are considered mean in Hinduism, not only this due to the inhuman treatment of the Hindus we are treated inferior all over India. In order to wipe this stigma or

blot upon us the only remedy is to abandon Hinduism and embrace Conversion.⁵⁰

Thus, Ambedkar provide the final solution to the untouchable predicament in the form of conversion. As he internalised the fact that conversion is the only way out and an ultimate remedy for the untouchables.

A thorough analysis of Buddhism concretizes Ambedkar's belief and claim in it. For instance, Buddha's non-claim of attributing any place for himself in *Dhamma* and his views on the place of morality in *Dhamma* where the Buddha says, "Morality is *Dhamma* and *Dhamma* is morality"⁵¹ particularly fascinated Ambedkar. Ambedkar believed that the most important point in Buddha's teaching was an individual and the morality. According to him the Buddha's way is a long way but sure one. It was the "safest and the soundest one." Therefore, he argued and persuaded the untouchables to follow the Buddha's way and shun the Marxist ideology.

According to Ambedkar it is unnecessary for the Buddhists to go to Karl Marx to get the foundation. Buddha has already laid the foundation for them to walk on. Replying to the Communists he remarks:

We welcome the Russian revolution because it aims to produce equality. But it cannot be too much emphasised that in producing equality, society cannot afford to sacrifice fraternity or liberty. In his view equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty. It seems that the three can co-exist only if one follows the way of the Buddha. Communism can give one but not all.⁵²

In another talk on the BBC, London on 12 May 1956, reiterating his same argument emphasizing his views on Buddhism he replies to journalists, "Why he chose Buddhism"?

I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination which no other

⁵⁰Surwade 2010, pp. 158-160.

⁵¹Ambedkar 2011, P. 247. (Translation mine)

⁵²BAWS Vol.3.2008, p. 462.

religion does. Buddhism teaches Pradhnya (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism) Karuna (love) and Samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good happy life. These three principles of Buddhism make appeal to me. These three principles should also make an appeal to the world. Neither God nor soul can save society.⁵³

Ambedkar preferred Buddhism, but moved away from its traditional rituals and chose very pragmatic religion; Buddhism that was textually explicable in the Buddha and his *Dhamma* Ambedkar reiterates this in the introduction of the text:

In my opinion, Buddha's *Dhamma* is supreme. No other religion could be compared with it. If one wants a scientific, modern religion he will not have choice but to choose Buddhism. I have formed this opinion after a deep and thorough study of religions for thirty-five years.⁵⁴

According to Ambedkar Buddha's method was different. His method was to change the mind of man, to alter his disposition, so that whatever man does, he does it voluntarily without the use of any force or compulsion. His means to alter the disposition of men was his *Dhamma* and the constant preaching of the *Dhamma*.⁵⁵ Buddhism as a religion had "an enormous influence" on him, so much so, one can argue that he was driven by the spirit of emancipating the society on the basis of Buddha's democratic principles.

In fact, the visible impact of Ambedkar's Buddhism could be seen in Maharashtra, as not only his own community, the then Mahars (ex-untouchables) converted, but conversion to Buddhism was a purpose left to the untouchables so as to humanize, mobilise, enlighten, and prepare them for battles ahead. Several factors, in fact, contributed equally in making the persona of Ambedkar. He got partially enlightened in

⁵³BAWS Vol.17 Part Three 2003, p. 515.

⁵⁴Ambedkar 2011, p. 13. (Translation mine)

⁵⁵BAWS Vol. 3. 2008, p. 461.

India because of the Buddhist philosophy and other revolutionary and transformative ideas and partially because of his educational tour abroad and the influence of the western liberal thought. During his study abroad the western professors and scholars like John Dewey, Edwin Saligman etc exerted tremendous influence on him. In terms of widening his perspective/outlook of life he could practically witness the implementation of the Buddhist democratic thought followed there unequivocally.

Taking inspiration from him, Ambedkar began his socio-political movements for the upliftment of the untouchables back in India. Ambedkar worked at the grass root level like an organic intellectual to set the things in place in India. Influenced by the liberal atmosphere and ideas in the west he launched a crusade against the orthodox socio-political traditions.

Ambedkar's writings mark his affiliation with Dewey through extensive quotations from Dewey's work. Ambedkar not only borrowed ideas and concepts from Dewey, his methodological approach and ways of argumentation also shows Dewey's influence. Both the thinkers believe that change is fundamental to life and that the thought of any age is often circumscribed by the conditions of life operant at the time. Both therefore are suspicious of tradition, worship and eternal truths. Thus, they challenged the dominant teleological ideas and tried to make an egalitarian society. Ambedkar, no doubt had deep impact of the liberal western thought on him with this baggage he entered India which was quite contradictory to the western societies. Ambedkar's life was nothing but a series of challenges at home (India) and the world.

Gruesome living and hard-working conditions from a young age made Ambedkar the tough man unlike many other contemporary figures in India. Despite the strenuous circumstances and the kind of upbringing and atmosphere that Ambedkar received from home for his intellectual capacities to grow added feather in his cap. The greatness of

Ambedkar lies in the fact that he took his wretched life as a challenge, faced it courageously, and found a better way out not only to himself but for a better tomorrow for everybody by writing the much-coveted text of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, one way to understand Ambedkarism is to analyse Ambedkar's views on the Indian Constitution, Democracy and Nationalism because Ambedkar wrote and spoke extensively on these crucial issues throughout his life. Ambedkar could nurture, cultivate, propagate, assimilate and cope with the western ideas of liberal humanism. The western liberal ideals ignited his mind and prepared him to pen down his thoughts on the Indian constitution, democracy and Nationalism. The highly amicable and academic background in the West prepared Ambedkar for his future course of life and action in India.

Ambedkar was fortunate enough to have experienced the kind of atmosphere he desired for during his study abroad. The gradual churning of his mind already happened in his childhood days in India because of his family background at home. It further nourished and nurtured abroad. He diligently took up the task of drafting the constitution of India thinking it to be a golden opportunity for him to do something for the betterment of the country. Writing the Constitution for the country re-kindled Ambedkar's hope. It rejuvenated his spirit of reconstructing the Indian society on egalitarian grounds.

Ambedkar and the Indian Constitution

Ambedkar wanted to reconstruct the age old traditional, conservative Indian society. Therefore, he took keen interest in the making of the Indian constitution despite his failing health condition. This is evident from the parliamentary speech given by T.T. Krishnamachari (Madras) appreciating the painstaking efforts that Ambedkar took to pen down the constitution. The president of India Rajendra Prasad also held Ambedkar in high esteem for single-handedly carrying forward the great task of writing the constitution

of India. Advocate Jaideo Gaikwad's text *Samvidhan– sabhet Dr. Ambedkar* throws light on Ambedkar's contribution to the Indian constitution.

Ambedkar worked relentlessly, enthusiastically and efficiently to write the Indian Constitution. Due to several reasons such as absenteeism, death, illness and their inability to come the selected members of the drafting committee could not attend the meetings. As a result, Ambedkar had to bore the brunt of drafting as well as writing the constitution of India. He took it up as a challenge and a great responsibility, readily accepted it and completed it within a span of almost two years, eleven months, and seventeen days.⁵⁶

The Constitution, of course, is mostly a reflection of the thinking of the Congress leaders and Constitutional experts more than Ambedkar's personal philosophy. His contribution to it, however, was far more than the provisions for Scheduled Castes, it included a stress on centralized government, which he felt not only a necessity for Indian democracy but a guarantee of all minority rights, an insistence on a separate and unitary judiciary, and a pledge to use the individual rather than the village or a group as the unit of government. His great skill guiding the draft Constitution through the Constituent Assembly can be seen in the verbatim reports of the Constituent Assembly *Debates*.

Ambedkar's work and activities from 1919 to 1956 account for his enormous effort for the drafting of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar's attempt was to shape India's destiny on egalitarian grounds. It was in 1919 that Ambedkar for the first time submitted a statement to the Southborough Committee on the demands of the Untouchables in the political sphere in the Legislative Council. His intellectual and political efforts for reservation policy also, began in 1919, were instrumental in

⁵⁶See Gaikwad 2008, p. 73.

developing a policy in 1932 in the form of Poona Pact.⁵⁷ Ambedkar portray a brilliant picture of an ideal society. According to him:

My ideal would be a society based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity? Why not?

An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. In other words there must be social endosmosis. This is fraternity, which is only another name for democracy.⁵⁸

Apart from his academic writings, Ambedkar developed a counter - discourse in the form of memorandums to the southborough committee regularly from 1919 to 1956. Later, he formed three political parties namely the Independent Labour Party (ILP) 1935, the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) 1946-48, and the Republican party of India (RPI) 1956, which was formed posthumously Ambedkar began voicing concern over multiple Dalit issues. His magnum-opus the *States and Minorities* (1947) discusses at length his journey from the academic to socio- political life etc.

In fact, the *States and Minorities* was nothing but a memorandum that he submitted to the constituent assembly Ambedkar wanted to make it a part of the constitution of India. It includes solutions and remedies against the economic exploitation not exclusively for the Scheduled Castes, but for all other sections of society as well. Interestingly, *The States and Minorities* is in the form of a constitution precisely, it was a

⁵⁷Thorat and Kumar 2009 argue through Ambedkar's original writings and, statements, and memorandums. They reviewed his contribution to the development of inclusive policies during the colonial administration and its culmination into the policy of reservation in the Constituent Assembly. In five sections it explores: problems of exclusionary nature of Indian society; constitutional reforms; political and electoral representation; fair share in employment and education; safeguards against social discrimination and economic exploitation; and post-constitution reforms and policies.

⁵⁸BAWS Vol.1.1979, p. 57.

“draft of the Indian Constitution.”⁵⁹ So, one could witness the early efforts of Ambedkar to draft the Indian Constitution right from the beginning, the British began reforming the Indian society in terms of providing equal opportunity for the depressed classes in which Ambedkar was at the forefront contributing to it playing a pivotal role.

A thorough analysis of these timely interventions reveals the origin of reservation policy in India. These documents in their intellectual exercise are fundamental to the understanding of the malady of Hindu society and the remedies proposed by Ambedkar against the denial of equal opportunity and incessant discrimination to untouchables and such other groups. It is inevitable to note the early efforts of social reforms that were done by Shahu Maharaj and his remarkable contribution that he had given for the upliftment of the society in terms of reservation. Therefore, he is considered as the father of social justice in India.

Shahu Maharaj of the princely state of Kolhapur, introduced reservation in favour of non- Brahmin and backward classes, much of which came into force in 1902. He provided free education to everyone and opened several hostels to make it easier for them to receive it. He also tried to ensure that people thus educated were suitably employed, and he appealed both for a class free India and the abolition of untouchability. His 1902 measure created 50 percent reservation for backward communities.⁶⁰

The purpose behind giving reservation to the backward classes was to empower the weaker sections of society. With this intention the principle or policy of reservation has been introduced in the constitution. The root of it lies in the Poona Pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar.

⁵⁹See Sukhdeo Thorat’s highly informative and brilliant speech on Dr. B.R.Ambedkar’s seminal text *States and Minorities* (1947) at Ambedkar Study Centre, National Law School of India University, Karnataka published on the net on 6 October, 2015.

⁶⁰ Salunkhe and Mali 1994, p. 79.

Ambedkar strongly defended the case of the Scheduled Castes and advocated for special pronouncements for them in the Constitution. According to him the Scheduled Castes are more than a minority and that any protection given to the citizens and to the minorities will not be adequate for the Scheduled Castes. In other words it means that their social, economic and educational condition is worse than that of the citizens and the other minorities that in addition to protection they would get as citizens and as minorities the Scheduled Castes would require special safeguards against the tyranny and discrimination of the majority.⁶¹

Ambedkar saw the root of an “ideal society” in Buddhism. He was attracted by the rationality in it.⁶² Right from the formation of the *Bhikkhu Sangha* and the formation of the *Ganarajya* system (Buddhist Council), and day-to-day proceedings etc.⁶³ Ambedkar had an in-depth study and knowledge of the Buddhist *Sangha* (organization), its working and therefore, he claimed that there was an existence of a full-fledged, systematically organized and administratively well-furnished and perfect religion in India.

According to Ambedkar, the Bhikkhu Sangha had the most democratic constitution in India. The Bhikkhu was like a prime minister among the members of the cabinet. He had never been a dictator and refused to appoint a dictator. The *Dhamma* was the Supreme Commander of the *Sangha*.⁶⁴ He remarked that Buddhism was in fact, India’s indigenous religion and hence, he converted into it. Ambedkar had the model of the Buddha in his mind right from the beginning and a desire to make India a Buddhist nation. To put it in Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan’s words, “Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar had

⁶¹BAWSVol.1.1979, pp. 383-84.

⁶²Omvedt 2013, p. 258.

⁶³Kasabe 2006, p. 337

⁶⁴BAWSVol.3. 2008, p. 452.

erected the pole of Buddhism in India in such a way that nobody can remove it.”⁶⁵

Ambedkar's newspaper *Prabuddha Bharat* is an authentic source of the entire history of the Buddhist Conversion Movement. Ambedkar's conversion movement is considered to be the biggest social revolutions in the modern times. The editorial of *Prabuddha Bharat* discussed Ambedkar's journalistic writings. It specifies the purpose behind the initiation of it. Babasaheb gave a clarion call to all those victims of caste to unite and organize themselves. He wanted them to liberate from the rigid thralldom of orthodox Hinduism and thereby wanted to reconstruct the society.

The Buddhism that Ambedkar presented is not the traditional but modern in its essence and outlook. The reason behind Ambedkar's outright rejection of the concept of the Dharma is it is related to one's own personal matters whereas the *Dhamma* is principally as well as fundamentally social.⁶⁶ Ambedkar further reiterates that the *Dhamma* is righteousness, which means right relations between man and man in all spheres of life. In other words, society cannot do without *Dhamma*. Ambedkar was glad to see the proceedings of the constitutional debates and the constituent assembly gradually gathering momentum and becoming positive on Buddhist lines.

Yashwant Manohar's article, "Dhamma Mhanje Bhartiya Samvidhanache Prantatva" discussed at length the confluence between Buddhism and the Indian Constitution. According to him Buddha's *Dhamma* is the Constitution of an ideal society and the Indian Constitution is nothing but the *Dhamma* of an ideal society.⁶⁷ Reflection of the Dhamma could be seen in the Indian Constitution vice versa. The Brahmins were the traditional rivals of Buddhism. They attacked Buddhism because it was against

⁶⁵See Gaikwad 2010, p. 4.

⁶⁶Ambedkar 2011, p. 242.

⁶⁷Manohar Yashwant, "Dhamma Mhanje Bhartiya Samvidhanache Prantatva", *Lokrajya: Dhammachakra Pravartan Suvarna Mahotsav Visheshank*, October 2006, p. 122. (Translation mine)

Chaturvarna⁶⁸ system. The Brahmins tried to misguide people claiming Buddha to be the incarnation of lord Vishnu and Buddhism and Brahminism are one and the same religions. After Muslim invasion on India and their destruction of the Buddhist monasteries the Brahmins called the Buddhist caves as Pandava Caves, breaking the Buddhist sculptures they erected the *Shivlinga* (lord Shiva) idols.”⁶⁹ In Mahatma Phule’s words it was nothing but the Brahminical conspiracy or skill to capture everything by hook or crook. India had a glorious past. People lived harmoniously and peacefully during Buddha’s period (563 B.C.E., two thousand five hundred years ago).

Later, due to foreign invasions partly of the “Muslims” and the “Hindus” there was decline and destruction of Buddhism in India. Ambedkar argues that the Brahmins were interested from the beginning to establish Brahminism. It is quite possible that the *Manusmriti*⁷⁰ was composed at the command of Pushyamitra Shung⁷¹ himself. His mission was to destroy Buddhism and re-establish Brahminism. He further goes on to say that Brahminism acquired by its invasion political power to annihilate Buddhism and it did annihilate Buddhism. According to Ambedkar, Islam did not supplant Hinduism. Islam never made it a thorough job of its mission Brahminism did. It drove out Buddhism as a religion and occupied its place. Thus, Brahmanic invasions of Buddhists India have a far greater significance to the historian of India than the Muslim invasion of Hindu India can be said to have produced.⁷² It is due to the revivalist efforts of Babasaheb Ambedkar that there was a revivalism/rebirth, or reconstruction of Buddhism in India. Therefore,

⁶⁸The four Varnas (group) system the Brahmins, Kshtriya, Vaishya and the Shudra.

⁶⁹Khairmode 2010, p. 95.

⁷⁰The *Manusmriti* represents itself as the dharma that Brahma declares to Manu, ‘the first man’ and is passed on by him to Bhrigu, one of the ten ‘great sages’. The text is believed to have attained its present form around the second century CE. See Ambedkar 2014, p. 269.

⁷¹Pushyamitra Shung was a Brahmin king (185-149BC) himself, forms the book *Manusmriti* of the philosophy of Brahmanism. See Ambedkar 2014, p. 269. Ambedkar argues that Pushyamitra’s political counter-revolution was to establish Brahmanism and to annihilate Buddhism. See Ambedkar 2008, p. 45.

⁷²BAWSVol.3.2008, pp. 273-74.

even after making such an egalitarian constitution of India based on Buddha's principle and values, he expressed anxiety over the fate of the constitution and democracy in India. What really concerned Ambedkar were the questions of democracy constitution and the independence of India. His love and affection for the country and his patriotic feeling could be seen in the following lines:

Will history repeat itself? Will Indians Place the country above their creed or will they place creed above their country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood.⁷³

Ambedkar express a deep sense of anxiety over the fate of democracy in India and his strong patriotic feeling for a united Indian state. The genuine concern of Ambedkar for the nation and its dwindling and dilapidated future yet a desire to make it better is evident in his writings.

Ambedkar and Democracy

Ambedkar strongly believed that recognition, self-respect and dignity are moral presuppositions in human life. It is in this context that Ambedkar's writings and his work is relevant. His engagement with Dalits has a democratic connotation and is inclusive in nature. Ambedkar believed that an equal society was closely related to success of democracy he propounds:

Democracy is a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes

⁷³ See Agarwal 1991, p. 123.

in economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed. In other words a successful working of the democracy is that there must be no glaring inequalities in the society. There must not be oppressed class and suppressed class. There must not be a suppressed class which has got all the privileges and a class which has got all the burdens to carry.⁷⁴

Ambedkar strongly asserts that “democracy is another name for equality.”⁷⁵ In his view a democratic society must assure a life of leisure and culture to each of its citizens. For him human life is very social rather than political. As he always wanted to have social liberty for the people first than the political liberty. Ambedkar further reiterated if the goal of democracy is to protect every individual it must recognize and identify each social group and their social bearing or position. Ambedkar believed in democratic principles where every individual has a share and lives freely with dignity and self-respect. According to him the other name of democracy is equality.

For Ambedkar, democracy is an aspiration to achieve equality by means of constitutional methods. For Ambedkar, the means is democratic way, and the end to achieve it is the constitution. Ambedkar’s political and social ideals are based on democratic principles; it is precisely because he believed that only in an egalitarian social set up one can live happily. Therefore, he reposed his immense faith in democratic ways which is foregrounded in the speech he made in the Constituent Assembly *debate*:

We must do is not to be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lay at the base of it a social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and

⁷⁴BAWS Vol.17 Part. 3. 2003, p. 475.

⁷⁵BAWS Vol.9. 1990, p. 447.

fraternity as the principle of life.⁷⁶

Ambedkar viewed that until and unless social and economic democracy will not be achieved political democracy will be in peril. He realized that social equality can bring change in the society where all individuals will be recognized, also the belief in constitutionalism, which will protect law and the rights of the individual. Ambedkar was optimistic and had faith in the parliamentary form of democracy. He supported parliamentary democracy because he was a staunch believer of “Constitutional Morality” which is essential to all parties by which liberty, equality and fraternity can be protected. Ambedkar was swayed by a democracy embedded in moral principles of a society, where there will be no high and no low or discrimination on the bases of caste, gender, etc. only within such a society or democracy individuals can realize their human potential he believed.

Therefore, Ambedkar was looking for a democratic religion to convert finally; he found Buddhism fulfilling all his democratic needs and aspirations hence, Ambedkar’s conversion to Buddhism has to be interpreted in terms of “modernity and progression” Ambedkar himself said that “Buddhism is always contemporary”, which provides a moral and ethical base. He found Buddhism to be more promising humanitarian, inclusive, and egalitarian and therefore took refuge into it converting himself into Buddhism.

Ambedkar borrowed the democratic thought from the Buddha. Ancient India witnessed the spread, propagation and prevalence of the Buddhist philosophy due to its good governance. The Buddhist philosophy has a prominent place in Ambedkarism. Ambedkar not only posed the problem but also offered a solution over it. If we look at his writings and speeches in the entire 22 volumes and other unpublished writings, we see

⁷⁶See Ahir 1973, p. 160.

that he has shown us the problem and offered pertinent solutions over them.

The rational people in India and the intellectuals across the world have understood and realized Ambedkarite thought. As Ambedkar, a man of high standards took refuge in the Buddha for all sorts of remedies ailments and miseries and to emancipate the downtrodden in the real sense. In every other agitation or protest for human rights or in the matters of civilian or public concern Babasaheb Ambedkar is grabbing the attention and capturing the centre stage; he is at forefront bearing the torch and leading the movement from the front.

There have been attempts to co-opt or to appropriate Ambedkar in the recent past. The question is why different people belong to diverse social categories and groups wants to co-opt or appropriate Ambedkar? Co-option, Ghettoization and deification produce both positive as well as negative results. The point is with which intention it is done is important. “Ambedkar” is a vibrant topic of discussion so much so that he has become the talk of the town in academia and elsewhere moreover, he has become the much-sold entity in the market in the recent times. Some Dalit groups do so to seek justice and solutions to their grievances and problems genuinely in Ambedkarism. It’s a different matter how people use his name for different reasons and purposes.

K. Jamnadas in his thought-provoking text *Dalits in 21st Century* remarks that the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* ⁷⁷ (National Volunteer Organization) and the *Sangh Parivar*⁷⁸ and its wing called *Samajik Samarasata Manch* (social assimilation forum) is largely responsible for systematically confusing and putting the Dalit Buddhists in great

⁷⁷RSS Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation), is an Indian right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary volunteer organization. The RSS is the progenitor and leader of large body of organization called the *Sangh Parivar* (the “family of the RSS”), which have presence in all facets of the Indian society. RSS was founded on 27 September 1925 at Nagpur, Maharashtra by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar.

⁷⁸Sangh Parivar is the name given to the collective of like-minded parties and organizations like the BJP, VHP, and the Bajrang Dal that generally work in the tandem for the promotion of the Hindu ideology.

dilemma celebrating and valorising Dalit icons like Phule, Kabir, and Ambedkar.⁷⁹ According to Jamnadas Dalits expressed the view that OBC's and not the Brahmins are the real enemies of Dalits today. The Brahmins did their lot and gone but the way they indoctrinated the "caste injection" in the heart, mind and psyche of the Indian society that its effects are very much tangible, and could be felt and experienced even today. The whole point of the RSS precisely is to efface and erode the name of Ambedkar.⁸⁰

L.S. Karkhanis criticized the RSS and its prominent outfit *Samarasata Manch* in his Marathi text *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* calling it the most pretentious, highly deceptive and misleading organization. Citing example from a misleading text *Dr. Hedgewar and Dr. Ambedkar a Comparative Study* published by Ramesh Patange an activist of RSS.⁸¹ According to Karkhanis the publication of this book is nothing but an attempt to divert attention of the people and to misguide them about Ambedkar and his thoughts. According to Karkhanis an attempt has been made in this book to show that Hedgewar and Ambedkar had common goals the only difference was in the means they adopted. They worked for the fulfilment of their common objectives throughout their life. One hardly comes across the proposition made by Patange that Ambedkar and Hedgewar had common objectives and agendas. There is hardly any evidence to prove this therefore, Patange's claim seem to be invalid and baseless.

It has been the policy of the RSS to not to criticize Ambedkar or Dalit movement directly but to show how Ambedkar and the Dalits are a part of the "Hindu fold." In the name of *Samarasata Manch* the RSS has been trying to co-opt and assimilate Dalits into the Hindu fold in the process it is trying to silence or suppress the voice of Dalits.

⁷⁹See Jamanadas 2014, p. 152.

⁸⁰Jamanadas 2014, p. 153.

⁸¹See Karkhanis 2007, p. 13.

Jamanadas adds RSS never refers to Ambedkar's criticism on Brahmanism rather they always call it reform of 'Hindu' religion and not 'Brahmin' religion.⁸²

Unlike the RSS Ambedkarite thought is straightforward, transparent and to the point. It doesn't believe in misguiding, and misleading people adopting all kinds of meandering and escape routes to have its say. Ambedkarite thought stands on its own terms because his philosophy has created its own ideals. Most importantly Ambedkarite thought does not discriminate, though Ambedkar was discriminated in his own time. It is for all and serves all equally. It acts as a moral motivator, a real guide and a philosopher. Ambedkarite ideology is universal, and it has a global vision.

In fact, the success and the secret behind Ambedkar's movements in Maharashtra are precisely due to the then *Mahars* (ex-untouchables) who despite their detrimental illiteracy (due to lack of education) supported him by all means and the upper castes and the other backward caste leaders and all others who had an emancipatory and egalitarian stance to reform society. The socially diverse castes and classes came forward and offered their complete and wholehearted support to Ambedkarite cause, because they liked his humanitarian approach and progressive thought. They took stock of the evolving socio-political scenario in India and joined hands collectively with Ambedkar in the process of social emancipation. In this context, it is important to recall the caution in Ambedkar's speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949:

There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered lifelong services to the country. But there are limits to greatness. In India, Bhakti, or what we may call the path of devotion or hero worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in

⁸²See Jamanadas 2014, p. 159.

the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero worship is a sure road to degradation.⁸³

There is no harm in praising one's hero; problem comes when one makes him God or attributes him a divine status. "Hero worship in the sense of expressing our unbound love and admiration is one thing and to obey the hero is totally a different kind of hero worship. There is nothing wrong in the former while the latter is a dangerous proposition. The former is man's respect for everything which is noble and of which the great man only an embodiment. The latter is the villain's fealty to his lord. The former is consistent with respect, but the latter is a sign of debasement. The former does not take away one's intelligence to think independently and act. The latter makes one a perfect fool." Teltumbde adds that "following Ambedkar means being inspired by his vision of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' and acting in accordance with his advice to 'educate, agitate, organise' so as to realise his goals of 'annihilation of caste and achievement of socialism.'"⁸⁴

Ambedkar's liberal thought united people. Whoever believed in humanitarian values believed Ambedkar's movement and joined him unhesitatingly. Ambedkarite thought has the transformative potential inbuilt in it. The people who believed in Ambedkarite thought knew that it has solution. Addressing a conference of the untouchables (Mahars) on 21st March 1920 at Mangaon, the Maharaja of Kolhapur Rajashree Shahu, being influenced by Ambedkar's commitment and efforts towards the downtrodden, rightly remarked:

⁸³BAWS.Vol.1.1979, p. 231.

⁸⁴Anand Teltumbde's article "Ambedkarites against Ambedkar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 11, 2013. Re- appeared in a Books In review section titled "Limiting Ambedkar" a text under review of Eleanor Zelliott *Ambedkar's World: The Making of Babasaheb and the Dalit Movement* by P. Radhakrishnan in *Frontline* December 13, 2013, p. 81. To look at Ambedkar's views on the concept of Hero Worship see BAWS Vol.1.p. 231.

You have found your saviour in Ambedkar, I am confident that he will break your shackles, not only that a time will come when, whispers my conscience, Ambedkar will shine as a front rank leader of all India fame and appeal.⁸⁵

The success of Ambedkar's project is largely due to his own efforts. It is partly due to the patronizing attitude of Shahu Maharaj and Sayajirao Gaikwad from Baroda. They promoted and encouraged Ambedkar to carry forward his studies abroad providing necessary scholarship amidst turbulent casteism and Brahminical atmosphere prevailing in India. The prophecy of Shahu Maharaj came true today. The people in India locally and globally are experiencing the "charisma and the dynamism" of Ambedkarism everywhere. The recent popular Marathi song reveals the fact:

Jyacha Rubab Rajeshahi
Suta butat rojacha rahi,
Jyacha Jagat Gajawaja,
Bhimrao yekacha Raja

The English translation is as follows:

The one whose impression/aura is kingly
The one who always lives in suit and boot,
The one whose name and fame is throughout,
The world, is the one and only
Bhimrao, the King.⁸⁶
(Translation mine)

⁸⁵See Keer 1971, p. 42. Keer has gained recognition (and has been awarded) for writing several biographies of political leaders at the time of independence. The biography on Ambedkar has been republished a number of times, and it is a central source on Ambedkar.

⁸⁶See Bhimrao Ekacha Raja- Adarsha Shinde (Bhimrao the only king) published on 31 March 2021 provided to You Tube by Distrokid (p) G Vijaya Anand Music released on : 2013-12-06 Auto-generated by You Tube.

The song is sung by the young and dynamic singer Adarsha Shinde the son of a legendary third generation Dalit singer Anand Shinde, and the grandson of Pralhad Shinde. Interestingly and importantly, the Shinde family or Gharana (including their cousins Vishnu and Milind Shinde) are legendary in terms of composing, propagating and galvanizing Ambedkarite thought through their highly provocative and deeply mesmerizing songs and voice throughout India. Their songs, cassettes, musical performances are most tangible and vibrant phenomenon everywhere in Maharashtra contributing greatly to the cause of Ambedkarism. The Shinde family kept alive the Dalit cultural tradition and identity through the manifestation of their shows and stage performance. Ambedkar believed in the transformation of mind through theatrical performance of an artist. He appreciated music and humour and encouraged others to do so. Ambedkar's message to his own community became a reality. Ambedkar ignited and enlightened the age-old closed minds of the untouchables, bombarding constantly on them the need to educate! Agitate! Organize! Like a stern master he comes down heavily upon his own community to awaken their dead self-esteem he says:

My final words of advice to you are Educate, Agitate and Organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can lose our battle. There is nothing material or social in it. For ours is a battle not for wealth or for Power. It is the battle for freedom. It is the battle of reclamation of human personality.⁸⁷

Ambedkar's usage of the diction and his choice of words in this message such as Educate, Agitate and Organize speak volume in itself. His emphasis on these terms indicates the fact that these are the things which were denied for the untouchables for ages. Ambedkar wants them to Educate, Agitate and Organize in the real sense by

⁸⁷See Keer 1971, p. 351.

understanding and reflecting over his philosophy and thought. Ambedkar's constant urge and persuasion of his community paid rich dividend strengthening his egalitarian mission of removal of the Untouchability.

I would like to share some of these things which I experience and observed during my membership days (2001-03) of the *Trailokya Buddhist Mahasabha* (TBM) in my hometown Nanded, Maharashtra to understand the nature of various attempts that are being made to propagate spiritual and not the practical Buddhism or Ambedkarite Buddhism in society through various organizations such as TBM etc. Initially when I joined TBM I was excited because I felt I would get an opportunity to learn more about the Buddha and his *Dhamma* but the TBM focus more on the spiritual aspect of the Buddha rather than the practical one which Babasaheb really wanted.

The *Dhammachari's* (Gurus) taught us "*Dnyanbhavana*, (meditation) *Metabhavana* (friendship) and *Anapansatti*" ("mindfulness of breathing"), it is a type of meditation in Buddhist canon or philosophy.⁸⁸ These practices were much more spiritual rather than the practical. They emphasized merely on the transcendental aspect of the Buddha rather than the practical one I felt. As matter of fact, (knowingly- unknowingly) the neo- Buddhists were and are being gradually dragged and plunged into a deep valley of "spiritualism." After a decade and a half down the line what I personally feel is what really can emancipate the Neo- Buddhists today is nothing but "Ambedkarite Buddhism" and nothing else, given by Ambedkar himself in the form of his stimulating text the *Buddha and his Dhamma* which is rightly referred as the bible for the "Neo-Buddhists" by professor Debjani Ganguly in her text *Caste and Dalit Lifeworlds: Postcolonial Perspectives* wherein she comes down heavily upon the spiritual practice of Buddhism in

⁸⁸See Manohar 2009, p. 128.

TBMSG (Trailokya Buddhist Mahasabha Sahayak Gan) she says, “growing influence of TBMSG among the Dalit masses has been seen by a few Dalit activists as detrimental to Dalit progress.”⁸⁹ In a polemical piece published in the early 1990s, Gopal Guru accused the TBMSG of “killing the political initiative of Dalits” by appropriating Ambedkar to further its spiritual agenda, and warned that TBMSG's stripping of the political content of Ambedkar's ideology would make Dalits insensitive to their fundamental problems.”⁹⁰

In this regard Yashwant Manohar's text *Ambedkarwadi Marathi Sahitya* rightly declares, “Dead Ambedkar is more dangerous than the Ambedkar alive.”⁹¹ What Ambedkarite Buddhists want today, is not the Buddha with, “eyes closed”; but the Buddha with “eyes opened” and the real enlightened Buddha this is what Ambedkar expected therefore, he even criticized the “idle minded” Buddhist monks and warned to follow, practice and implement the Buddha with an awakened mind. Precisely, what Ambedkar wanted was to make an enlightened Buddhist country or a *Prabuddha Bharat*.⁹² He wanted his followers to be alert, loyal, logical and genius in every walk of life.

It has been observed that undoubtedly and quintessentially, Ambedkar and the Buddha both become the iconic figures for the Dalit community for their emancipation today. The Dalit community in particular is seen invisible in terms of upward social mobility because of improper, incorrect following or neglecting the Buddha or

⁸⁹See Ganguly 2005, pp. 170-71.

⁹⁰Gopal Guru's provide a strong critique towards the TBMSG as they are stripping of the political content of Ambedkar's ideology and making the Dalit Buddhists more insensitive towards their problems more or less support my point of view towards looking at the TBM. See Ganguly 2005, pp. 170-71.

⁹¹Manohar 2012, p. 167.

⁹²The term *Prabuddha Bharat* is used use to emphasize Ambedkar's vision of making the whole of India an enlightened one i.e., to make every human being a logical, rational and thinking being irrespective of caste, creed, gender and religion in this sense Ambedkarism is universal in creed and truly maintain Buddha's universal “fraternity”. In fact, Ambedkar tried his level best reconstructing, restructuring and modernizing the traditional, orthodox unequal and unjust social system into a far better and precisely an egalitarian society in the form of drafting and contributing on his part offering the Indian constitution to the nation See Mankar 2015, p. 141.

Ambedkar. On the contrary, those who followed Ambedkarite path got educated and thus drastically excelled in their lives. Not only the Dalits but the non-Dalits are also seeking refuge in Ambedkar especially in a moment when the nation is undergoing serious crisis of “citizenship issue” in the recent times.

For instance, the formulation of National Register of citizens (NRC) and the citizenship Amendment ACT (CAA) by the central government has created a nationwide protest. People from discrete social, economic, political and regional backgrounds have come onto the streets to register their disapproval on the ACT. They believe that the CAA is communal in nature as it confers citizenship on the basis of religion. They also believe that questioning citizenship and seeking of proof will disenfranchise millions of poor irrespective of religion and that the initiative of the government is an attack on the basic tenants and individual constitutional rights. Mihir Desai a senior advocate practising in the Bombay High Court, demystifies and dissects the CAA-NRC-NPR issues critiquing it strongly in his thought-provoking article Resist the NPR! ‘CAA-NRC AND Its Discontents’: An Elaborate Analysis remarks that the Citizens (Amendment) Act, 2019 is unconstitutional for its discriminatory and arbitrary provisions.⁹³ The linked exercises of the National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens threaten to disenfranchise crores of people, rendering them stateless and without rights. The combination of CAA with NPR-NRC would produce consequences that are detrimental to the stable and harmonious functioning of our society and policy. His basic argument in his article is that the CAA is unconstitutional. Even if the amendment is held to be Constitutional, the protests are justified and should continue. If the CAA is held by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional, the NPR and the NRC should still be objected to,

⁹³Mihir Deasi “CAA-NRC-NPR and its Discontents.”*Economic and Political Weekly* Vol.55(7), p. 15. www.epw.in/journal/2020/7/perspectives/caa%E2%80%9Cnrc%E2%80%93npr-and-its-discontents.html.

since they are exercises that will be extremely detrimental especially to the poor and the marginalized.

The mass media has brilliantly covered the entire issues of the entire saga of the Anti-CAA-NRC issue through various thought-provoking articles and political cartoons. For instance, Pavan Verma's article "A Tale of Two Nationalisms"⁹⁴ highlights Ambedkar as the iconic figure for freedom, dissent and justice leading from the front demanding for an egalitarian Indian Society along with a symbolical cartoon of Ambedkar who is leading from the front tells the entire story and people seeking refuge in Ambedkar. Interestingly, the most conspicuous symbol of this ongoing resistance is the portrait of Ambedkar, the father of Indian constitution, held high, waved as an enduring image of resistance by the protestors.

Ambedkar is in fact a focal point in the resistance movements and mobilizations of the Dalits and the oppressed communities. However, his image and thoughts have now transcended the boundaries of stereotyped caste and communal propositions. It signals the beginning of a new political and social awakening in the country, where Ambedkar emerge as the focal rallying point of resistance to the oppression unleashed by very people whom the nation has voted to power. This is happening in the recent times because people in general have understood and realized the importance and relevance of Ambedkarite thought. They are critically reading and interpreting Ambedkar, trying to decipher and explore different meanings attached to it. No doubt: Ambedkar has gone in every nook and corner of the country but still a lot more needs to be done to educate the masses about Ambedkarite thought which is so diverse and deep.

The portrait of Ambedkar is now being widely symbolized as antidote to anti-

⁹⁴*The Times of India*. "A Tale of Two Nationalisms." 1 February 2020.

people approach and actions of the governments. His ideas and thoughts are often invoked in speeches given during protest-marches, along with slogans that uphold the values and principles enshrined in the constitution. Jawaharlal Nehru University which is largely known as the hub of “Marxist intellectuals” scholars and professors seems to have turned towards Ambedkar’s ideology and his struggle for human rights and humanitarian outlook to seek justice is a great transition in the recent times. The striking reality is: Ambedkar is being seen as the “Saviour”, someone who has the ultimate remedy and the solution over all kinds of issues. Needless to say, throughout his life Ambedkar fought tooth and nail against any sort of injustice and anti-human behaviour, his whole point was to make “humanity” available to everyone. He taught his followers to live life with “self – respect and dignity” which is the hallmark of being a true Ambedkarite and a real tribute to his thought and deeds. Gopal Guru substantiate the same argument in his insightful article “Dalits in Pursuit of Modernity”, according to him modernity has provided a positive sign to Dalits in terms of self-expression to gain equality, liberty and self-respect. The idea of Modernity is a parting from the past. It is a way of looking forward Guru sees modernity in the context of their being provided the language of rights to equality, freedom and dignity, self-respect and recognition. A sense of equality and self-respect provide normative ground for Dalit’s pursuit of Modernity.⁹⁵

A thoughtful, thorough and a critical examination of Ambedkarism reveal the true nature of Ambedkarite thought and its relevance in our times. As a matter of fact, Ambedkarite thought has not been given enough exposure in the academia and elsewhere too which need to be taken up seriously, Ambedkar wrote and spoke so profusely and extensively on almost every issue one can think of; the point is how much of it is

⁹⁵See Thapar 2001, p. 123.

disseminated in society. The responsibility of a true Ambedkarite is to see that Ambedkarite thought should reach in every nook and corner of the country.

Ambedkarism has the strength and the capacity to galvanize and radicalize society. Gandhi knew it, he was well aware of Ambedkar's intellectual capacities and his knowledge of law and experience therefore, he insisted Nehru to include his name in the list of the members, who would be in the drafting committee. What Gandhi said about Ambedkar is significant here to mention,

Ambedkar is my old rival, but this is also true that, perhaps, he is the only person at the moment in India whose expertise in law and constitution so: if we don't make use of his knowledge and experience, he won't be but the country (India) certainly will lose a lot.⁹⁶

Gandhi was very much watchful of Ambedkar's activities, movements, intellect and capabilities, right from the beginning he knew him. He was convinced that Ambedkar is the only person able and appropriate to draft the constitution to shape the destiny of the nation. This is evident from his own statements and words of praise for Ambedkar by him. Appreciating the erudite scholarship and the innate talent in Ambedkar he remarked replying to his intriguing question:

Gandhiji, I have no homeland. You have got a homeland, and from the reports that have reached me of your work at the Round Table Conference, I know you are a patriot of a sterling worth.⁹⁷

G. Aloysius argues in *Nationalism without a nation in India* that "Gandhi's mobilization

⁹⁶*Samvidhaan* is a Rajya Sabha TV production mini-series having 10 episodes. The show premiered on 2 March 2014 on Rajya Sabha TV. It is written by Shama Zaidi and Atul Tiwari and directed by Shyam Benegal in which prominent freedom fighters, Hindi Cinema actors and actresses, and Indian leaders participated wholeheartedly in the discussions to lay down the framework of the constitution of India. See. Episode 2 titled, "Independence: A Divided Legacy."

⁹⁷Keer 1971, p. 166.

was vertical instead of horizontal.”⁹⁸ To put it in Bama’s words it was like *Karukku*⁹⁹ which Gandhi uses so effectively to have his say Aloysius remarks:

Gandhi as an experienced acrobat, was walking a tightrope with admirable skill and dexterity he generated a controlled mass mobilization for purely demonstrative purposes, never allowing the masses to take over the leadership (or in the accepted parlance ‘to turn violent’) and at the same time constantly sent feelers to the rules for negotiations.¹⁰⁰

Gandhi actually made the life of the untouchable deplorable in terms of power sharing. He never advocated social union with them, nor would he allow them to leave the Hindu fold, instead presumptively demanding political unity at the level of subservience. At the superficial level Gandhi portrayed himself to be the champion of Hindu–Muslim and the untouchable unity, but at a deeper level Gandhi did nothing substantial, especially, for the untouchables for their betterment to put it in Ambedkar’s words:

We believe in self – help and self – respect we are not prepared to have faith in great leaders and Mahatmas. Let me be brutally frank about it. History tells that Mahatmas, like fleeting phantoms, they raise dust, but raise no level why should the congressmen oppose our movement and dub me a traitor?¹⁰¹

Ambedkar ask pertinent questions to the Congress and the Gandhi to draw their attention

⁹⁸ Aloysius 1997, p. 203.

⁹⁹ *Karukku* means palmyra leaves, which have serrated edges on both sides, are like double-edged swords. By a felicitous pun, the Tamil word *Karukku*, containing the word karm, embryo or seed, also means freshness or newness. In her foreword, Bama draws attention to the symbol, and refers to the words in Hebrews (New Testament) for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. See Bama 2000, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Aloysius 1997, p. 197.

¹⁰¹ Keer 1971, p. 166. Ambedkar gives his definition of Great man according to him, “a great man must be motivated by the dynamics of a social purpose and must act as the scourge and the scavenger of society.” See BAWSVol.1, p. 215. Though Gandhi acted and worked as a social servant for the abolition of untouchability in society in Ambedkar’s estimation it was only a snobbishness that Gandhi adopted. For Gandhi, removal of untouchability was a platform; and not a programme of action and so, Gandhi was not the “liberator” or “emancipator” of the untouchability. See Keer 1971, p. 371.

to the genuine problem of untouchables seeking answer to the question why do they oppose the movement of the untouchable? Ambedkar understood that as long as the Harijans¹⁰² remain within Hinduism, they would remain *dhurijans* (outcastes) in their everyday life. For Ambedkar, unlike Gandhi, the problem of caste was not just a station in his personal spiritual quest: it was a problem of the life or death. It is here that Ambedkar's struggle for social justice differs from the pseudo or bogus reformations proposed by Gandhi.¹⁰³

Ambedkar wrote the monumental text *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables* and *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables* to show the real face of Gandhi to the world as well as to the Untouchables in India. As he rightly points out in the preface of the text,

I have written the book especially for the Untouchables and for the Foreigners. It is necessary for me to state both the facts as well as arguments and pay no regard to the artistic sense or the fastidious taste of a cultivated and informed class of readers.¹⁰⁴

Referring to the Round Table Conference proceedings in London Ambedkar remarks that Mr. Gandhi values more his reputation as the “saviour” of the untouchables than his reputation as the Champion of Swaraj (self-rule) or as the protagonist of *Ahimsa*. Ambedkar ask if this was the case; when question of the political safeguards of the untouchables came to the floor for discussion why Gandhi opposed it terming it as unnecessary and harmful. He further adds that it is a great pity that no detailed study of these claims by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress has been undertaken so far. Ambedkar vehemently criticized the Congress and Gandhi in this remarkable text *What Congress*

¹⁰²Mahatma Gandhi used the term for the untouchables *Harijan* literally means “Children of God.”

¹⁰³Ravikumar 2009, p. 84.

¹⁰⁴BAWSVol.9.1990, p. 6.

and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables.

In the wake of the rising *Hindutva*¹⁰⁵ forces posing real danger and a threat to humanity at large and also to the Dalit movement in particular there is a need to re-visit or re-define Ambedkarism newly today therefore, I have attempted to discuss it, giving a broader picture of the same in the thesis, covering a wide spectrum of Ambedkar's writings and speeches and other writings on him.

K. Jamanadas points out the intervention of the RSS into the socio-political arena of India in his *Dalits in 21st century: Ambedkarite perspective* in detail. The Dalits in India can create their own individual and genuine Ambedkarite identity following "Ambedkarism" in the true sense. It's high time for them to be alert and watchful today especially because the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is attempting to reverse the ideology of Phule-Ambedkar.¹⁰⁶ It is a part of the Brahminical strategy to govern the Hindus becoming "Pro-Hindutva." The RSS *pracharaks* (Propagators) never refer Ambedkar's criticism on Brahminism. They are bound to preserve the vested interest of the Hindus. They glorify the Hindu identity and propagate hatred towards the Dalits and Muslims playing politics of identity. Their major interest is the welfare of the privileged castes. The internal aspect of the *Samarasata Manch*¹⁰⁷ is always concealed.¹⁰⁸

Thirumaavalavan analyses the various roles of Hindutva in sustaining caste Hindu hegemony. He speaks provocatively of the need to "Counter – Hindutva" with a Tamil

¹⁰⁵Hinduness; a term is used to designate Hindu nationalism.

¹⁰⁶Jamanadas 2014, p. 159.

¹⁰⁷*Samarasata Manch* was started on Ambedkar Jayanti of 1983, and was virtually under Dattopant Thengdi during his lifetime. According to RSS It is a platform for all having common concern. Thengdi remarks that if the *Samajik Samarasata* is created, the social equality comes "automatically." *Samskaras* (teaching and preaching) are impressed on the mind of each and every "Swayamsevak" (volunteers) in the Shakhas (branches) of the RSS According to Pardeshi, the policy of *Samarasata Manch* is to sell the Brahminic ideology in the form of Ambedka. "Ambedkar's ideals were of homogenous society and integrated nation. In its place they propogate cultural idea of Supremacy of Brahmins and sell it to the masses in the name of Ambedkar. That is the policy of the *Samarasata*." See Jamanadas 2014, pp. 154-55.

¹⁰⁸Jamanadas 2014, p. 159.

identity that can reach beyond its region to other oppressed peoples. He speaks of Eelam, of the refusal to be a Hindu and of the rights to convert, of women's rights of the heritage and culture of the Dalits, and of the need to follow the guidelines of Revolutionary Ambedkar. He asserts in his much-acclaimed text *Uproot Hindutva: Fiery voice of the Liberation Panthers*:

Ambedkar created a great tremor by converting the religion of lakhs of people on a single day. He is the one who could do this revolution in the entire world. He mobilized lakhs of people in Nagpur and made them embrace Buddhism. Ambedkar changed his religion on the basis that this is the only way to liberate the people.¹⁰⁹

An Ambedkarite scholar, social reformer and activist like D.Vijay Mankar who is the national organizer of AIMBSCS, *Prabuddha Bharat* and Ambedkar party of India (API) has been enormously contributing to the Ambedkarite mission and vision. He brought out three volumes to succeed the 'vision and action' of Ambedkarism wherein his empowering and thought-provoking speeches on Ambedkarism have been included. He gives a "National plan to succeed" in Ambedkarism. According to him, Ambedkarism is not only an ideology and a philosophy, but Ambedkarism is also a policy of human life.¹¹⁰

Like many other Dalit writers who defined the concept of Ambedkarism Vijay Mankar also tried defining it. For instance, his volumes of speeches and other socio-political writings on Ambedkar give a clear and comprehensive version of Ambedkarism. He gives the plan, method and policy to achieve the goal of Ambedkarism. He formulates an equation of Ambedkarism in the process:

¹⁰⁹Thirumaavalavan 2004, p. 91.

¹¹⁰Mankar 2015, p. 135.

“Ambedkarism = Equality + Liberty + Fraternity + Justice + Dhamma.”¹¹¹

He refers Ambedkar as the greatest humanitarian revolutionary of the world and vows to spread Ambedkarism throughout the world in the near future. Such determination, conviction and efforts are required to solidify and concretize Ambedkarism argument, not only from Mankar’s point of view alone, but also from all those Dalit intellectuals and scholars who work on and for Ambedkar only then they can create their unique identity as “Buddhist Ambedkarites.”

A comprehensive study and understanding of Ambedkarism lead the way forward for Dalit discourse. But, due to the reluctant and indifferent attitude of the social system and the state in power the concept or the idea of Ambedkarism has not been properly deciphered, explored and discussed over the years in India. At the same time efforts are being made to promote and channelize Ambedkarism in India.

Yashwant Manohar defines Ambedkarism taking cue from Matthew Arnold’s touchstone method.¹¹² He examines the Dalit literary genres applying Ambedkarism as a parameter to judge whether the work of art is genuinely Ambedkarite or not, he has given his own parameters to determine Ambedkarism. According to him Ambedkarism is a way which leads one towards the path of social good such as fraternity, co-operation, equality, social justice, economic democracy, socialism and the welfare of society. It brings social revolution without shading a single drop of blood. It demands disjuncture from all kinds of exploitative and unequal traditions and believes in transforming the minds of the

¹¹¹Mankar 2015, p. 218.

¹¹²The term was first coined by Mathew Arnold in *The Study of Poetry* (1880) to denote short but distinctive passages, selected from the writings of great poets, which he used to determine the excellence of passages or poems which are compared to them. Arnold proposed this method of evaluation as a corrective for what he called the “fallacious” estimates of poems according to their historic importance in the development of literature, or else according to their “personal” appeal to an individual critic. The touchstone, he proposed, are passages from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton etc. I use Arnold’s term to state that “Ambedkarism” should be the touchstone for any poet or writer irrespective of caste, creed, gender or race to determine whether his writing is genuinely Ambedkarite or not i.e. whether his work reflect Ambedkarite thought or not. See Abrams 2003, p. 321.

people.¹¹³

Keeping in mind the parameter of Ambedkarism proposed by Manohar, if the Dalit and the non-Dalit writers walk long enough, they are likely to have a substantial change in their outlook and bearing. Ambedkarism is the gateway passing through which one develops the capacity to achieve excellence in literature and life. It acts as a guiding force to the Dalit community in particular. Highlighting the significance of Ambedkarite thought Suresh Mane remarks,

Ambedkarism has played a milestone role in the liberation movement and become the leading light for millions and millions oppressed not only in India but throughout the globe.¹¹⁴

In my estimation Ambedkarism is a way of life not only for Dalits but also for the entire humanity. It is a path breaking movement. It is like a compass an instrument, used to navigate the ships which show direction and guides the sailor on board. At the same time it instructs, guides and alerts one from dangers in life. Likewise, it has become an urgent necessity for Dalits to comprehend and understand it in every aspect; especially because there is lack of dynamic leadership like Ambedkar in India (that the Dalits desperately need) today.

Ambedkarism is a system of making humanity joyful. It ignites the flame of the mind. It is a protest-voice against all kinds of suppression injustice and brutalities. It is a remedy over all social ills and evils. It is the protector, promoter and preserver of self-respect and of humanity. The Buddha and the *Dhamma* are the jewels of Ambedkarism. Democracy is the breath of Ambedkarism. Equality, liberty, fraternity, social justice and secularism are the five precepts or *Panchasheela*'s of Ambedkarism. It is the singer of

¹¹³Manohar 2012, p. 50.

¹¹⁴Mane 2010, p. 52.

great saga of humanity. It is a thought of radical transformation. It believes in rationality and logic.

I would like to briefly discuss about various initiatives taken up by the media and the society for the promotion, expansion and reception of Ambedkarite thought. Apart from the print media, the electronic media is also playing a pro-active role enhancing, fostering and propagating Ambedkarite thought. In recent times the electronic media has effectively made use of it by projecting, promoting and popularizing the image, ideology and personality of Ambedkar. The wide circulation of the internet services has added another feather in the cap of spreading awareness among the people about Ambedkar and his movements through Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc., the social media is being used enormously by the people across the world. It has connected people and brought the world closer.

The percentage of people who follow social media for their own purpose is increasing day by day. Many Dalits have formed their groups to share their views with each other. There is exchange of Dalit ethos, culture, tradition and literature through constant interaction and dialogue with each other. Ambedkar was voted recently (August 2012) as the “Greatest Indian after the Gandhi” in an e-poll initiated by a TV channels (History TV18 and CNN-IBN) with an overwhelming majority of votes.¹¹⁵ According to Eleanor Zelliot, “the release of Jabbar Patel’s famous film, on Ambedkar, in India has brought the life of Ambedkar in a very positive way into this media.” Equally innovative are the websites such as “Ambedkar.org” which contains articles on Dalit writings etc.¹¹⁶

I would like to briefly discuss about various initiatives taken by the media and the society in the promotion, expansion, reception, and exposition of Ambedkarite thought

¹¹⁵Jadhav 2014, p. 6.

¹¹⁶Zelliot 1996, p. 5.

today. For instance, “Dalit Camera: Through Un-touchable Eyes” in particular has been one of the best initiative began in the University such as English and Foreign Language University (EFLU) Hyderabad, Hyderabad Central University (HCU), Hyderabad and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi etc. these University youths have played a pivotal role in terms of showcasing, and exhibiting Dalit issues. Students such as Narayanan, Jentle, Baidurya, Reju, Priya Chandran and James Michael are all from EFLU, Hyderabad, Sudarshan from Osmania University, Hyderabad, Anoop Patel from JNU, Shibi Peters from HCU have been very active in popularising and promoting Dalit Camera. Dalit Camera¹¹⁷ is basically a You Tube initiative set up around 2012 by Raees Mohammed (previously Ravichandran Bathran) to document life in India from Dalit, Adivasi and Bahujan perspective, and other minorities living in India. It has been described as the first use of videos uploaded on social media to highlight the difficulties faced by Dalits.

Dalit Camera is a collective effort initiated and carried forward to fight caste discrimination. The work focuses on Hinduism. The vision of this work is to envision Babasaheb Ambedkar’s mission to eradicate caste. One of the most important issues the Dalit Camera took up was the Reservation Policy, since in internet public spheres, like the video sharing site YouTube, one finds mostly the anti-reservation arguments. In this growing cyber-dependent age, Dalits don’t have to learn from them. Caste and Indian Judiciary was another important area that Dalit Camera covered. Dalit Camera took the videos of the activists on ground and also took interviews of the people working at grass root level. In that sense it has worked as a chronicler. Dalit Camera is indebted to those who work genuinely for core Dalit issue.

¹¹⁷<https://www.dalitcamera.com> or <https://m.youtube.com/channel/...> from 2012

The team members of Dalit Camera took the following oath, “following inspired leader like Ambedkar, we fight caste at all levels and we do not believe it a birth category, at least we believe caste can be annihilated and eradicated.” With this courageous and bold mission, the Dalit Camera moved forward. This was more significant in the wake of the kind of discrimination, injustice, humiliations and the atrocities that the Dalit students face in the higher educational institutions and the universities in the recent times. There is no negotiation of the fact that the caste structure is still dominant in the Indian society and very much active and functional in and around the metropolis as well as in the towns and village households. Dalit Camera has been initiated precisely to expose and tackle the Dalit issues that the community is facing today.

Sensitizing, exposing, and finding solution over Dalit issues through Ambedkarism has become the need of the hour therefore, there is a need for Dalit movement to take recourse to media (electronic and print) for the promotion, expansion and growth of the community. All round efforts are required for sensitizing the Dalit community in particular in which the media has a crucial role to play.

In fact, in recent times the electronic media is active with television serials on the life of Ambedkar in Marathi and Hindi such as *Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Mahamanavachi Gauravgatha* from 18 May 2019 by Star Pravah produced by Nitin Vaidya and directed by Ganesh Rasane in Marathi, *Ek Mahanayak- Dr.Babasaheb Ramji Ambedkar* by Imtiaz Punjabi etc. Another significant programme that I would like to mention is *Dalit Dastak*¹¹⁸ which is a monthly Dalit-Centered Hindi news magazine published in India. They telecast news related to Dalit issues giving them adequate exposure. They invite

¹¹⁸www.dalitdastak.com, June 12, 2012.

Dalit scholars across India to debate and discuss the current Dalit issue in society. Other programmes such as Bhim Gyan Charcha¹¹⁹ or Bhim Gyan Charcha Sangh also spreading awareness about Ambedkarite thought and philosophy especially in Northern India. The motto of the programme is to spread Ambedkarite thought throughout North India, educating people about it, inspiring them to do yeoman service for social cause.

Mukti (liberation) founded in 1982 as a youth organization aiming for social, economic and political activities of Dalits. It is a progressive youth organization having non-Dalit youth as active members committed to work on issues related to social justice, equality and human rights of Dalits. It was realized that building an alternative Dalit media was essential though it is an arduous task, and the issues had to be addressed in its full dimension rather than confining itself to publishing merely a monthly periodicals, books or newspapers only.

The RSTV or The Rajya Sabha TV¹²⁰ Television is a cable television network channel owned and operated by the Rajya Sabha that covers the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha. Apart from, telecasting live coverage of Rajya Sabha. It brings incisive analysis of the parliamentary affairs with the vision to document the story of how the constitution of India was created. The RSTV has produced nearly 10 episodes or parts on the working and making of the Indian Constitution. The T.V. mini-series of *Samvidhaan* directed by the noted film director Shyam Benegal and commissioned by Rajya Sabha. The serial is in episodic manner it represents the entire story of the making of an Indian Constitution in greater details covering the entire spectrum of debates and discussions that took place at the time of writing the Indian Constitution.

It is a ten hour long live commentary of the proceedings of the house and the

¹¹⁹http://www.bgcm.in/web_form_4.aspx

¹²⁰<https://rajasabha.nic.in>rstvlive>. Dec 15, 2011. Or<https://m.youtube.com>watch>

deliberations of different issues in the making of the Constitution which is based on the recorded and written material available at that point of time. The serial is nothing but a fascinating journey where each episode talks about a new topic at length. It illuminates and enlightens the readers with different points of views brought together by the assembly members from the freedom movement, academicians and representatives of all provinces/states and communities. The initial episodes set the tone of the Constitution talk about the context in which the need to draft the Constitution arose and how the framing of the Constitution was an indispensable exercise for India. The episodes emphasize on the significance of the Constitution for an independent nation like India.

Later, highlighting the crux of the Constitution the episodes mention the setting of the objectives of the Constitution, its directive principles, fundamental rights, safeguarding the rights of the minorities designing the administrative machinery etc. The episodes on Ambedkar in this serial are significant from the vantage point of understanding Ambedkarism in a much better way.

Samvidhan provide an opportunity to listen, watch and see Ambedkar (Sachin Khedekar) who enacted the role of Ambedkar brilliantly in the serial. The audio-visual impact of the dialogues in the serial captures the imagination of the character and stays with the reader. Overall, the serial has been superbly executed and perfectly designed so as to draw the attention of the readers rather familiarise them with the making of the Constitution of India.

Chapter Two

Marathi Periodicals, *Asmitadarsha* and Gangadhar Pantawane

Historically analysing the Marathi literary Periodicals, I attempt to study both the Marathi and the Dalit periodicals to conduct a comparative assessment comparing and contrasting the Marathi and Dalit literary periodicals in post- Ambedkarite Maharashtra in this chapter. The chapter focuses on the contribution, significance, aims and objectives of both the Marathi as well as the Dalit literary periodicals in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. It will exclusively and largely focus on *Asmitadarsha* (Dalit literary Marathi periodical) in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. The chapter deals precisely with the Prose writings or *Vaicharik Likhan* locating it within the ambit of Ambedkarite perspective. Since, Ambedkarite thought is the base and the crux of the thesis an attempt has been made to critically analyse Ambedkar's journalistic prose writings in this chapter.

The chapter aims to explore different dimensions attached to Ambedkar's multifaceted personality which has not been discussed openly for confining and defining Ambedkar to a particular status. Since, the crux of the thesis is Ambedkarite thought and the discourse relating to it I largely concentrate on Ambedkarism keeping the common thread of Ambedkarite thought running throughout the thesis in general and in this chapter in particular.

Overview of Literary Periodicals in Maharashtra

Beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed drastic change in Maharashtra's socio-political and cultural history. This was the time of the closure of the age-old self-rule in India. The British arrived in India and established their colonial government. There was a change in every walk of life due to the intervention of the British Raj and the colonial

modernity.¹ As a result, Marathi periodical *Dnyanodaya* was published in 1842 mainly for the purpose of dissemination of knowledge. Mukta Salve's stimulating essay "Mang – Maharanchya Dukkha Wishayi Nibandha, 1855"² Originally, written in Marathi found space in the social arena at that point in time. *Dnyanodaya* printed and published Salve's essay on 15 February 1855. Mukta's essay was highly praised and appreciated for its intellectual quality and thoughtfulness by the British. This essay was Salve's revolt against the supremacy of the orthodox Hindu society and its cultural practices. Salve's pioneering essay could also be seen as her attempt towards trying out her hand to "prose" that was considered to be a stronghold of the upper castes and was a very challenging literary genre or form in mid-nineteenth century Bombay presidency, 1855. Salve raised multiple issues on religion, spirituality and ethics in her essay.³ It was indeed her thought-provoking essay which was a trendsetter given the kind of socio-political issues prevailing in society at that point of time. Salve wants to draw the attention of the colonial administration at that point of time to the issues of the untouchables in society. The Marathi literature also underwent tremendous change due to modern education

¹Colonial Modernity or Discourse is a term brought into currency by Edward Said who saw Foucault's notion of discourse as valuable for describing that system within which that range of practices termed "colonial" came into being. Said's *Orientalism*, which examined the ways in which the colonial discourse or Modernity operates as an instrument of power, initiated what came to be known as colonial discourse theory, that theory which, in the 1980s, saw colonial discourse as its field of study. Colonial discourse is greatly implicated in ideas of the centrality of Europe, and thus in assumption that have become characteristic of modernity assumptions about history, language, literature and technology. Thus, colonial discourse is a system of statements that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonizing powers and about the relationship between these two. It is a system of knowledge and beliefs about the world within which acts of colonization take place. Although it is generated within the society and cultures of the colonizers, it becomes that discourse within which the colonized may also come to see themselves. See Ashcroft, Griffiths and Helen Tiffin: 2007, pp. 41-42; Rani 2017, pp. 84 -85.

²See Mukta Salve a 3rd or 4th standard educated niece of a great revolutionary Lahuji Salve and a student in Mahatma and Savitribai Phule belong to the marginalized community wrote an influential essay at the age of 11/12 years on 15 February 1855. Her brilliant essay written on the pain, sorrow and suffering of the Mang and Mahar (downtrodden community) in Bombay Presidency 1855 critiquing Caste, Religion, and various other restrictive tendencies and traditions of the upper castes. Salve appreciates the educational attempts and reforms brought by the colonial modernity for the marginalized communities in Bombay Presidency 1855. See Rani 2017, p. 73 and 90; Waman Meshram 2000, p. 40.

³See Wankhede 2011, p. 9.

system, printing and publishing houses, industrial revolution, rule of law, criticism of age-old traditions and customs changed the notions of religion etc. Newspapers came out in huge numbers and the essay (prose) writing became popular. As a result, “prose” as dominant category came into being. Essay appeared in (English) as a literary genre and dealt with different kinds of issues in a systematic manner.⁴

Due to neo-liberal British education policy, there was intellectual growth in the thinking process in the minds of the people. Rigorous communication and interaction among the people decreased the notion of caste and religion. Periodicals helped accelerating the process of literary production due to various kinds of socio-political movements and developments in Maharashtra.⁵ The religiosity among the people reduced to a great extent due to the advent of periodicals in Maharashtra. Milind Wakankar exploring religious conversion argues that a crisis in value provide a productive and solid ground for the extraordinary rhetorical energies that pervaded the Marathi public sphere during this period.⁶ Wakankar further add that the Marathi used in missionary tracts made possible the emergence of the ‘I’ of the convert, and pushed ‘religion’ into the gap opened up in social life by a crisis of values, a crisis productively instrumentalised by Phule. Mahatma Phule provided the essential boost to the cause of untouchability through his powerful writings as well as through his socio-political movements in nineteenth-century Western India. The colonial Indian Society gradually moved towards rationality and logical thinking. The British writers profusely expressed themselves in prose format. British essayist’s such as T.B. Macaulay, Edward Gibbon, H.T. Buckle, Herbert Spencer,

⁴See V.S. Khandekar’s “Marathitil Nibandha Wangmaya” in Kulkarni 2007, p. 269.

⁵See Bhimrao Kulkarni’s article on “Lalit Gadya” (literary prose) in Kulkarni 2007, pp. 381-82.

⁶See Milind Wakankar’s article on, “The Crisis in Religion: Christianity and Conversion in the Marathi Nineteenth Century.” Published in South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies. Vol. 41, 2018- Issue 2 pp. 468-482. Published online: 25 April 2018.

C.E. Scott, John Milton, Lord Byron, Adam Smith, J. S. Mill, and Thomas Carlyle etc. have greatly impacted the mind of the Marathi thinkers. Writing in prose was considered a sign of great industry or scholarship by then. Taking inspiration from the British essayists the Marathi writers and philosophers also began writing in prose in the nineteenth century modern Maharashtra.⁷ Though there was influence of English literature on Marathi literature, translation of the English texts was largely done in Marathi through which the Marathi writers attempted to acquaint English literature, language life and culture to the Indians.

For instance, V.K. Rajwade in his essay “Angla Sahitya” (English Literature) talks about English texts and the variations in them over the years. Rajwade’s attempt was to study different English texts of his time to see their impact on society.⁸ Writing in Periodicals especially in Prose (format or genre) became the marker and matter of wisdom and intellectuality for the writing community at that point of time. Marathi writers produced thought provoking intellectual prose following the British and European writers in the initial phase of mid- nineteenth century Bombay Presidency. Around 1875 began a new era for Marathi literature. This period was significant from Marathi literary point of view. It is considered to be the most significant period and an important phase in the evolution and rise of the Marathi literary thought.⁹

P.N. Joshi propounds that due to invention of the publishing houses and printing machines and press the publishing industry grew rapidly. Newspapers, magazines, and

⁷ See P.N. Joshi 2000, p. 11.

⁸See Jog 1973, p. 333.

⁹This volume 5 part II of Marathi literary history largely covers a significant period from 1874 -1920. This period was the period of a great awakening in Maharashtra in terms of growth and development of Marathi literature. This period was a complete amalgamation of the old and the new writers. Due to the availability of printing press large amount of literature was being produced. As a result there was a rise of a bumper crop of Marathi literary writing all over Maharashtra. See R.S. Jog 1973, p. 256.

periodicals were published in huge number in the regional languages¹⁰ in 1818, after the fall of the Peshwas¹¹ the British began their East India Company activities in India. The first periodical published in the regional language in India was *Digdarshan* from Bengal edited by J.C. Marshman. He also edited a weekly called *Samachar Darpan* the same year. At the same time a highly acclaimed *Bengal gazette* also got published so, by 1839 there were 26 periodicals published from Calcutta region itself. Significant amount of sensation and hustle-bustle was seen in Kolkata due to vibrant literary activity. In 1832, Balshashtri Jambhekar started *Darpan* (a fortnightly), *Mumbai Akhbar* 1840, *Prabhakar* 1840; *Dnyandarshan* 1854, *Upadesh Chandrika* 1844, etc began later. *Dnyansindhu* 1841, *Dnyanchandrodaya* 1840, *Dhumketu* 1840, *Dyanodaya* 1841 *Marathi Dnyanaprasarak* 1850, It has continued the literary thought from 1853-1866, *Pune Pathshalapatrak* 1861, *Vividhdnyanvistar*¹² 1867, *Dambhaharak* 1871 carry forward the literary thought. All these periodicals played a vital role in the production, growth, development and progress of Marathi essays. These are some of these prominent periodicals that have been published in the early nineteenth century Maharashtra¹³ Balshastri Jambhekar, Dadoba Tarkhadkar, Lokhitwadi all of these are instrumental in galvanizing and spreading awareness among the people in modern Maharashtra.¹⁴

There was intellectual growth and consciousness among the people in

¹⁰Joshi 2000, p. 80.

¹¹The Peshwa was the appointed Prime Minister of the Maratha Empire of the Indian subcontinent. Originally, the Peshwas served as the subordinates to the Chattrapati (the Maratha king); later, under the Bhat family, they became the *de facto* leaders of the Maratha Confederacy with the Chattrapati becoming a nominal ruler. The Peshwas themselves were reduced to titular leaders, and remained under the authority of the Maratha nobles and the British East India Company.

¹²According to R.S. Jog the contribution of *Vividhdnyanvistar* is remarkable in terms of achievement of Marathi periodicals in Maharashtra. The first half of the periodical i.e. the first fifty years of 1867 July and the present historical period is contemporary. According to A.K. Priyolkar, "No other periodical in Marathi literature could achieve or gain so much of popularity because of its excellence, a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of texts like that of *Vividhdnyanvistar*." It was a matter of pride for the writer to have his essay published in *Vividhdnyanvistar*. *Vistar* was nothing but a literary institute. S.N. Chafekar, W.G. Apte, N.H. Apte, published their articles through the periodical. See Jog 1973, pp. 340-341.

¹³Dahake 2005, p. 76; Jog 1973, p. 257.

¹⁴Joshi 2000, p. 86.

Maharashtra in the real sense due to thought-provoking prose writings and essays that have been published from time to time through newspapers, periodicals and magazines. Thus, we find that the periodicals in Maharashtra played a key role projecting knowledge as well as changing the mentality of society. Marathi periodicals thus occupied a prominent place in Marathi literature. The literary tradition established different streams of literature; these different genres strengthened Marathi literary circle a lot. The Marathi literary periodicals played a pivotal role establishing modern literary tradition in Maharashtra. The modern Marathi has a history of almost 200 years of literary tradition; and the periodicals have contributed immensely to it providing new writers, new thoughts, new thinking patterns, and new literary genres etc. In this process, the Marathi language as well as the Marathi literature renewed and renovated profusely. According to Abhishek Jakhade, “The periodicals consider and concentrate on a single literary genre or different genres; it analyzes and criticizes the literary form that has been produced.”¹⁵ Analysing the definition clearly and carefully we find that the very purpose of the periodical is to criticize and analyse the literary writings that is produced, and to find out the loopholes or lacunae that are there in the literary production and to suggest, guide and encourage new and upcoming writers.

Another significant feature of the periodical is not to undermine or underestimate any other literary genre but to treat the entire literary genre equally. It is very important to mention here that the tradition of literary writing through periodicals has basically come from the West. The western people wrote and published profusely in the periodicals initially such as *Partition Review*, *Dial*, *New York*, *Poetry*, *New Writing*, *London Magazine*, and *Encounter* etc. We have fortnightly, monthly, bimonthly, tri-monthly,

¹⁵Jakhade 2011, p. 4.

quarterly periodicals in the history of Marathi literature as well.

The periodicals had a vital role in grooming and shaping the mind of the people. Keeping the interest of the readers intact they provided the necessary ingredients for the proper nourishment of the mind of the people. It was in fact the responsibility of the periodicals. Forging friendly and amicable relation between the readers and writers is an essential function of the periodicals. In the recent times the periodicals are highly conscious of all these things. The basic purpose of the periodical is the propagation, production and dissemination of knowledge. Adding up to the available knowledge, provide new information to the existing knowledge is the responsibility of the periodicals. Not only this, but the periodical gives enough space for entrainment also. These things are very important in writing the periodicals because they are the source for the propagation of knowledge and entertainment. Publishing new and innovative ideas and popularizing literature, organizing debates and discussions on vital literary issues, conducting conferences and seminars on various socio-political, cultural and literary issues etc. Bring to the fore important events and elements in society and try to forge a new socio- cultural relation between them. The periodicals such as *Asmitadarsha*, *Pratishthan*, and *Aksharvaidarbhi* etc have gained supreme importance today in Marathi literary circle.¹⁶

Maharashtra has a rich tradition of journalistic writings. Scholars such as Lokmanya Tilak, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Acharya Atre, Nana Saheb Parulkar etc have hugely contributed transforming the mind-set of the people through their prolific writings and powerful speeches. The newspapers they ran at that point of time highlighted the need of social change and creation of a new society. The journalists devoted their life and time advocating for truth and the Marathi newspapers were not an exception to this. It has

¹⁶Bhagat 2000, p. 168.

passed through critical times, faced great challenges and still it has made its mark. The first issue of the *Maharatta* was published on 2 January and that of *Kesari*, on 4 January 1881.¹⁷ The age of Reformation played a significant role in the making of modern Maharashtra. Nineteenth century Maharashtra witnessed the modern thought. There was insistence on the social sphere all over Maharashtra. The contemporary social reformers firmly believed that the root of social change lie in the religious thinking and institutions therefore they began their mission of social reform from the Hindu religious faith.

With the rising influence of colonialism in Maharashtra there was a birth of a new class. The British educated Indians like Ambedkar and Gandhi etc appeared on the scene. Questions of Caste and Religion again took precedence. With the death of Lokmanya Tilak (1920) an era of a rebellious patriot came to an end. At the same time there was a birth or entry of social reformers like Ambedkar and Gandhi. Ambedkar launched a crusade against the unjust and inhuman treatment meted out to the downtrodden community in Maharashtra through his newspapers and periodicals. I discuss this in greater detail in the upcoming paragraph.

Ambedkar's Contribution to Journalism in Maharashtra

Prior to Ambedkar few Dalit intellectuals and scholars had initiated Dalit liberation movement through periodicals in Maharashtra. Ambedkar's contribution to the Dalit liberation struggle is indeed incredible, and therefore it is praiseworthy and worth mentioning, which is why I want to highlight the contribution of Ambedkar to journalism in Marathi in this chapter. Ambedkar began *Mooknayak* (the dumb hero) in 1920 though it was edited by Pandurang Bhatkal, Ambedkar himself wrote editorials in it. The same

¹⁷Rao 2011, p. 36.

year Ambedkar entered in India's political and social life. After the closure of *Mooknayak* Ambedkar began *Bahishkrit Bharat* (Boycotted India) in (1927) after the formation of *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha* (boycotted welfare assembly) in 1929, after its closure he again started another daily *Janata* in 1930. Ambedkar wrote exclusively in Marathi for his own newspapers. He wrote significant essays through *Mooknayak* (Periodical) his Marathi writing came from the *Bahishkrut Bharat*.¹⁸

Apart from this, he also contributed to some important political, social, economic, religious and cultural aspects. Almost ninety percent of Ambedkar's writings are in English; only ten percent of it is available in Marathi. Out of his 22 volumes of his Writings and Speeches some volumes are exclusively in Marathi such as volume 18 all three parts, volume 19 and 20 apart from this his newspapers, fortnightlies and other journalistic writings have been published in Marathi such as *Samata*, *Janata*, *Bahishkrut Bharat* and *Mooknayak* and posthumously *Prabuddha Bharat* published by the government of Maharashtra. Translations of Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches volumes have been done by several scholars across India in their respective regional languages such as C.B. Khairmode's Volumes on *Dr.Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Charitra* all 15 are in Marathi. Ambedkar gave evidence of his great statesmanship and scholarship through his thought-provoking writings and speeches volumes. The Government of Maharashtra has published 22 volumes of Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches so far. The revolutionary and thought-provoking writings of Ambedkar give a comprehensive view of the entire socio-political, cultural, economic and religious set up in India.

Babasaheb Ambedkar realized the significance of having newspaper for his movement. He remarks that for the success of any movement there is a need to have

¹⁸Cited in the article "Babasahebanchi Prerak Patrakarita" in *Lokrajya* (ed) Brijesh singh 10th issue, 68th year April 2017, pp. 14-15.

newspapers. “Without newspapers the condition of the movement is like that of a bird without wings.” This tagline appears on the editorial page of every single issue of *Samrat*.¹⁹ Ambedkar was well aware of the fact that newspaper could be one of the strongest weapons to fight against the oppressive social system. Creating consciousness among the depressed, giving them equal status in power structure during the transfer of power from the British to the Indians were his objectives. Ambedkar always preferred social liberty than the political liberty; he strongly advocated for it throughout his life. He always wanted the depressed to be in power, and to have equal share of status like the Hindus in India.

Despite the fact that Ambedkar was such an excellent journalist and have produced a huge corpus of his writings in Marathi the mainstream media did not recognize his journalistic skills and talent. The so called Marathi upper caste historians and journalists side-lined Ambedkar, they neglected him. Taking serious note of this Gangadhar Pantawane writes in his book *Patrakar Ambedkar* criticizing the so-called Hindu Journalists that Babasaheb was such a prolific journalist yet; The Hindu Society doesn’t consider him so. In Marathi literary circle also, he is not recognized as a Journalist. The mainstream Marathi authors possessed their narrow-minded, parochial mentality about him. Whereas the entire plethora of Ambedkar’s Marathi writings is evident of the fact that he was writer on par excellence. The books that have been published in the modern Marathi literature bore the reference of same voice people but deliberately his name has been cut off from the list.²⁰

¹⁹*Samrat* is one of the most powerful Dalit daily and the voice of the common man edited by Baban Kamble from Mumbai. It represents the voice of the oppressed giving enough space and exposure to Dalit bahun, Buddhist and Ambedkarite thought.

²⁰ See Dr.Gangadhar Pantawane’s brilliant article “Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Yanchi Patrakarita” in *Lokrajya* 2006, pp. 45 and 48. Drawing inspiration from Ambedkar’s journalistic writings Pantawane did his Ph.D on the Ambedkar’s journalism and later, published his thesis titled “Patrakar Dr.Babasaheb

Ambedkar's biographers took a serious note of his journalistic writings such as C.B. Khairmode and Dhanjay Keer they wrote extensively on every aspect of his personality, parting ways with the mainstream Marathi writers and the so called essayists and journalists. Ambedkar wrote, in the process; formed his own aesthetics paving way for Dalit literature. Some authors wrote extensively on Ambedkar and his journalism in Maharashtra are Ratnakar Ganvir, Appasaheb Rupavate, Harishchandra Nirmale, Sukhram Hivrale and Gangadhar Pantawane etc.²¹

The literary periodicals in Maharashtra greatly contributed to the growth and development of Marathi literature. The contribution of the periodicals in Marathwada region to literature is not only praiseworthy, but it is directive and functional in nature. It is a general understanding that the glorious tradition of writing literary periodicals have come from Western Maharashtra particularly from Pune and Mumbai. But there is no doubt that the literary Marathi periodicals such as *Pratibha*, *Prathisthan*, and *Asmitadarsha* have great impact on the leaders and the minds of the people. These periodicals are not only of a standard quality, but they have also given a prestigious position to Marathi literature and culture.

Pratibha has been published from Aurangabad from 1947. This periodical has largely contributed to Marathi literature and culture. Eminent journalist J.P. Mule edited this periodical. Many significant literary figures contributed to this periodical such as Setu Madavrao Pagadi, N.S. Pohnerkar, W.R. Kant, Yashwant Kanitkar, M.G. Nandapurkar, S.M. Garge, Bhagwantrao Deshmukh etc have published their literature through it. Khandeshi's poet Sopandev Chaudhari, Pune's S.G. Joshi, S.K. Kshirsagar,

Ambedkar" which might have prompted Pantawane to start his individual Journal devoted to Ambedkarite thought. In fact, Pantawane began *Asmitadarsha* a literary journal in 1967-68 from Aurangabad. See *Lokrajya* 2018, p. 58.

²¹See Sada Karhade 2010, p. 51.

and Mumbai's W.L. Kulkarni have also given their valuable contribution to it. *Pratibha* became a milestone especially after the 1920s it helped giving new direction to the young generation scholars.²²

Pratishthan is one of the most significant periodicals in the post-independence period published from 1953 onwards. The Fifth Marathwada Literary Conference was held in Hyderabad under the president ship of Setu Madavrao Pagadi. *Pratishthan* was established solely for the purpose of opening up opportunities for the literary writers, and research scholars from Marathwada region. Eminent writers from Marathwada region like Narhar Kurundkar, W.L. Kulkarni, Sudhir Rasal, U.M. Pathan, Usha Haskar, Chandrakant Patil, Nagnath Kotapalle, etc contributed to this periodical enriching its scope. The 1953 issue published stories, poems, research-oriented articles and articles on criticism. Different writers from Marathwada region got attracted towards *Pratishthan*. *Pratishthan* stressed upon the need to have literary articles and criticism to be published.²³

The Little Magazine Movement in Post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra

The Post-Ambedkarite scholars show complete dissatisfaction and discontent with the upper caste literature. They out rightly rejected the literature of the upper castes. The young generation of scholars realize the need and the necessity of having their own literature written by themselves. They protest against the hegemonic upper caste writing. As a result, they formed *Aniyatkalikas* or non-periodicals. These *Aniyatkalikas* were later renamed as *Laghuniyatkalikas* (little magazines). Raja Dhale was one of the prominent

²²See Gangadhar Pantawane's article "Marathwadyatil Niyatkalike: Yek Drushtikshep." Kamble 2011, pp. 111-12.

²³See Prabha Ganorkar, Usha Takalkar, Vasant Dahake, Jaya Dadkar, and Sadanand Bhatkal ed. *Sankshipta Marathi Vangmaykosh* from 1920-2003. 2004, pp. 462-63.

figures in this movement. Chandrakant Patil used the term *Laghuniyatkalikas* while writing a preface to Raja Dhale's collection of writings, *Astitvachya Resha*. Dhale played a significant role in the formation of the Dalit panther movement in Maharashtra, 1972.²⁴

Vasant Abaji Dahake also used the same term in his critical text *Marathi Sameekshechi Sadhyastithi*. Using this title "Laghuniyatkalikanchi Chalval" (movement of the little magazines), Dahake took note of all the *Niyatkalikas* and *Aniyatkalikas* (periodicals and non-periodicals) of his time. It is important here to mention that the term *Laghuniyatkalikas* has negative implications in itself; therefore, the then writers renamed it as *Aniyatkalikas* instead of *Laghuniyatkalikas*. The so-called mainstream Marathi literature got a big blow with the advent of little magazine movement.²⁵ The movement of the *Laghuniyatkalikas* completely dismantled the structure of the mainstream Marathi literature. The rise of Dalit literature destroyed the structure, criticism, and the traditional standards set by the Marathi literature. The contribution and movement of the working classes have a lion's share in the formation of the Dalit-working class literature, according to Dahake.²⁶

Answering the question why the movement of *Laghuniyatkalikas* began Dahake states that the generation of 1960's was utterly disgusted and dissatisfied with everything around. The resentment of this generation was the result of the consequences of the complete dissatisfaction with the socio-political situation evolved in Maharashtra. The educated youth of the 1960's was against the hegemonic Brahminical literary world. They rejected their literature their whole struggle was against the prevailing Brahminical social system. Some of the most popular *Laghuniyatkalikas* in Maharashtra were, *Shabda*,

²⁴See Bhagat 2000, pp. 175-76.

²⁵Dahake 2011, p. 60.

²⁶Dahake 2011, p. 66.

Disha, Atta, Yeru, Shabda Shilpa, Timba, Aso, Chakravarti, Vidroha, and Jatak etc.²⁷

Glancing closely at the 1960s and 70s decade one finds that this was a sensational period in terms of growth and development of the *Laghuniyatkalikas* or little magazines. The little magazines were published across the country. The main objective behind the publication of the little magazine is to register protest against the established literary trend at that time. The periodicals had an angry tone and an assertive voice and hence, their rebellion seems genuine and to the point. Arjun Dangle remarks that their entire struggle was against the established technique of writing. The movement members took the stand that: “We shall write the way we feel; who are you to dictate us?”²⁸ This way, one can see the roots of formation of aesthetics of a new kind in the writings of the little magazine writers. According to Dahake, “the *Laghuniyatkalikas* was an expression of the physical and mental condition of the society.”²⁹ 1970s saw the rise of Communism and Naxalism across the state. The period of 1960s-70s was a period of people’s agitation. It was a period completely packed with series of significant happenings all over Maharashtra. For instance, the formation of Maharashtra state on 1st May 1960, the rise of Shiv Sena on 19 June 1966, many other Dalit- Adivasi, and farmer movements, the rise of Dalit literature and eventually the birth of the Dalit Panther on 9 July 1972 on the lines of the Black Panther Movement in America against racism etc.²⁹

The publication of the Little Magazine was a movement much more significant from Marathi literary, cultural and aesthetic point of view. The movement began after a prolonged gap of 14 long years in 1955 when *Shabda* and *Disha Laghuniyatkalikas* were published. The little magazine *Abakadae* second issue came up with an insightful details that there were nearly 23 *Laghuniyatkalikas* or little magazines published by the end of

²⁷Dahake 2011, pp. 61-62.

²⁸Dangle 1992, p. 245.

²⁹Dahake 2005, p. 225.

1969.³⁰ Beginning from *Shabda* (1955), followed by *Disha*, *Rupgandha*, *Roop*, *Rang*, *Atharva*, *Aso*, *Atta*, *Bharud*, *Hema*, *Akshare*, *Fakta*, *Timba*, *Tapsi*, *Yeru*, *Wacha*, *Kawala*, *Dainik*, *Chakravarti*, *Sanavivi*, *Shreeshabda*, etc Some other little magazines have been published such as *Pruthak*, *Trishanku*, *Rawa*, *Udagar*, *Lru*, *Vidroh*, *Aamhi*, *Rucha*, *Jatak*, *Nikay*, *Akalan*, *Prameya*, *Samvad Astitva*, *Shabdashilpa* etc aroused consciousness and inspired the downtrodden.³¹

The year 1960 was exclusively and predominantly known to be the period of little magazines. The reason behind the formation of little magazine could be found in the issues and articles published in the little magazines. According to Dahake, “*Asmitadarsha* published literature not only regarding Dalit movement and its various dimensions but also highlighted the philosophical and critical writings.”³² The little magazine movement was nothing but an Avant-Garde³³ modernist poetry burst upon the so-called Marathi mainstream literary world. The period from 1955-1975 in Marathi literature was largely dominated by the little magazines. This movement was led by Ashok Shahane in the 1960’s followed by Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, Tulsi Parab, Bhalchandra Nemade, Manohar Oak, Bhau Padhey, Vilas Sarang, and Vasant Dahake etc were the prominent writers in it. Their writing was non-conformist and non-populist. The representative translation of many parts of this period was done by Dilip Chitre.

In fact, Chitre had cordial relations with most of the writers in Marathi for instance Namdeo Dhasal (a Dalit Marxist writer). Chitre translated Dhasal’s *Golpithaa*

³⁰Bhagat 2000, p. 176.

³¹Dahake 2011, p. 61.

³²Dahake 2000, pp. 60-61.

³³The Avant-garde are people or works that are experimental, radical, or unorthodox with respect to art, culture, and society. It is frequently characterized by aesthetic innovation and initial unacceptability.

collection of his poems as *Namdeo Dhasal: a poet of the Underworld*.³⁴ Ashok Shahane's seminal text *Napeksha* deals with the little magazine period in greater detail.³⁵ Citing an article published in *Abakadae* in the first half of fifth issue on little magazines he writes extensively in his own typical way of narration about the progress and development about it. The issue explains the need to begin the *Laghuniyatkalikas*. The members of the *Laghuniyatkalikas* came up with multiple answers to the initiation of the *Laghuniyatkalikas*. It was difficult for them to give any particular reason.³⁶

The *Laghuniyatkalikas* precisely was the outcome of the inner feelings and emotions of the youth of the 1960-70s who wanted to express themselves out rightly. The subject matter for them differed from the personal to the social issues. It was the voice of the unheard people irrespective of caste, class, creed, etc. Though the period was short it created sensation in the socio-political, cultural and literary sphere in Maharashtra. The little magazine movement gave rise to short and dynamic movements in the state. As a result, there was a formation of the Dalit Panthers a militant organization in Maharashtra. Eminent writer activists such as Raja Dhale who wrote and contributed in the little magazine movement became the core member of the Dalit Panthers.

The Dalit Panther is one of the most significant organizations that were established in Maharashtra in 1970s. Raja Dhale was the most important contributor and an organic intellectual and a great scholar in it. His article in *Sadhana* created a lot of hue and cry in society and in the literary circles in Maharashtra. This article was not literary in nature, but it was an article which expressed explicitly and intensely a complete chaotic and traumatic socio-political scenario in Maharashtra. Dhale's article, "Kala Swatantra

³⁴See *Namdeo Dhasal: Poet of the Underworld poems 1972-2006*. Selected, introduced and translated from the Marathi by Dilip Chitre, 2007.

³⁵Shahane 2005, p. 75 and 82.

³⁶Dahake 2011, p. 62.

Din” (Black Independence Day) appeared in *Sadhana* on 15th August 1972 created a traumatic situation in Maharashtra. Dhale’s insightful article in *Sadhana* vociferously demands justice and equality for the Dalits. Dhale vehemently opposed the Independence Day on the pretext of the rising Dalit atrocities, violence and exploitation in Maharashtra in the 1970s.³⁷ In the storm following Dhale’s article in the special issue of *Sadhana* in which he made scathing remarks on the Indian national flag, the Panther supported *Sadhana* and Raja Dhale. The Dalits in Maharashtra got acquainted with the panthers and the discontent of several years began to explode.³⁸ Dhale contributed profusely writing in *Niyatkalikas* (periodicals) such as, *Atta*, *Yeru*, *Chakravarti*, *Vidroh*, *Jatak*, etc. Dhale’s article “Satyakathechi Satyakatha” (real story of *Satyakatha*) in *Yeru* got immense popularity and later on this highly circulated and controversial periodical was commonly burnt in a bonfire in Mumbai.³⁹ *Satyakatha* claims that it deals with the true incidents of Dalit life. Actually, our (Dalit) life is absent in *Satyakatha*. Dhale exposed the reality of the *Satyakatha* in his own way. He revealed the truth unfolding the conservative ideology behind it.⁴⁰

Role and Contribution of Asmitadarsha and Gangadhar Pantawane

1960s decade was full of sensational movements, and vibrant activities of different

³⁷Abapkar compiled Dhale’s interviews taken altogether in his short booklet. In his informative article on Dhale, Dhammapal Ratnakar talks about his contribution to the *Niyatkalikas* and *Aniyatkalikas*. He elaborated on The Dalit Panther Movement, the Mass Movement, *Samyak Kranti*, the *Dhammalipi* and *Satyakatha*. Ratnakar comment on Dhale much debated article in *Sadhana* “Kala Swatantradin”. According to him Dhale spoke openly and vividly against the oppressive social system operational in the state. Dhale remains firm and confident over his Phule-Ambedkarite standpoint. Dhale remained loyal and honest to his Phule- Ambedkarite vision and therefore, he is highly revered and respected in Maharashtra. See Abapkar 2014, p. 17 and 20.

³⁸See Dangle 1992, p. 253-54.

³⁹Dangle 1992, p. 244.

⁴⁰See Abapkar 2014, p. 19; Ganorkar, Takalkar, Dahake, Dadkar and Bhatkal 2004, p. 702.

kinds.⁴¹ Cooperative movements, farmers movements, Dalit movements, struggles of the Nomadic Tribes and communities, Muslim Satyashodhak (fact finding) movement, Dalit Women liberation movements, different kinds of literary movements, the movement of the *Laghuniyatkalikas*, Dalit literary movement, Rural literature movement, movement in Drawing and Painting, movement of Parallel cinema, etc took place in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. Due to rising demand of the people and government intervention things put in place as a result there was establishment of Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskruti Mandal Pune for the promotion and growth of literature, language and culture.

Different organizations came up in huge number for the welfare of the people. Various kinds of educational initiatives and attempts began by the government. People from all walks of life took educational opportunity. Education made people think and realize themselves of their being. It gave them new identity and consciousness. There was a radical change in social transformation in such a big way that it prompted the youth to express themselves. They began writing through various newspapers, magazines, and periodicals etc. The Marathi *Niyatkalikas* (periodicals) created its unique identity through language and literature. Gangadhar Pantawane's *Asmitadarsha* created history in terms of literature for continually running the periodical for more than five decades in Maharashtra. Pantawane's role and contribution to *Asmitadarsha* is so intense and tremendous that both Pantawane and *Asmitadarsha* became synonymous to each other. Pantawane is known and recognized to Maharashtra because of *Asmitadarsha* and vice – versa. In the next paragraph I discuss the contribution of *Asmitadarsha* in production and enhancement of literature and culture.

⁴¹ See Karnik 2011, p. 172.

Literary Contribution

Asmitadarsha (Mirror of Identity) is a Dalit literary periodical started in 1967-68 by Gangadhar Pantwane from Aurangabad, Maharashtra. For the last five decades, this periodical has recognized and published Dalit writings. It is perhaps the only Dalit literary periodical which has been continuing without interruption since its inception. The Milind Sahitya Sabha saw its birth in 1967 in the premises of Milind College of Arts, Science and Commerce in Aurangabad. *Asmitadarsha* and *Milind Sahitya Parishad* was the need of the hour. Both the periodicals could be established under the supervision of the then principal of Milind College M.N. Wankhede, and the guidance of Gangadhar Pantawane, and the collective efforts of R.G. Jadhav, L.B. Raymane, Sukhram Hivrale and Waman Nibalkar. Due to several reasons such as the transfer of M.N. Wankhede from the Maharashtra Public Service Commission to the Union Public Service Commission around 1968, he could no longer act as the principal advisor to the periodicals and Gangadhar Pantawane became the chief editor. In his editorial committee Except Wankhede other members continued.⁴² The first issue of the literary magazine *Asmitadarsha* titled as *Asmita* (Identity) brought out in 1967 later it has been renamed as *Asmitadarsha* thus this periodical became the epitome of the entire corpus of Dalit writing that has been produced in Maharashtra.⁴³

Asmitadarsha gave a new lease of life to the Dalit world. Increase in social consciousness made Dalits more alert and inspire them to pen down their experiences and

⁴² See P.E. Sonkamble's article "Milind Prashanatil Gatasmrutina Ujala Nimmitta: Dr.Pantawane." Sonkamble article gives a vent to the past memories of the Milind college premises and the highly disciplined and educative and mesmerising atmosphere and the campus. Sonkamble becomes nostalgic while describing the whole incidence in Milind college Premises. This article presents clear a picture of a blend of discipline, morality and education envisioned by the founding father of Milind College Babasaheb Ambedkar. The contribution of Milind College or "Nagsen Van" is indeed great in terms of producing scholars, intellectuals, philosophers, and writers of such as V.D. Chandanshive, Sukhdeo Thorat, Gopal Guru, and Surendra Jondhale etc.

⁴³ See Ganorkar, Takalkar, Dahake, Dadkar and Bhatkal 2004, pp. 24-25.

contribute to Dalit movement. A platform was provided to Dalit writers with the beginning of *Asmitadarsha* in 1967-68, a quarterly journal in Marathi edited by its proponent Gangadhar Pantawane.⁴⁴ Thus, *Asmitadarsha* played an instrumental role in galvanizing and strengthening the Dalit literary movement in Maharashtra. After 1968, critics from Dalit society began putting forth their views about Dalit literature and its role. A number of young writers found place in periodical such as *Asmitadarsha*.

In order to materialize Ambedkar's vision and mission in actuality, M.N. Wankhede, Gangadhar Pantawane, Sukhram Hirwale, L.B. Raymane, Waman Nimbalkar all of them together began a Marathi periodical called *Asmitadarsha*. The editor of the first issue was R.G. Jadhav. *Asmita* (identity) has been renamed in 1968 as *Asmitadarsha*. Pantawane took the lead and thereafter, became the chief editor of it. *Asmitadarsha* followed the slogan in letter and spirit "New literary tendencies with new consciousness" ultimately became the hallmark of *Asmitadarsha*. *Asmitadarsha* published Dalit poetry and short stories; later it published plays, autobiographies (in an episodic manner in fragments), prose writings etc. From 1977, *Asmitadarsha* turned into a bimonthly magazine. The eminent writers who wrote and contributed hugely to it are Bandhumadav, Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul, Yogiraj Waghmare, Waman Howal, Amitabh, W.R. Kant, Vinda Karandikar, Narayan Surve, Vasant Dahake, etc.

Apart from this, another significant contribution of *Asmitadarsha* is the articles on arts, education, and religion and on Negro literature. *Asmitadarsha* thus, kept alive the tradition of intellectual prose writings. It has organized Dalit literary conferences at regular time interval, discussions and debates on various Dalit issues and thus created a platform for all the Dalit and non-Dalit writers in Maharashtra. *Asmitadarsha* played a

⁴⁴See Murugkar 1991, p. 58.

crucial role in shaping and moulding literature, culture, and history etc.⁴⁵

Asmitadarsha is the outcome of the entire socio-political, cultural scenario in Maharashtra. It is the result of the entire socio-political and cultural upheavals in Maharashtra. The Dalit movements in Maharashtra severely affected the literature and *Asmitadarsha* is the result of the socio-political and cultural happenings. It is very important here to mention the period in which *Asmitadarsha* was published because this was the time when the Dalit movements and the Dalit activities gained momentum. Educated Dalit at this juncture tried to express them through literature. The Dalit youth wanted to express them openly, therefore they were looking for some medium to have their say. *Asmitadarsha* provided them such a platform. It has not only prepared the platform, but it also encouraged, motivated many local writers and opened up opportunities for the young Dalit scholars. *Asmitadarsha* understood and realized the need to have such a powerful medium for Dalit writers to express themselves. *Asmitadarsha* successfully completed five decades now. The twig of *Asmitadarsha* that was implanted by Gangadhar Pantwane now has grown and turned up into a huge tree.

Asmitadarsha has strengthened the Dalit movement and the Dalit literature and vice-versa. It has given voice to the voiceless. It has imbibed, cultivated and inculcated Ambedkarite thought and philosophy in the mind of the people. Since Ambedkarite thought is the base and source of *Asmitadarsha*. It claims itself to be the proponent and carrier of an Ambedkarite thought and vision. This periodical has done tremendous work in spreading the Phule-Ambedkar ideology in Maharashtra. *Asmitadarsha* gives equal space for all the genres of literature. Many novice writers found space in *Asmitadarsha* eventually turning themselves to be well known literary figures.

⁴⁵ See Prabha Ganorkar, Usha Takalkar, Vasant Dahake, Jaya Dadkar, and Sadanand Bhatkal ed. *Sankshipta Marathi Vangmaykosh* from 1920-2003. 2004, pp. 24-25.

No doubt, *Asmitadarsha* has a lion's share in creating a perfect platform for the Dalit writings. It has helped, motivated and inspired them. It has created its own independent revolution by establishing its own space for Dalit literary criticism and Dalit intellectual writings in Marathi. It has immensely contributed to Marathi literature as well. Many local writers came into the limelight through their writings in *Asmitadarsha* such as, Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul, Yogiraj Waghmare, Keshav Meshram, Bandhumadhav, Bhaskar Chandanshiv, Amitabh, Yogendra Meshram, Waman Howal, Madhav Kondwilkar, Waman Nimbalkar, Sharankumar Limbale, Vishwas Vaseker, Rushikesh Kamble, and Damodhar More etc.⁴⁶

The writers in *Asmitadarsha* produced writings of a standard and substance of a quality. It is scholarly in nature. Undoubtedly, it has become one of the most widely circulated and widely read Dalit literary periodical of the recent times in Maharashtra. The periodical is inclusive in nature and character i.e. the writers are not only Dalits but also non-Dalits. Credit goes to Gangadhar Pantwane for his relentless efforts, unflinching commitment and a desire to do something for the Dalit community. Pantwane's *Asmitadarsha* has created a history of its own times in Maharashtra.

Asmitadarsha is the outcome or product of post-independence socio-political, cultural transition, and literary production in Maharashtra. The socio-political cultural transition took place in post-independence period affected the literary production in Maharashtra out of which Dalit literature was produced and *Asmitadarsha* (Trimonthy Periodical) is one of them. Dalit literary movement became vibrant from (1965-1970) during which an educated Dalit youth was desperately searching for a periodical to express himself with new feelings, experiences, and awareness etc.

⁴⁶See Ghandge 2008, pp. 7-8.

He was in search of some periodical where he could express his views strongly and freely, without hesitation. He wants to express how he lived and experienced his sorrows, pains, and agonies etc. He found answers to all his questions in *Asmitadarsha*. Thus, *Asmitadarsha* gave him space to express his thoughts openly, vividly, and clearly etc. According to Arjun Dangle the very discussion in the first issue of *Asmitadarsha* titled “cultural conflict in Maharashtra and the literary question” paved the way for Dalit literature.⁴⁷ It has shown the way to the agitated Dalit youth in 1970's thus *Asmitadarsha* has done a superb job timely intervening into the Dalit question and breaking the ice, giving a proper direction and guidelines for the Dalit literature and life. The Dalit youth started writing in *Asmitadarsha*. He took a great sigh of relief after getting introduced to *Asmitadarsha*. It has promoted new writers understanding their creativity and talent. It has made them confident which eventually led them towards the success of the movement. *Asmitadarsha* took up the challenge of time. It strengthened the Dalit literary movement in the real sense. It was a splendid job carried by *Asmitadarsha* giving space to the downtrodden community to express themselves. *Asmitadarsha* gave Dalits a platform to showcase their skill and talent; it promoted, inspired, motivated, and galvanized the spirit and sense of oneness among them. *Asmitadarsha* also gave impetus to the non-Marathi and novice youths to express themselves. *Asmitadarsha* published their articles, write-ups and encouraged them for more than five decades now.

Daya Pawar's article in *Pratishthan*, July 1969 titled “Upekshitanchya Navya Janiva” (new consciousness of the oppressed) stated clearly how *Asmitadarsha* created a literary sensation all over Maharashtra in which the Dalit literary scholars had a lion's share. It has grown far and wide. The small sapling implanted by Gangadhar Pantawane

⁴⁷Dangle 2007, p. 128.

has become a full-fledged tree now. *Asmitadarsha* took up following major tasks on its anvil and performs them with utmost devotion, dedication, commitment and vigour. *Asmitadarsha* created a great sensation in terms of its literary influence in its initial phase in which Sharadchandra Muktibodh, Waman Ingle, P.S. Nerurkar, S.D. Karhade, Narayan Surve and other progressive Marxist critics had contributed a lot.⁴⁸

Asmitadarsha has done a stupendous task of nurturing, presenting, and cultivating Ambedkarite thought and philosophy among the masses. According to Gangadhar Pantawane, *Asmitadarsha* is thoroughly dedicated, devoted, committed to the spread and propagation of Ambedkarite thought. Pantawane has clearly stated it in 1978 issue of *Asmitadarsha* that, “we want revolt literature, we want literature with Ambedkarite consciousness and ideology; we don’t want artificial or masked literature.”⁴⁹ From the boldness, clarity and confidence with which Pantawane made the statement; one could see the authenticity of what he wants from the initiation of *Asmitadarsha*. *Asmitadarsha* itself was totally ingrained in Ambedkarite thought and ideology.⁵⁰

Harish Khanderao text *Ambedkarwadi Sahitya: Janiva Ani Manasikata* supports Pantawane's assertive stand. According to Khanderao, it was important and essential for Pantawane to take a definitive stand on his periodical *Asmitadarsha* therefore, keeping in view Dalit literature, Vidrohi (rebellious) literature, Buddhist literature and Ambedkarite

⁴⁸See Dangle 2007, p. 128.

⁴⁹Khanderao 2006, p. 103.

⁵⁰Reiterating the essence of a periodical like *Asmitadarsha* Pantawane asserts that it is essential to have a periodical committed and devoted to Ambedkarite thought. Pantawane claims that *Asmitadarsha* is a periodical produced to envision the vision of an egalitarian society by Ambedkar. *Asmitadarsha* has been pursuing it since its inception. According to Harish Khanderao one has to see what lie behind Pantawane's such bold statements and assertive stance. In my estimation, it is predominantly because of the fact that the period from 1970 to 1990 was a period full of socio-political happenings, movements and activities in Maharashtra. It was the time the Dalits and the marginalised came on the street to have equal rights in every sphere of life. Activists, writers came forward expressing their anxiety, anger; frustration etc through literature as a result some achieved excellence in writing and became prolific commentators of social cause. Pantawane allowed all kinds of writings in this phase from all quarters and sections of society to his periodical *Asmitadarsha*. As a result *Asmitadarsha* became famous in terms of producing writers and writings of a quality and standard.

literature in mind and putting Dalit consciousness and Ambedkar ideology at the helm of affair Pantawane made his stand very clear. After a prolonged interview with Pantawane Siddhodhan Kamble stated that the whole point of Pantawane's Dalit intellectual prose writing is an amalgamation and admixture of pre-Ambedkarite Dalit intellectual prose, contemporary Ambedkarite prose and post-Ambedkarite Dalit intellectual prose writing.⁵¹

We were committed to keep *Asmitadarsha* running at any cost because it was the strongest and surest weapon of an Ambedkarite philosophy. No matter whether anybody support or not, no matter people appreciate it or hate it; at any cost and on any condition we want to keep it running.⁵²

With this sheer determination and enormous confidence Pantawane began *Asmitadarsha*. Perhaps this is the reason why Pantawane's *Asmitadarsha* scaled new heights in its formative years and continued for more than five decades now. The educated youth got into education began expressing Ambedkarite thoughts after the 1960's. *Asmitadarsha* gave them impetus to all new, local, and novice writers. *Asmitadarsha* saw the talent and the skills in them. These writers had the courage and the strength to write forcefully and powerfully with all their might and conviction. Thus, *Asmitadarsha* began with utmost grit and determination.

Socio-Political and Cultural Contribution

The role played by Gangadhar Pantawane is important here to understand the cultural revolt and the cultural upbringing or growth of Ambedkar ideology. *Asmitadarsha* acknowledged or considered *Ambedkarwad* or Ambedkarism to be the source of Dalit literature; it is also the base of *Asmitadarsha*, because *Asmitadarsha* is the outcome of

⁵¹Pawar and Kamble 1997, p. 24.

⁵²Pawar and Kamble 1997, pp. 21-22.

Dalit literature. According to Lata Murugkar, “Ambedkarism is the backbone of Dalit literature. It has provided a major frame of reference for their literary and intellectual activities.”⁵³ *Asmitadarsha* took up great task of spreading and propagating Phule-Ambedkarite thought or ideology and the socio-democratic thought. *Asmitadarsha* gave Dalit literature a commendable place, position, prestige, honour, and publicity, and vice-versa. It has motivated new young writers by raising consciousness in them. It has promoted them to invest in *Asmitadarsha* contributing scholarly essays into it.

The writers new, local, novice amateur as well as the established one's found place in *Asmitadarsha*. It helped reaching their writing to the far and wide corner of Maharashtra. Thus, *Asmitadarsha* has created a new literary history in the last five decades in Dalit literary criticism as well as through intellectual prose-writings in Maharashtra.

In a prolonged journey of more than five decades, *Asmitadarsha* contributed a lot to the growth and development of Dalit literature in general and the Marathi literature in particular. It has propagated Ambedkarite thought and philosophy to the grass root. *Asmitadarsha* changed the entire Marathi socio-political and literary scenario. It has changed the parameters or the standards set by the mainstream Marathi literature and formed its own brand new and novel module or aesthetics of its own in terms of writing periodic literature. It has given the language of rebelliousness and a consciousness of a new kind to society.

Asmitadarsha has strengthened Dalit literature and vice-versa. It has given a new lease of life to Dalit literature. It has promoted Dalit literary movement giving exposure to Dalit literary and movement writing. Because of the vastness and wide expanse of

⁵³Murugkar1991, p. 53.

Dalit literature today it has become an important academic discipline. *Asmitadarsha* presents literary awards to the best of the writings produced due to which there has been a tough competition amongst the writer community all over Maharashtra. As a result, there is addition of creative writers in *Asmitadarsha*. Renowned Hindi writers such as Aruna Lokhande who translated a Telugu Dalit play *Muniwahanudu* by Kolakaluri Enoch⁵⁴ appeared in *Asmitadarsha*, October issue 2004, *Gujarati Dalit Sahitya: Swaroop Ani Sandarbha* by Joseph Macwan translated by Leela Shinde and Gangadhar Pantawane in 1988.⁵⁵ *Asmitadarsha* published most of writing from Gujarati into Marathi. Not only the Marathi writers but the other writers from all other regional languages also contributed to *Asmitadarsha* enormously. *Asmitadarsha* has been at the forefront translating and publishing literatures from other languages as well.

It has provided a base to Dalit literature and intellectual prose-writings. *Asmitadarsha* produced and published writings in almost every literary genre such as short-novel, novella, autobiographies, stories, poems, intellectual prose-writings, and literary-writings etc. It has covered diverse writings on literature and society, culture etc. Articles produced in *Asmitadarsha* are research-oriented and therefore, well-thought and brilliantly executed having in depth knowledge and experience. They have a standard and a class of their own. It has produced thought- provoking writings on diverse subjects and personalities such as Gautam Buddha, Mahatma Phule, and Ambedkar etc.

Both writers established ones as well as the new ones struggled and achieved

⁵⁴Kolakaluri Enoch hails from a Dalit Community has a prominent position in Telugu Dalit literature. He championed the Dalit cause. He portrayed in his writings the life of the marginalized i.e. their painful experiences and sufferings, failures and achievements, their protest to the point of perfection. Enoch has been the president of "Ambedkar Vignana Peetham," Anantapur from 1972 to till date. He was also the president of Dalit Writers Association, Hyderabad from 1991-1994. Notably most of his novels appeared in Telugu journals before they had been published as novels and a few won prizes too. Enoch's play *Munivahanudu* was a non-detailed text for intermediate course of Andhra Pradesh students during 1985-87.

⁵⁵See *Asmitadarsha* issue edited by Gangadhar Pantawane 37 (4) Oct, Nov, Dec 2004, p. 03.

excellence in *Asmitadarsha* and vice- versa. Many local writers came forward through *Asmitadarsha* and established themselves. *Asmitadarsha* gave impetus to the local to the global writers to put it in Antonio Gramsci's term *Asmitadarsha* maintained "subaltern (consciousness) perspective" giving fair and equal opportunity to all. It has gone down to the lowest of the low to give justice to everyone, in this way, one can say that *Asmitadarsha* is the most inclusive periodical in Maharashtra (Both the Dalit and non-Dalits contributed in the growth and development of it.) This is perhaps the reason why everybody feels so connected to it and feels as if it is their own (family) periodical and everybody is so attached to it. Pantawane's *Asmitadarsha* went beyond the narrow-domestic walls and tried to build bridge on egalitarian grounds following the footsteps of Ambedkarite ideology.

From the inception of *Asmitadarsha* prominent and prolific academic heavyweights and the mainstream Marathi authors such as Kusumagraja, W.R. Kant, Vinda Karandikar, Narayan Surve, Vasant Abaji Dahake contributed comprehensively their thought-provoking poetry to *Asmitadarsha*. The reason behind assimilation of such a huge gathering of Marathi writers under a common roof of *Asmitadarsha* is Pantawane whose basic subject was Marathi in which he did his masters and later Ph.D joining Milind College he became an eminent Marathi student's lovable and likable Professor. Interestingly, most of the writers in *Asmitadarsha* hail from Marathi discipline. If one looks at Pantawane's Marathi writings and his enormous contribution to it and the huge number of awards, honours and recognition he received for his dedication and devotion towards writing one can understand why Pantawane is admired and appreciated in the so called mainstream academic Marathi circle.

During the 1970s-1980s there was an upsurge of writing Dalit Autobiographies in Maharashtra. This was the time every Dalit writer male/female wanted to talk about their

lived experiences. *Asmitadarsha* published initial autobiographical writings of individual authors such as Rustum Achalkhamb's *Gavaki*, P.E. Sonkamble's *Aathwaniche Pakshi*, and Kumud Pawade's *Antaspoot* etc. have been published in an episodic manner through *Asmitadarsha*. The Dalit male writers initially wrote their autobiographies later it was followed by the female writers.

Marathi dramas or one act play writings on Marathi drama have also been published by *Asmitadarsha* for instance- renowned Marathi dramatists and playwrights such as Datta Bhagat, Premanand Gazvi, Ramnath Chavan, and Prakash Tribhuvan etc publish their Marathi dramas and theatrical activities consistently. It is very difficult to compartmentalize or categorize authors in *Asmitadarsha* in a particular genre, category or literary type. There are authors who specialize in particular literary genre, but there are others who are equally good handling or writing in other genres as well.

Asmitadarsha also produced and published critical historical writings of eminent historians such as D.D. Kosambi (historical / cultural thoughts.) K.L. Mahale's articles on various historical issues and *Asmitadarsha* had the honour of publishing highly informative, educative and protest writings of Janardan Waghmare on Afro- American literature. Waghmare wrote exclusively on "Negro literature" or Black literature, culture, and art right from the beginning of *Asmitadarsha*. The Afro-American literature and writing has been given enough exposure in *Asmitadarsha*.⁵⁶ Writings of M.S. Patil on Dalit literature, Indumati Shevade on Dalit short stories, etc found place in the periodical. *Asmitadarsha* also has the credit of publishing writings on various topics and issues such as Marxism, Garmin (rural) literature, Saint Literature etc. It also gives enough space and

⁵⁶Janardan Waghmare wrote extensively on the Negro Question through *Asmitadarsha*. He focused on the Afro-American literature, culture and art right from the beginning of the journal.i.e. 1967-68. Waghmare wrote enormously on Afro-American renowned writers such as James Baldwin, Martin Luther King, Ralph Ellison, and Richard Wright etc in comparative perspective with Dalit literature. See Janardan Waghmare's highly influential text on Afro-American writings American Negro: Literature and Culture 2008.

coverage to comparative literature and writings as well.

Special issues in *Asmitadarsha* are treated as “special reference books”⁵⁷ Pantawane worked minutely and meticulously for the articles, write ups, literary genres etc in terms of minutely observing, checking, and editing the articles in it. He was very particular and serious about the content, subject matter and the substance to be published in *Asmitadarsha*.⁵⁸ Editing literary pieces of different authors Pantawane changed their earlier titles and gave them new titles as per their types and forms for instance the name to Janardan Waghmare’s book *American Negro: Sahitya Any Sanskruti*, Rustam Achalkhamb’s *Gavaki*, P.E. Sonkamble’s *Aathwaniche Pakshi* all these Dalit autobiographies have been renamed by Pantawane himself. In appreciation of *Asmitadarsha* renowned Dalit scholar Shankarrao Kharat remarked that “*Asmitadarsha* is a gazette for Dalits.”⁵⁹

Explaining the worth and significance of special issue published by *Asmitadarsha* at regular time interval Arjun Dangle comments that the special issues in the near future will prove to be very important document of Dalit literature, culture and social movement.⁶⁰

Individual texts can be brought out from the special issues published in *Asmitadarsha*. The special issues are an integral part of *Asmitadarsha*; they need to be treated differently. They are huge source of knowledge, wisdom and intellect. Apart from this there are other genres and writing in *Asmitadarsha* which need due attention and care. In this respect *Asmitadarsha* is an immense source for research and analysis. This is

⁵⁷See Ghandge 2008, p. 8.

⁵⁸See Arjun Dangle’s article on Pantawane “Drashta Vicharvant” (A Visionary thinker) appered in *Prajawani* a Marathi daily 28 March 2018, p. 4.

⁵⁹Gaikwad 2015, p. 72.

⁶⁰See Arjun Dangle’s article on Dr. Pantawane “Chintansheel Sahitik” (A Contemplative Literary) appered in *Punya Nagari* a Marathi daily 28 March 2018, p. 6.

the reason why scholars in Maharashtra in particular have extensively worked on *Asmitadarsha* and the periodical has enjoyed popularity and fame in academic circle.

Asmitadarsha have special issues on new, diverse, rare, neglected, and significant subjects. Some special issues which have been published in *Asmitadarsha* are: Dalit Literature Special issue (1973), Education and Culture Special Issue (1975), Dalit Women Special issue (1981), Dalit Autobiography Special Issue (1983), Indian Constitution Special Issue (1997), and Religion and Culture Special issue (1999) etc.

It has also been the tradition and culture of *Asmitadarsha* to publish special issues on the Individual lives of famous Personalities such as: Mahatma Phule Death Anniversary issue (1990), Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Birth Anniversary issue (1991), Shankarrao Kharat Special issue (1996), D.M. Khairkar Special Issue (1998), Bhalchandra Fadke Special issue (2000) etc.⁶¹

All these are research-oriented writings produced by the individual writers in *Asmitadatrsha*. *Asmitadarsha* has given voice to many relevant issues through discussion, debates and communication for instance following issues have been discussed and later got published in *Asmitadarsha*. It has conducted *Parisanvad* (symposium) discussion on literary issues. Various socio-political issues grappling Dalit lives have also been discussed in the forum. The discussion over various issues paved the way for an Ambedkarite thinking and direction. Through the Dalit literary conferences *Asmitadarsha* explored new writers etc.⁶²

All these discussions and deliberations paved the way for an Ambedkarite thinking and Dalit literary movement. Through these conferences, *Asmitadarsha* created new authors acquired a new vision and attitude of life. I discuss *Asmitadarsha* and

⁶¹See Ghandge 2008, p. 8.

⁶²Ghandge 2008, p. 9.

various issues in Parisanvad or discussion in detail in the fourth Chapter in the thesis. From (1974) onwards *Asmitadarsha* began “Lekhak Wachak Melava” (writer reader conference). Now these conferences have acquired wider scope in and around Maharashtra. Various issues have been discussed through the conference grabbed the attention of the readers. Presidential Speeches have also been published in it. Referring to Gangadhar Pantawane’s *Asmitadarsha* in his article “post-independence Marathi literary criticism” G.M. Kulkarni elaborately remarks:

Gangadhar Pantawane edited and Aurangabad published *Asmitadarsha* periodical has been constantly running for the last fifteen to thirty years projecting Dalit literature. The periodical arranges enthusiastically the literary conferences every year. Along with this *Marathwada*, *Purva*, *Akshar*, *Samaj-Prabodhan Patrika*, *Sadhana*, *Vidroh*, *Samuchit*, *Amhi*, *Astitva*, *Sugava*, and newspapers like *Pustak-Pandhari*, weeklies, periodicals, annual and special issues, all of these are seriously and responsibly taking note of Dalit literature. Not only this Dalit Studies have been included as a part of M.A. Marathi programme in Pune University and Shivaji University and some thesis on Dalit literature have also been published.⁶³

Kulkarni’s comments make it clear that topic like Dalit Studies is being taken up very seriously in an academic circle. There is a wide-ranging discussion, debates and seminars etc that are being organized in the Universities and colleges across the globe on Dalit Studies. In the recent times Ambedkar Study Centre’s, Centre for Human Rights, Centre for Social Exclusion and Inclusion, etc have been set up in the Universities all over India to promote and study the subaltern literature, tradition and culture etc.

There is a reflection of social consciousness and a sense of truth in the pages of

⁶³See G.M.Kulkarni’s article “Swatantryottar Marathi Sahitya-Samiksha” in Kulkarni 2008, p. 359.

Asmitadarsha. Glancing through it one finds that even the artists who have portrayed the drawings in it with utmost sincerity and seriousness pertinent to the socio-political reality at that point of time in Maharashtra. The front page or the cover and the internal sketches and drawings within it are self-revelatory; they speak the mind of the unspoken Dalits. Dalit rebellious drawings symbolically come alive trying to search for its own existence (self) through the pages of *Asmitadarsha*, therefore these drawings are self-revelatory they are lively or life-like. B.M. Paraswale, Bhau Samartha, Pashu Bhagat, Prakash Kamtikar, Shridhar Ambhore, etc. have contributed equally to *Asmitadarsha* through their paintings. Their paintings have essence and symbols. This argument is substantiated by Krishna Kirwale in his text Dalit movement and literature he argues that the front page and the internal drawings in *Asmitadarsha* have a social relevance, essence and sensibility. It symbolise the fact that Dalit drawing is in search of its own existence. They are lively. The Dalit painters as if they are exploring a consciousness of a new kind through their pictures and imageries and images. The sketches are full of social essence and societal awareness.⁶⁴

Apart from the drawing and sketches Pantawane has also added the photographs and pictures taken on important occasions and events for the authentication and documentation purpose. These photographs and pictures taken and added together at regular interval in the pages of *Asmitadarsha* serve as an authentic source for researchers and scholars working on Dalit issues in periodicals and journals. In the initial phase *Asmitadarsha* allowed small advertisements to be published in it due to economic and financial constraints but after the 1990s when it became financially independent it stopped all kinds of advertisements and devoted every single page for intellectual growth

⁶⁴See Kirwale 2006, p. 124.

and development of society.

I would like to give the titles under which the president of the Reader-Writer Conference began their talks or delivered their speeches. Kumud Pawade (A Dalit Feminist Scholar) spoke under the heading “Dalit sahityala tikwayache sarvakash prayatna zale pahijet” (An overall attempt has to be made to preserve Dalit literature from all directions) in which she highlighted the importance and perseverance of Dalit literature. She spoke this in *Asmitadarsha* Writer-Reader Conference held at Osmanabad (1980). Another eminent writer Daya Pawar spoke under “Dalitanchya Chalvali Jenva Tivra Hotat Tenva Dalit Sahitya Janmalayete” (Dalit literature is born whenever Dalit movements get vibrant) he spoke this in *Asmitadarsha* Writer-Reader Conference held at Solapur, 1983. Bhalchandra Fadke speaking at *Asmitadarsha* Writer-Reader Conference in Pune 1985 said “Dalit-sahitya sandarbhat paramparagat sahityasashtrachi punarmandani karavi lagel” (Reconstruction of traditional literary criticism will have to be done in terms of Dalit-literary context) highlighting the need to develop a counter-Dalit-literary discourse in literature.

Maharashtra is a land of great cultural and literary activity. The literary conferences, the Writer-Reader Conferences have also been conducted or organised by Buddhist literary conference. The Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, the Dalit, Adivasi and Gramin Sahitya Sammelan, Ahwaal Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sammelan, the Dalit Natya Sammelan, Parivartan Sahitya Sammelan, Ambedkari Sahitya Sammelan, Akhil Bhartiya Prabuddha Natya Sammelan and Vidrohi Sahitya Sammelan etc.

According to Laxman Gaikwad “Dalit lekhakani jaglayache kam kele pahije” (Dalit writer should work like a watch dog) he spoke this in *Asmitadarsha* Writer-Reader Conference held at Yeotmal, 1993. Prominent Marathi Playwright Premanand Gazvi says, “Dalit Sahitya Awartat Sapadale Ahe” (Dalit literature is trapped in a vicious circle)

Asmitadarsha Writer Reader Conference held at Chandrapur, 1994. Highlighting the importance and history of literature in hundred years R.G. Jadhav begin his talk in *Asmitadarsha* Writer-Reader Conference held in Degloor, 1996 Yogiraj Waghmare asks prominent question “why don’t we write on every aspect of life?” And appeal the writer community to write on every other issue apart from the Dalit issues; he said this speaking at the *Asmitadarsha* Writer-Reader Conference, Murtijapur 1998.⁶⁵ Through all these conferences and assemblies the authors tried their level best to pen down their thoughts on every aspect of Dalit literature and life etc.

Asmitadarsha made these novice writers to reflect, think and express themselves. It gave them the space required for the exposition of their talent or skill. It nurtured them, instilled a sense of oneness and confidence in them. The credit goes to Gangadhar Pantawane, who stood like a wall behind them. He took pain to make *Asmitadarsha* an “ideal” periodical Pantawane has done this herculean task a success of his time where it was just an imagination for any periodicals/magazines to run so uninterruptedly for such a length of time. Pantawane did a splendid job with utmost dedication and determination. The greatness of *Asmitadarsha* lies in the fact that there has not been any joint issue published in the whole history of *Asmitadarsha*, so far. *Asmitadarsha* added to the beauty of it by publishing special issues on intellectual prose-writings. It paved the way to Dalit literature. It provided a maturity and direction by critically analysing the writings within it. As a result, Pantawane was awarded the prestigious Ratnakar Desai award from Mumbai Marathi journalism committee in 1976. Not only this *Asmitadarsha* has been honoured with numerous awards for its thought provoking, remarkable, insightful, informative, and educative, articles in it.

⁶⁵See Limbale 2007.

The contribution of Gangadhar Pantawane is historical indeed, because taking up such a herculean task of running a periodical with a mission is indeed a laborious and herculean task. Making *Asmitadarsha* sound and fitting intellectually in all respect credit goes to Gangadhar Pantawane, who is the whole and the sole of *Asmitadarsha*. One has to accept and admit this without a second thought that Pantawane created a new paradigm in Dalit literature through his thought-provoking journal *Asmitadarsha*. In this respect, one can confidently say that Pantawane lived up to the expectations of Ambedkar's (vision and mission) and worked like a true follower of his social movement running the periodical in the form of *Asmitadarsha* successfully contributing to Dalit Literature and Society through his thought provoking writings as well. Ambedkar's message and appeal for the literary community in this context is significant and apt to mention here. Guiding a writer community in Vidarbha region literary conference held in Nagpur, on 2nd May 1954, Ambedkar remarked:

Manifest sublime, noble and great ideals of life and cultural values through your literary writings. Do not narrow down your aim. Make it broad. Extend, expand, and spread it far and wide. Do not confine your writings to yourself only. Spread it so that it will remove the gloomy darkish atmosphere in the villages. Do not forget that we have a vast world of the millions of Dalits, suppressed, oppressed people around us. Galvanize their lives through your writings. Understand their pain and sorrows and sufferings through you writings elevate their lives, educate them, therein lies real humanity.⁶⁶

Keeping this great message in mind, *Asmitadarsha* was born and worked relentlessly cherishing and preserving the Ambedkarite goal. This lofty thought is inspirational and

⁶⁶See Limbale 2007, p. 4.

greatest for *Asmitadarsha*. It tries its best to put in place Ambedkarite ideology. *Asmitadarsha* is a journal devoted to the cause of spreading and propagating Ambedkarite thought. *Asmitadarsha* has travelled relentlessly surmounting all odds in its path taking up the social cause upon its shoulder. The entire Dalit society was ignited by Ambedkar's movement and thought. With the help and co-operation of Dalit literature *Asmitadarsha* could move forward materialising Ambedkarite mission of social emancipation of the downtrodden in society. Pantawane followed the message of Ambedkar in true spirit launching his masterpiece *Asmitadarsha* successfully in the state.

So far, the mainstream Marathi writing neglected the sorrow, pain and agonies of Dalit society. There was no voice to the voiceless in the mainstream Marathi literature. Therefore, we did not come across the pain and suffering of the Dalits. The Marathi mainstream writing did not try to address the issues related to Dalit society. *Asmitadarsha* did what the mainstream Marathi writing couldn't. The Marathi literature deliberately neglected Dalit life and writings and took pride talking and writing about nature, imaginary and unethical things in life. In Baburao Bagul's words, "the Marathi writer community is basically a Hindu community. Being a Hindu, they never peeped into the alley of Mahar-Mang Wadas (lower castes localities). They are engrossed writing about the Sadashiv Pethi literature (literature created by the upper castes) as per the dictates of Ketkar."⁶⁷

On the contrary the Dalit literature considers "man" at the centre. It holds man at the centre. It considers man superior and God inferior. The Dalit literary circle opted for democracy and egalitarian perspective. Considering this as a work of social reform *Asmitadarsha* has been instrumental producing, writings and publishing thought-

⁶⁷See Pawar and Hathkananglekar 2008, p. 277.

provoking articles regarding Dalits and gradually moving forward since 1967 onwards. *Asmitadarsha* has become a great literary and cultural movement today. Through Ambedkarite thought literary consciousness aroused in Dalit literature. *Asmitadarsha* became the focal point of Dalit literature and its cultural revolt. It is a periodical for the popularity of the issues of the suppressed and the oppressed in society. *Asmitadarsha* is motivated by Phule-Ambedkarite philosophy and works for it. Gangadhar Pantawane, the editor of *Asmitadarsha* writes:

To me Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul, Holy books teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution.⁶⁸

The pain, suffering and the agony of a Dalit life was understood, realized and experienced by Pantawane being a Dalit himself. He had closely studied what it means to be a Dalit in such caste-ridden country like India. Keeping in view the larger pain of Dalit community and to give voice to the voiceless Pantawane began his mouthpiece *Asmitadarsha*. Pantawane believed in the innate capacity of a Dalit; therefore, in order to give them a forum of their own he began *Asmitadarsha*. Pantawane had a firm belief that the literature of Dalit is genuine and because it is the outcome of their own life and lived experiences. Pantawane saw the real spark in it. He always believed that Dalit literature can create a radical change in the socio-political and literary life of a Dalit. With this hope and expectation Pantawane began his most coveted journal *Asmitadarsha*.

Cultural hunger is increasingly growing at rapid speed of late for literature due to audio-visuals, Doordarshan, internet, cybercafé, Facebook, WhatsApp, Blogs, Twitter,

⁶⁸ See Ganguly 2005, p. 132.

Instagram and other social media. In such an atmosphere, very few organizations seem to be working for social propagation *Asmitadarsha* is one of them. It has been tirelessly striving for keeping intact social and political movements. After the demise of Ambedkar *Asmitadarsha* faced challenges boldly, it filled the gap and continued its struggle for existence. There was a reflection of the experimental reality in the writings of the authors. *Asmitadarsha* discussed various issues related to literature, society, culture, religion, history, education, etc.

Asmitadarsha has become a social revolution. The relationship of *Asmitadarsha* has been linked up with Phule-Ambedkrite egalitarian thought. It is related to their idea of a new social order. Dalit literature today has become one of the important literary streams. It has also widened the spheres of Marathi literature. *Asmitadarsha* broadened the circle of overall Marathi literature. Gangadhar Pantawane has been using Ambedkarite thought in an effective manner in *Asmitadarsha*. It has become a social, cultural and literary movement. It is not confined today to a mere periodical only. It has become a part and parcel of social cultural and literary movement. It is effectively carrying forward the social or cultural movement since last fifty years. It always preferred loyalty to Ambedkarism.

Asmitadarsha has created a consciousness of a new kind. It has played a key role whenever there was a contradiction between the established and the oppressed. It emphatically showcased the egalitarian thought of Dalit suppression and Stree Mukti (women liberation). At the same time, it has produced writings on various diverse issues such as literature, society, religion, history, education etc. while so doing it waged a war against slavery and inequality in society.

Asmitadarsha literary conferences are nothing but an intellectual journey and a literary feast for the academicians all over Maharashtra. *Asmitadarsha* literary

conferences are nothing but an intellectual cosmos for the knowledge - loving audience because many Dalit and non-Dalit writers contributed to it. Therefore, it has come to be one of the most prominent periodicals committed to Phule-Shahu-Ambedkarite ideology. Speaking in an interview with G.M. Kulkarni, Pantawane vividly expressed his views on conduction and need of holding Dalit-literary conferences. According to Pantawane,

I conducted *Asmitadarsha* Writer Reader Conference in 1974 along with my friends and companions. Taking conference was the need of the hour. It was important to keep intact the interest and excitement of the authors alive. It encourages them. Conferences are held to boost the confidence and morale of the people. It encourages and gives the writers direction and a way to move forward. In fact, many of them could evaluate themselves critically because of these conferences. A host of these things happen in *Asmitadarsha* literary conferences.⁶⁹

Asmitadarsha produced a series of creative, skilful and talented writers over the years with the initiation of the Writer –Reader gatherings. Every writer struggles to establish himself as a renowned one through sheer determination and wisdom. *Asmitadarsha* conferences motivate the young and the old and treat them equally. It provides them the necessary stage to hone their skills and to prove their worth. *Asmitadarsha* works for its betterment and the writers do vice-versa.

Asmitadarsha has gone beyond Maharashtra, hence we must say due to the vast amount of spread and expanse of Dalit literature; the Marathi literary sphere has been expanded. *Asmitadarsha* gave a new face to the people on the outskirts of the village. These downtrodden people did not see their life in the literature of the traditional writers or in traditional literature. The mainstream Marathi authors deliberately side-lined Dalits

⁶⁹Kulkarni 1997, pp. 53-54.

writers. *Asmitadarsha* gave them a new identity a name, fame and publicity. *Asmitadarsha* recognized the talent within them. It made its stage open for all types of writers constantly taking review of these writers *Asmitadarsha* always strove hard for excellence. It has always insisted upon the personal experiences. It made them write about the experiential reality. Therefore, various writers contributed to *Asmitadarsha* in and around Maharashtra the Dalits and Adivasis expressed the contradictions in their respective lives through it. They expressed their views emphatically through *Asmitadarsha*. They accepted wholeheartedly the challenges of the established writers. They tried to assimilate life with Ambedkarite thought and literature.

Traditional mainstream literary critics proclaimed that Dalit literature is not a literature; but they can't deny the fact that without Dalit literature there can't be the existence of Marathi literature. Without Dalit literature mainstream Marathi literature cannot be completed. Ambedkarite intellectual movement preserved the oppressed Dalit identity. *Asmitadarsha* is not only an intellectual social movement, but it is the transparent mirror of Phule-Ambedkarite ideology.

Asmitadarsha has opened a stage of its own to the Dalit writers specially when there were no publication houses around for them. It encouraged them, and strengthened their literary consciousness. It is a periodical entirety devoted to the intellectual movement of Dalits. It has now acquired professionalism, between loyalty and conduct *Asmitadarsha* preferred loyalty and therefore, *Asmitadarsha* today is seen in a developed way, the reason behind is its perseverance, loyalty, will-power, and strong determination etc. *Asmitadarsha* has been facing challenges of various kinds from its inception.

Since, *Asmitadarsha* is inclusive in nature progressive thinkers and writers are friends to *Asmitadarsha*; therefore, the Marxists writers also were friendly with *Asmitadarsha* family. They also contributed to *Asmitadarsha* through their writings.

Marxist writers such as Narayan Surve, S.D. Karhade, P.S. Nerurkar, and Narhar Kurundkar etc have greatly contributed to the growth and development in it.⁷⁰

Asmitadarsha made its mark carrying out debates and discussions on various issues thus paving way to literary development. It has pondered over Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule's egalitarian principle. Many new writers came forward such as V.B. Kolte, P. L. Deshpande, Kusumagraj, G.T. Madkholkar, Sharadchandra Muktibodh, D.K. Bedekar and P.S. Nerurkar etc. These writers successfully attempted to comment on Ambedkar.

From the beginning itself *Asmitadarsha*, stressed on having discussion and debates on socio-political issues raising voice against inequalities in society. Dalit writers, poets, dramatists, critics, storytellers, spontaneously made the intellectual credentials with social movement and social loyalty. As a part of this in 1980, *Asmitadarsha* organized a discussion on "Namantar" issue vibrant at that point of time entitled it as "Namantar Ek Sanskrutik Chalval." Many Dalit writers told different stories regarding their devastation. Many writers contributed in writing about Dalit lives. Raybhan Jadhav, Nirmalkumar Fadkule, B.H. Kalyankar, Achutrao Khodawe are equally remarkable.⁷¹

An aimed teacher does all the conditioning required on the modern generation and young generation and nurture it Pantawane has just done this through the pages of *Asmitadarsha* relentlessly. Without the contribution of authors nothing could have been achieved asserts Pantawane. Eminent writers helped me in my endeavour proclaimed Pantawane. He is highly indebted to them for their valuable and path-breaking writings. Tarachandra Khandelkar, Waman Hawal, Yogiraj Waghmare, Krushna Kirwale, Manohar Jadhav, Damodhar More, Loknath Yashwant, Bagman Bhoir, Kosher Ghorpade, Sampat

⁷⁰Gaikwad 2015, p. 45.

⁷¹Gaikwad 2015, p. 45.

Gaikwad, Yogendra Meshram, Suresh Sabu, Eknath Sonawane, Machindra Chormale, Sanjeevkumar Sonwane, and Mahendra Gaikwad etc. The list is unending. The purpose behind giving or mentioning the authors is to familiarise the readers with them and their specialisation they have in their respective genre in which they write.

When there was conflict between the traditional Mainstream Marathi writers and Dalit writers, especially when Dalit literature became a laughing stock among the mainstream Marathi writers Dalit writers came forward to answer them back. Raja Dhale, Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul, M.B. Chitnis, Acharya Dinbandhu, Bhalchandra Fadke, Ratnakar Ganavir, Shankarrao Suradkar, Arjun Dangle, Yashwant Manohar, Waman Nimbalkar, and Namdeo Dhasal etc. All of them collectively and forcefully defended the cause of having Dalit literature rather they strengthened it writing thought-provoking and insightful essays and intellectual prose of which the mainstream Marathi writers were jealous of.

The period from 1960s-1970s was a crucial period in terms of the growth, development and progress of Dalit literature like the period 1920s was a period of excellence for the Afro- Americans where they developed art, music, culture and literature of their own in the Harlem town in America. The phenomenon is popularly known as the “Harlem Renaissance.”⁷² Way back in 1960s-1970s Maharashtra experienced similar situation like Renaissance or rebirth in terms of literature, art, culture etc. Amidst all these socio- cultural transition and turmoil *Asmitadarsha* continuously served the community. It worked for social awakenings to a large extent. Since 1974 it has been organizing literary conferences every year, almost in every nook and corner of Maharashtra. The initial gathering of authors in *Asmitadarsha* has turned into literary

⁷²The Harlem Renaissance was an intellectual, social, and artistic explosion centered in Harlem, Manhattan, New York City, spanning the 1920s. At the time, it was known as the “New Negro Movement”, named after the *New Negro*, a 1925 anthology edited by Alain Locke.

conferences now. It has attained academic form and status today.

The social and literary programmes initiated to enhance the writing reading among the people thus educating them. *Asmitadarsha* has always rated humanity at the highest. Ambedkar created men with brain and an intellectual class of people a class of great intellect over a period of time an intellectual army was established or formed.

Asmitadarsha is a hub of multiple academic activities and events not lesser than any University, therefore, if one calls it or gives it the status of a “University” it would not be an exaggeration. Various events take place during *Asmitadarsha* literary conferences such as- Research papers are published, reading debate and discussions takes place, storytelling, Dalit dramas are enacted, Dalit songs are sung same time interviews are conducted, poem reading / reciting sessions are arranged, sometimes there is writer-reader communication etc. All the participants participate in all these events in a disciplined manner. These programmes are conducted with frolic and fun. The age of *Asmitadarsha* is now almost 50 years and the age of *Asmitadarsha* literary conference is 32 years.

In this way, *Asmitadarsha* has become a strongest means of Ambedkarite movement and struggle today. It has been developing steadily and working relentlessly for Ambedkarism. It is standing firmly and working effectively for the spread, propagation and preservation of Ambedkarite ideology. Expressing his gratitude towards *Asmitadarsha* Hrushikesh Kamble student of Pantawane says,

Dalit literature primarily is a field of expressing human sentiments. There is unbreakable bonding between Dalit literature and society. I personally look at my writing as a writer expressing the socio-cultural sentiment of society this very perception I gained while working in the movement of *Asmitadarsha*. I owe my

gratitude to Gangadhar Pantawane who really taught me a lot.⁷³

Appreciating the greatness and glory of Pantawane D.B. Gajapuriya writers in his thought-provoking article titled, “Uttunga Pratibhechi Dhagadhagati Mashal!” in an editorial *Lokmat* a popular Marathi daily. *Asmitadarsha* is the one and only literary periodical of organizing writer’s conference. It is a great intellectual feast for the readers and audience for the cultural exchange. Pantawane sir is the guide and the Sutradhar (anchor) of the same.

During 3rd and 4th January, the 32nd *Asmitadarsha* literary conference was held in Nanded (Maharashtra) presided by Nagaraj Manjule the director of the blockbuster Marathi movie *Sairat*. This is what Manjule said about *Asmitadarsha* Gangadhar Pantawane and the literary conference if we walk on the path shown by Mahatma Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Ambedkar and Buddha only then we can expect for a better tomorrow.⁷⁴

Jagdish Kadam remarks, the literature produced in *Asmitadarsha* we feel is related to our lives, so we developed “Catharsis”⁷⁵ with it. The first Reader-Writer Conference of *Asmitadarsha* was held in Nanded way back in 1975. Pantawane Sir appreciated me and my story-writing. In making me a writer today, *Asmitadarsha* has a lion’s share kadam proclaims. I owe a lot to Pantawane sir and *Asmitadarsha*.⁷⁶

Keshav Deshmukh remarks that the very utterance of the word *Asmitadarsha* is the word of the movement. *Asmitadarsha* not only published literature and brought writers to the limelight it is constantly and consistently involved in doing research, publication, conferences etc. *Asmitadarsha* has a taste, grandeur, and greatness of a

⁷³Kamble 1997, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Asmita* 32nd *Asmitadarsha* Sahitya Sammelan, Nanded. Presidential Speech delivered by Nagaraj Manjule.p. 21.

⁷⁵Catharsis is the process of expressing strong feeling, for example through plays or other artistic activities, as a way of getting rid of anger, reducing suffering, etc.

⁷⁶Jagdish Kadam’s article “*Asmitadarsha* ani Amhi” in *Saka* 3 January 2015. P. 8

different kind. *Asmitadarsha* supported the author writing against injustice and inequality. It always aimed at seeking knowledge, truth and reality. Keeping in mind the need to translate *Asmitadarsha* always move forward and translate literature available in other languages.⁷⁷The passing away of Pantawane was deeply regretted and mourned by almost all Marathi literary fraternity, academicians and newspapers in Maharashtra. This is what the editorial of Balasaheb Thackeray *Samana* a Marathi daily has said,

The Periodical *Asmitadarsha* is a rightful platform of writers with transformative and creative mind. It has produced three generations writers of Dalit movement. Pantawane created history establishing *Asmitadarsha* University in itself. He has successfully carried forward *Asmitadarsha* (against all odds), leading a frugal life (facing economic crisis), resulting in creation of Dalit literary movement and a whole lot of literary personnel.⁷⁸

Asmitadarsha: Questions, Comments and Criticism

Undoubtedly, *Asmitadarsha* has created a revolution in the academic as well as the social sphere across Maharashtra. It came under scanner because of questions, comments and criticism over it. Authors, academicians and activists like Bhausaheb Adasul, Raja Dhale, Yashwant Manohar and Harish Khanderao took strong objection and apprehension over the authenticity and integrity of *Asmitadarsha*. I present here their point of view to initiate a brief discussion over the controversy and confusion that was created in Maharashtra on Pantawane and *Asmitadarsha*.

Bhausaheb Adasul remarks that “Brahmin literary scholars and the Dalit writer

⁷⁷See Keshav Deshmukh’s article “*Asmitadarsha* chya panyachi chav niralicha” in *Sakal* 3 January 2015.p. 8

⁷⁸See the editorial page and the article on Pantawane’s passing on “Lekhakanche Vidyapeeth Harwale” in *Samana* a Marathi Daily 28 March 2018, p. 4.

Pantawane presented a totally wrong and divergent view of the entire graph of Dalit literary history through his tri-monthly periodical *Asmitadarsha*. It is nothing but one of those malicious acts, an attempt and a crab like tendencies of Pantawane to prove his greatness and worth in an academic sphere.” Another criticism that is levelled upon Pantawane is he always pleads and struggles to get blessings or patronage and support from his Brahmin counterparts.⁷⁹

Pantawane has time and again strongly asserted and reiterated through the pages of *Asmitadarsha* that,

We want Ambedkarite literature, we want rebellious literature, we want literature with Ambedkarite consciousness, and we don’t want masked or artificial literature.⁸⁰

A responsible thinker and an eminent scholar like Pantawane who strongly asserts for an Ambedkarite literature and cause, the one who is completely devoted and committed to Ambedkarite vision and mission. Why would he present a distorted and a divergent view of the history of Dalit literature and culture in the first place? Therefore, Adsul’s criticism on Gangadhar Pantawane seems to be invalid and irrelevant.

Looking at Pantawane’s educational Background with his specialization in “Marathi” and his colleagues who mostly belong to Marathi subject and upper castes wrote profusely in Marathi language, literature and culture etc. It is possible that in the formative years of *Asmitadarsha* Pantawane might have taken help from them in terms of their literature to begin *Asmitadarsha* and also pleaded them to enrich *Asmitadarsha* contributing into it. This is evident from the initial issues of *Asmitadarsha* 1967-68 if we glance through it. Undeniably, Pantawane’s upper caste friends and colleagues came

⁷⁹See Adsul 1977, p. 11.

⁸⁰See Gangadhar Pantawane edited *Asmitadarsha* October-November-December issue 1978, p. 44.

forward contributing to *Asmitadarsha* through their literature etc.

Drawing our attention at Raja Dhale's influential presidential speech at *Asmitadarsha* Reader Writer Conference, Pune Adsul remarks that Dhale severely criticized *Asmitadarsha*. He questions the credibility and the credentials that *Asmitadarsha* created. Referring to the periodical *Asmitadarsha* Dhale emphasized on the usage of the two significant words *Asmita* (Identity) and *Adarsha* (Ideals) that it has created through it. It is interesting to mention that Dhale was one of the most loyal follower and carrier of Ambedkarite thought. He was known for his unwavering and relentless commitment to Ambedkarite thought in Maharashtra. Dhale is a rebellious and a prolific personality in an Ambedkarite movement and literature. He is appreciated for his firm stand on Phule- Ambedkar ideology. According to Bhausaheb Adsul, "Advocate B.C. Kamble, Myself Bhausaheb Adsul, Raja Dhale, and Vijay Sonvane have been the staunch follower of Ambedkarite literature from 1950 onwards."⁸¹

Commenting on the regular usage of two terms i.e. Dalit and *Asmita* in *Asmitadarsha* Dhale remarks that, first of all, we must do is to discard or ban the word "Dalit" from our literature and the second word is *Asmitadarsha*. These two words might have been used several times in the context of literary discussions. Conceptualising Dalit identity Dhale remarks that Dalit and *Asmita* are two entirely contradictory terms because the one who is a Dalit (the oppressed section of society) do not have *Asmita* (self-identity or consciousness) and the one who has *Asmita* or identity cannot be a Dalit. In Dhale's view this is not just a word play but things to comprehend and understood by people in all intricacies. Dhale strongly object the usage of the "Dalit" for the literature of the marginalized. In his opinion we have come a long way from our state of "Dalithood." He

⁸¹See Adsul 1977, p. 49.

raises pertinent and pointed question such as why should we stick to Dalithood even today? Have we not come a long way from it? What kind of reflection is this? What kind of consciousness lies in the word “Dalit”? Why the marginalized people take pride and precedence in calling and considering themselves still “Dalit”? What is the ideal of our identity? Is it Dalithood or Phule- Ambedkarite thought? Dhale further asserts that the one who are stick to the word (Dalit) do not have answer to all the questions I posed to them I know for sure.⁸²

According to Dhale there is a need to think logically, newly and with a fresh perspective shunning all traditional definitions of the word “Dalit” given by learned scholars. One has to keep in mind the fact that Phule and Ambedkar were the strongest supporters of Dalits but not of “Dalithood.” Coming down heavily upon some Dalit scholars and authors who do it deliberately, Dhale remarks that within (the Dalits) us there are people who are supporters of Dalithood instead of Dalits.

Expressing deep anxiety and anger over the rampant use of the word Dalit Dhale explains I have stopped the usage of the word “Dalit” for two decades. I propose to call our literature “Ambedkari Preraneche Sahitya” (Literature of Ambedkarite inspiration) later; I added another word Phule to it and began calling it “Phule-Ambedkarite inspirational literature.” Dhale’s option to Dalit literature seems logical, authentic and relevant because the very beginning of the entire Dalit struggle in the real sense began from Mahatma Phule and culminated in Babasaheb Ambedkar. In fact Phule and Ambedkar are the towering figures in Dalit discourse and for every Dalit in Maharashtra. Dhale’s conceptualization of Phule-Ambedkar ideology is an ideology of commitment for social change; it is transparent, transformative in creed and therefore seems a viable

⁸²See Adsul 1977, pp. 51-52.

option for Dalits to follow.

The crux of Dhale's entire argument is his rejection of Dalithood, a state which reduces and degrades human being to nothing. He argues that if the literature of the marginalized is born for the rejection of Dalithood how can it be Dalit? Dalit is an old age practice which has been imposed upon us. We have not happily accepted it. It has been forcibly imposed upon us by the oppressive Manu. It is not the state we received from Phule- Ambedkarite struggle. If this is the case, then how our literature is Dalit? Why do we assert our Dalithood/Dalitness upon us? Dhale asks a straight forward question to Dalit writers are we truly Phule-Ambedkarites or hidden Manuwadi's? (Followers of Manu)

Dhale clearly denounced imposed Dalithood upon Dalits. He urges Dalits to give up their Dalit label and accept or call themselves Ambedkarites. Through his thought-provoking speech Raja Dhale launched a critique on the writers who write in *Asmitadarsha* not with Ambedkarite perspective but with Marxist inclination.⁸³ Dhale was an organic intellectual and a prolific writer who observed the socio-political, cultural and literary movement in Maharashtra so closely that he had in-depth knowledge of the pros and cons of the literature and society. Dhale's major concern and anxiety was the tendency of Dalit writers to exhibit "Dalithood" to gain sympathy from society.

It is true on one hand that there are innumerable difficulties in a Dalit's life and he talks about it to gain social justice. It is also true that a Dalit life is nothing but a life of degradation and destitution; on the other hand Dhale asks how long a Dalit should cling to his status as Dalit. Should he not try coming out of it? He criticized the writers who wants to be benefited talking about "Dalithood." He criticized those who are interested in

⁸³See Adsul 1977, p. 55.

exposing the helpless condition in a Dalit life producing literature keeping the interest of the upper castes. Through his prolonged speech he tries to give a proper way of analysing and interpreting Dalit literature calling it inspirational literature of Phule-Ambedkar consciousness.

Clarifying his stand further emphasizing on literature with Phule-Ambedkarite consciousness Dhale writes in his influential article, “Yekvisavya Shatakachya Sandarbhat Phule-Ambedkarvadachi Mandani”⁸⁴(Reconstruction of Phule-Ambedkarite literature in the 21st century) that there is a need to newly establish Phule-Ambedkarite ideology in the 21st century especially when other ideologies (Marxist) are trying to define it. Dhale criticize the Marxists and their way to drag Ambedkarism towards Marxism in the process trying to define Ambedkarism. According to Dhale Marx and Ambedkar differ in terms of their thought processes. One finds that Ambedkar gives priority to a classless, casteless and an egalitarian society whereas Marx insists on economic equality. Both the thoughts are well knitted and perfect from their own perspective as a result there is formation of their individual philosophies in society. Dhale enquires if we try to change the course of their ideology will there be not a contradiction?

Therefore, one must not try to exchange one for the other for personal benefit or for diverting society making it directionless. Hence, there is need to re-define Phule-Ambedkarism newly removing all kinds of misleading tendencies and misconceptions within it. Dhale’s insistence on Phule-Ambedkarite ideology seems logical and genuine because there has to be a perfect balance and synergy between inspiration and ideals otherwise the desired results cannot be expected. Phule and Ambedkar both were literary thinkers in a way. The people and authors who claim and call themselves the carrier and

⁸⁴ See Raja Dhale’s influential article, “Yekvisavya Shatakachya Sandarbhat Phule-Ambedkarvadachi Mandani” in *Prabuddha Bharat* special issue 1999, p. 8.

follower of Phule-Ambedkar ideology remain empty on the grass root cannot do anything for the fulfilment of Phule-Ambedkarite vision and mission. Taking cue from Ambedkar Dhale spoke in an Ambedkarite tone:

I have been a critic and I must continue to be such. It may be, I am making mistakes, but I have always felt that it is better to make mistakes than to accept guidance and direction from others or to sit silent and allow things to deteriorate.⁸⁵

In this regard, I would like to draw attention of the reader to the criticism launched against Gangadhar Pantawane. Pantawane was highly criticized to be seen in RSS programmes and platforms. According to K. Jamanadas, RSS is a multi-pronged octopus with many wings working to spread the RSS influence among the Dalits and Buddhists.⁸⁶ Therefore, Pantawane's presence in the RSS quarters was highly condemnable and non-excusable indeed.

There is certain amount of truth in the criticism and comment that has come from Dalit community. Questions were posed therefore, on the honesty, integrity, authenticity and character of Pantawane. How can a writer like Pantawane commit such a blunder? Questions, comments and criticism were levelled against Pantawane for his close contacts with the upper caste friend circle and literary fraternity as well. Pantawane's name once again came in the limelight in 1997 when Yashwant Manohar took objection over Pantawane's integrity and loyalty towards literature. Yashwant Manohar in a collection of poetry *Diary* by Yuvraj Gangaram passed some derogatory remarks on Pantawane. Due to some baseless and humiliated remarks made by Yashwant Mahohar he was charged

⁸⁵ See Raja Dhale's influential Presidential speech delivered at *Asmitadarsha* literary conference- 21 organized by Dalit Literary Conference, Pune from 27-28.1995, p. 39.

⁸⁶ See K. Jamanadas 2014, p. 152.

and pulled in the court of law by Pantawane under article 285-92 on 30-10-1992.⁸⁷ In this case, Pantawane won the battle and proving himself blameless and genuine. For the wide exposure and publicity of this entire issue Pantawane gave enough evidence of the dismissal or disapproval of the charges on him. He published the whole issue through various newspapers, magazines, and periodicals *Asmitadarsha* in particular.

Asmitadarsha, in general and Pantawane in particular became much more sensitive, conscious and serious due to various kinds of critical remarks from the scholars, who write in it. This kind of criticism was necessary to put *Asmitadarsha* right on the track of Ambedkarism all the time. In other words, *Asmitadarsha* and Pantawane both became alert, attentive and conscious towards the goal of Ambedkarism due to timely intervention and critical engagement of the contributors in it.

Pantawane provided the much needed rather essential platform for the writers to express themselves wholeheartedly in *Asmitadarsha* and the writers wrote in it diligently and responsibly considering it (a rightful place) of their own to have their say. In this way *Asmitadarsha* truly became a periodical of eminence due to the committed, concerted, devoted and rigorous efforts of the contributors (writers, scholars and intellectuals) writing in it.

Despite several questions, comments and criticism *Asmitadarsha* continuously kept running on a single track of Ambedkarite thought as its base since 1967-68. The pain, trouble and the efforts Pantawane took to run the periodical are no doubt undeniable. His efforts are indeed noteworthy, stupendous and remarkable. Pantawane deserves special thanks for successfully carrying forward Ambedkarite vision and mission through his most popular journal *Asmitadarsha*.

⁸⁷ See Gangadhar Pantawane's *Asmitadarsha* issue Jan-Feb-Mar 1997 pp. 65-66 in which Pantawane provide evidence through newspaper cuttings of his innocence in this whole controversy against him. The newspaper cuttings show articles of apology and plea from Yashwant Manohar to Pantawane.

Chapter Three

***Asmitadarsha* Literature, Society and Culture**

Asmitadarsha produced eminent literature and achieved excellence in the process it has created an ideal Ambedkarite society and culture in post Ambedkarite Maharashtra. Under the larger domain of literature, society, and culture I attempt to study different articles in *Asmitadarsha*. The chapter will look at literature produced in *Asmitadarsha* from (1967- 2000) and the society and culture that has evolved since then. It will highlight various socio-political, cultural, literary and historical issues in Maharashtra from an Ambedkarite perspective. This chapter has been divided into two sections *AB* and *CD* respectively, for the sake of convenience and ease to concentrate and study individual articles in *Asmitadarsha*. Section *A* and *B* will focus on various Socio-Political and Cultural issues and section *C* and *D* will focus on the Literary and Historical issues. Both Section *AB* and *CD* studies various kinds of socio-political, cultural, literary and historical issues from an Ambedkarite perspective. The best way to judge or justify articles in *Asmitadarsha* (whether they have elements or traces of Ambedkarite thought or not) in my view is to apply the parameters which constitutes Ambedkarite thought such as Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice to it. Because Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice form the crux of Ambedkarite thought in a nutshell.

I apply the parameters of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice which altogether constitute Ambedkarism to measure and analyse issues in *Asmitadarsha*. Through a critical study of the issues in *Asmitadarsha* I attempt to trace Ambedkarism with the help of its parameters. As Ambedkarism is the crux of the thesis each segment in this chapter has been studied from an Ambedkarite perspective. Glancing through Maharashtra's dynamic and sensational history it is seen that that every year the socio-

political, cultural, literary and historical issues changed in Maharashtra; the reflection of it is seen in *Asmitadarsha* issues. *Asmitadarsha* focus on the progressive aspect of the socio- political, cultural, literary and historical developments. Right from the beginning till date various issues have been dealt upon by the writers in *Asmitadarsha*. It has captured and covered all these socio-political equations and the ups and downs which have happened in Maharashtra from 1967-68 onwards.

I attempt to analyse the Socio-Political and the cultural Issues in *Asmitadarsha* individually. I argue that these articles explicitly represent Ambedkarite thought and ideology. It is really a daunting task to categorize and conduct individual study of the issues in *Asmitadarsha* like the way I attempt to do because the issues merge with each other so often that it becomes all the more difficult to compartmentalize or categorize them into a specific category. The categorization or classification of these articles has been done in this chapter simply for the sake of an in-depth analysis and focus on the individual issues in *Asmitadarsha* and to have a compactness and rigour in the thesis. In fact all the articles on different and diverse subjects, titles and genres are the representative or the carrier of Ambedkarite thought or message in their own ways. For research constraints, I focussed on few of them. The articles have been selected based on their potentiality and strength and their relevance to Ambedkarite thought or Ambedkarism in the contemporary times. In a way, the articles represent Ambedkarite thought and ideology. The attempt is to investigate and trace Ambedkarite thought through these writings.

The chapter intends to study and focus on the significant and the most essential writings produced through *Asmitadarsha* over the years. It attempts to cover all the major and minor developments in terms of issues of social concerns. This chapter will pave the way forward for the research aspirants to look through the issues involved in it which

forms a base for further analysis. It will familiarise the readers and the researchers with the prolific and prominent scholars, writers, activists and their writings in *Asmitadarsha*. The articles produced in *Asmitadarsha* are highly intellectual, thought provoking and scholarly and, therefore; they are considered to be an important source and documents for research and analysis. In this sense, *Asmitadarsha* happens to be a time tested and time proven periodical in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra.

Socio-Political Issues in *Asmitadarsha*

Asmitadarsha always prioritise Ambedkarite thought and philosophy. It considers Ambedkarite thought its foundational basis. Therefore, authors in *Asmitadarsha* wrote keeping in view Ambedkarite Philosophy and vision. This chapter will discuss individual articles in *Asmitadarsh* to have a better understanding of Ambedkarite thought and philosophy. Ratnakar Ganvir's article "Hindu Sanskruti, Jatiwyawastha Ani Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar"¹ (Hindu Culture, Caste System and Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar) in *Asmitadarsha* highlight Ambedkar's views on Hindu-culture, caste system and the Untouchability. Through his famous newspapers *Bahishkrut Bharat* and *Mooknayak*² Ambedkar launched his crusade against the oppressive Hindu social system. This article opens up a discussion on Ambedkar's and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's views on Hinduism. According to Ambedkar Untouchability is a peculiar feature of Hindu society. There is no parallel to it anywhere in the world. Untouchability has been observed and

¹*Asmitadarsha* "Prabodhan" special issue, 9 (2) 1976, pp. 15 and 17.

²Ambedkar began his fortnightly *Mooknayak* (The Dumb Hero) in January 1920 to articulate and address the cause of the untouchables in Maharashtra. Ambedkar edited his own paper *Bahishkrut Bharat* on 3rd February 1928. Due to the publication of the newspapers and fortnightlies a twister like situation aroused in the upper caste Hindu localities and households. *Bahishkrut Bharat* ran consecutively for two years. It has contributed greatly in terms of reforming and organizing Dalit society to a large extent. Apart from these two newspapers Ambedkar had other newspapers to his credit such as *Janata*, *Samata* and *Prabuddha Bharat* (published posthumously). See Narke 2008, p. 3.

practised in India not for a short period but for a longer period, it is eternal in nature. The Hindu culture made Untouchability eternal. The Hindu culture and civilization could hardly be called civilization. It is a diabolic contrivance to suppress and enslave humanity. Therefore, its proper name would be infamy.³In this respect, Ambedkar refused the claims made by S. Radhakrishnan. In his Upton lectures on *Hindu view of life* 1926 Europe, glorifying and valorising Hindu culture and tradition. Radhakrishnan says, “I represent Hinduism as a progressive historical movement still in the making.”⁴Moreover, he described the Buddha as “the maker of modern Hinduism.”⁵ Ambedkar strongly disagrees with both his propositions and claims made by him.

Radhakrishnan expressed his views glorifying Hindu culture and tradition; how it has survived despite heavy odds all these years. Refusing and refuting his claim straightaway Ambedkar pose question to Radhakrishnan he says, “people who take pride in being Hindu” is least important that you lived or survived but how you survived is more important. According to him there are many ways of survival some people survive for self-respect, some survive for surrender, in both these survivals, one survival is survival of humanity and the other one is of inhumanity. Therefore, it is wrong to think that the Hindu nation could survive for such a long time because it was stronger; further he adds, “Hindu society survived as a slave-nation for such a long time.” The wise people did not annihilate them. They showed mercy on them, therefore it is surviving. So, there is nothing to take pride in such a thing called “Hindu” religion. We at least are ashamed of living such a lowly life! Propounds Ambedkar.

The point Ambedkar was trying to make here is “living worthily is more important than just merely living.” Living with self-respect and dignity is worth living for

³See BAWS 2010, p. 239.

⁴See Rao 1994, pp. 67-68.

⁵See Singh 1996, p. 109.

Ambedkar and this is what he wanted his people to follow. That is what precisely Ambedkarism is. For Ambedkar, self-respect, morality, and dignity of a human being matters the most than anything else. He insists the marginalized to live life with self-respect and dignity which is the basis for Ambedkarism. Ambedkar has done a straightforward and brilliant analysis of Hindu culture and tradition in his monumental work *Annihilation of Caste*, he expressed similar views on Hindu culture in his famous speech in Lahore's Jat-Pat Todak Mandal, he said,

A Hindus life has been a life of continuous defeat and what appears to him to be life ever-lasting is not living ever-lastingly but is really a life which is perishing ever-lastingly. It is a mode of survival of which every right-minded Hindu, who is not afraid to own up the truth, will feel ashamed.⁶

This popular speech by Ambedkar made great sensation among the Hindus especially Mahatma Gandhi and Vinayak Damodhar Savarkar for which both criticized Ambedkar for being anti-national. Dejected, disappointed and enraged V.D. Savarkar wrote "Vijayisheel Hindu Rashtra" an article glorifying the Hindu nation or *Rashtra* in response to Ambedkar. Not only this, Savarkar's impatient and restless mind comes to rest and peace only after completion of his text *Bhartiya Itihasatil Saha Soneri Pane*,⁷ 1963 in this way, the Hindu ideologues like Savarkar and Gandhi were trying to defend Hinduism in their own ways launching a counter-discourse to Ambedkar on religious matters Hinduism in particular. Savarkar was busy trying to reconstruct Hindu society establishing "Hindu-Nationalism"⁸ Gandhi provided the necessary strength for the

⁶See BAWS 1979, p. 66.

⁷See Savarkar 2012.

⁸D.N. Gokhale's biography on Vinayak Damodhar Savarkar gives a detailed and comprehensive vision of Savarkar on Hinduism. It explains in detail every aspect of Hinduism. According to Gokhale Savarkar's Hindutva agenda was much more comprehensive and inclusive in nature. In the formation of his Hindu nationalism he expected Annihilation of caste. Savarkar desired to assimilate 5-6 crore untouchables into

propagation and growth of Hinduism writing and talking extensively on Hinduism.⁹

Hindu society got a special knack of assimilating and dissolving biggest philosophers into its fold. Thinkers, ideologues and reformers from the Buddha to Nanak, Nanak to Kabir, Kabir to Ram Mohan Roy, Roy to Ranade, and Bhandarkar, all of them adopted together as part of the Hindu social reformers. Ambedkar comes up with altogether different analysis of Hindu society. According to Ambedkar Hindu society is like France's "Bourbon royal society"¹⁰ which learns nothing and forgets nothing."¹¹ Despite being such a shameless society it has no regrets. It has to be admitted that it has flexibility to defend its existence and identity at any cost according to Ambedkar nobody can challenge the Hindu Pundits in finding solution. They are ready to go to any extent to have their say it is their inherent tendency. This article discussed various views on Hinduism expressed by different scholars over the years. It familiarise us with Ambedkarite values of self-respect and dignity.

"Maharshi Shinde Yani Keleli Dalitanchi Seva" (Maharshi Shinde's service to Dalits) in this article¹²R.N. Chavan reviewed the socio- political contribution of Maharshi

the Hinduism. He strove hard for liberating Hinduism from the conservative and traditional creed. See Gokhale 2010, p. 110.

⁹ According to Sukhdev Gandhi was a follower of a fundamentalist and conservative Brahminical Hinduism and a shrewd politician. He always upheld the cause and purpose of Hinduism. Sukhdev criticize Gandhi exposing the real face of Gandhi in his influential text. See Sukhdev 2015, p. 240.

¹⁰ Bourbon Dynasty in France was the most powerful one. The Bourbon ruled France from 1589-1792, when Louis xvi was overthrown and executed during the French Revolution. The family was established as the hereditary lords of Bourbon and vassals of the Capetian dynasty that established French monarchy in the tenth century. See <https://www.encyclopedia.com>

¹¹ Ambedkar had a keen study and observation of the Hindu society and the people. Exposing the skilful behaviour and tactful appearance of the Hindu society Ambedkar writes in his newspaper *Bahishkrut Bharat* that the period from the Buddha till the Gandhi provides enough evidence of the fact that how skilfully the Hindus have defended Hinduism. The followers of Gandhi in Maharashtra have done enough efforts for the removal of untouchability? There were Hindus who opposed reforms against untouchability. The Hindus have such an old age innate skill to assimilate accomodate and dissolve anything intolerable against Hinduism. "Hindu society is like France's Bourbon society which learns nothing and forgets nothing." The Hindu society has the ability, tolerance and the flexibility to secure and preserve its existence at all cost. Nobody can deny or doubt the ability of the Hindus Shashtripandits to find solution or a way out over anything. They act and compromise as per the need of the time it is there in the blood of the Hindus. See Ambedkar B.R. *Bahishkrut Bharat* April 12. 1929 in BAWS 2008, p. 262 (4).

¹² *Asmitadarsha* 11 (2) 1978, p. 9 and 12.

Shinde for the emancipation of the untouchables. Focus the unfocussed and listening to the unheard or the subaltern has always been the aim of *Asmitadarsha*. Therefore, it has ingeniously worked to cherish its goal. This is an informed article in terms of understanding the efforts of social reforms carried out by Vitthal Ramji Shinde and others for the betterment of Dalit society.

Chavan states that, Shinde began his work of social emancipation of Dalits fifteen years after the demise of Mahatma Jotiba Phule. Phule began working on the questions of untouchability for the first time in India. Shinde continued his legacy and carried it forward diligently. There has always been a consistent effort of social reforms by some or the other charismatic personality in the course of time that is how the untouchables improved their social status. In the success story of the untouchables Shinde also contributed extensively. Shinde discuss at length on untouchability in his monumental work *Bhartiya Asprushyatecha Prashna?*¹³ (Question of India's Untouchability)

This work on the untouchable question was unique in the sense that for the first time in the beginning of the twentieth century a non-Dalit like Shinde dared to speak on such a controversial subject like untouchability. Shinde contributed profusely writing on untouchability. Putting the crucial question of untouchability on the National platform such as the Indian National Congress he tried to give it a movement's status. Shinde's greatness lies in the fact that he began an organization to address the concerns of the downtrodden called the "Depressed Classes Mission", in 1906 undertaking actual task of emancipation of the untouchables.¹⁴

¹³Shinde 2003.

¹⁴Ambedkar organized the Depressed Classes Association in 1930, clashed with Mahatma Gandhi at the second Round Table Conference by demanding separate electorates for Dalits. In 1919 when the Reforms committee (Franchise), commonly known as the Southborough Committee was set up under the new government of India Act, 1919, Shinde was also invited to give evidence before it on behalf of his mission. He and two other representatives of Mahars, Ambedkar and G.A. Gawai, demanded separate electorates for

Shinde always believed that more than education the elevation, cultivation and sublimation of mind is more important therefore, he wanted to bring spiritual transformation of the untouchables. Shinde believed that once the spiritual growth of mind happens, he would be a liberated being. This is where we find Shinde sounding more like Gandhi. In fact, Shinde was influenced by Gandhian philosophy. Ambedkar also wanted his follower to be spiritual but practical at the same time. Therefore, he opted and insists on pragmatic Buddhism.

There have been efforts from the upper castes for the removal of untouchability but they were superficial, unsubstantial and pseudo in nature according to Ambedkar. Shinde's incomplete task of the socio-political liberation of untouchables was later carried forward under the able leadership of Ambedkar. He instilled confidence among his follower and prepared them for the socio-political struggle for their emancipation.

“Mahar Vatan: Yek Drushtikshep”¹⁵(Mahar Vatan at a glance) in this article S.S. Narwade critically analyse Ambedkar's view on the much-debated Mahar *Vatan* (hereditary offices) Ambedkar was highly critical of the notion of Mahar *Vatan* its privileges and benefits the untouchables gained. He has expressed his views on Mahar

the depressed classes. Shinde and Ambedkar demanded for the rights of the Depressed Classes before the Southborough Committee from different perspective. No doubt Shinde's contribution to the removal of untouchability is great indeed but due to his imposition of the upper caste Hindus over the political rights of the untouchables Ambedkar brought no confidence motion in a conference *Bhartiya Bahishkrut Sabha* held on 1st June 1920 at Nagpur under the Presidentship of Shahu Maharaj. According to Hiroyuki Kotani Ambedkar emphasized that the depressed classes were naturally entitled to separate electorates already given to Muslims and also that depressed classes would be represented by their own community members. He and other depressed class leaders denounce Shinde's proposal for electoral qualification as being too high for them and he and his mission were severely criticized on this point in the first Akhil – *Bhartiya Bahishkrut Parishad* held in Nagpur on 30-31 May 1920. See Kotani 1999, p. 189. Shinde used the term Depressed Classes in a comprehensive manner. It includes all marginalized section of society. According to Shinde due to internal differences between the lower castes Shinde thought all of them collectively. Shinde maintained that due to highly pathetic and vulnerable conditions of the untouchable and economic disparity there was economic backwardness in Depressed Classes. One of the reasons behind Ambedkar's disapproval to Shinde's reform agenda of the untouchable could be his close association with Gandhi and his influence on him and his mission of removal of untouchability. Ambedkar differed from Gandhian ways of social reforms of the depressed classes in a big way.

¹⁵*Asmitadarsha* 11 (4) 1978, p. 126 and 130.

Vatan out rightly in his writings and speeches. Narwade begins his article talking about the glorious history of Mahars in Maharashtra and their downfall in this article. According to him, Rajaramshashtri Bhagwat, V.K. Rajwade, Khanapurkar and Shridhar Ketkar all these writers have categorically stated that “Maharashtra is the state of Mahars.”¹⁶ All of them proved with proper evidence that the Mahars once dominated the state of Maharashtra. According to Wamanrao Bhat,

There are many indications to show that the Mahars were an ancient nation or a large community inhabiting and occupying the plains of Maharashtra. Very probably through conquest, they lost their possessions and have been treated for generations as a subject people.¹⁷

The Mahars had self-esteem and intelligence. They had a glorious past in India. They had established their kingdom in the past independently. They enjoyed power and prestige in the past. With the passage of time the same brave Mahars become paupers; they were made so by the socio-political and economic system in India. Later on the Mahars were made to work for the upper castes in their own land.¹⁸ Such was the brutal fate of Mahar's. They were made to suffer relentlessly and experience the worst face of life from the upper castes in India.

Narwade's article precisely takes stock of the position of the Mahars in the past and what they became, how they became, and why they became so? This article on the whole revolves round these intriguing and grappling questions of the untouchables and the untouchability that was prevalent in the past. Adding further in this article Narwade

¹⁶According to C.B. Khairmode Mahar is one of the most prominent untouchable castes among the other untouchable castes in Maharashtra. The history of this caste has died down with the passage of time. From whatever information that is available today of the Mahar community it is seen that Mahar folk were the original inhabitants of Maharashtra. Not only this, they were highly intellectual, cultured, and warriors of a class. They were the ruling class once upon a time in Maharashtra. See Khairmode 2010, pp. 13-14.

¹⁷ See Khairmode 2010, p. 16.

¹⁸See Dhasal 2010, p. 76.

says that in place of their work the Mahars were given 52 rights. They were made slaves of the upper castes. The upper castes become rich on their labour and hard work. The Mahars of Bidar got them from the Muslim kings.¹⁹ These rights were very old and ancient and with the passage of time they got administrative status. During Bahamani dynasty their number become (52) therefore they are called 52 rights.

Baluta (Barter) was another source of income for Mahars, but here too there were many difficulties involved in it.²⁰ Patil's and the Kulkarni's were more benefitted by the Baluta, they misused their power. Narwade talks about the third beneficiary thing for the Mahars. It was through cash (paid cash). The Mahars too would get a meagre amount at the end of the month was the entire scenario. The Mahar community drastically changed because of the Mahar Watandari system the Mahars were ruined, crushed and shattered literally. They lost their self-respect. The Baluta system was mistook for begging and thus the Mahars were called beggars.

Maharki (a symbol of suppression and tyranny) was a sign of slavery and inactiveness on the part of Mahars. It led the Mahars to their systematic deterioration and downfall. Therefore, criticizing *Maharki* Ambedkar wrote five articles in *Bahishkrut Bharat* explaining the faults lie in it and the ways and means to curb it. In 1927 Ambedkar began his struggle for the abolition of Mahar *Vatan*. Later in 1958 his efforts materialized when the then chief minister of Maharashtra Yashwantrao Chavan passed an act abolishing Mahar *Vatan* across Maharashtra²¹ Hiroyuki Kotani has elaborately discussed about Mahar *Vatan* in his influential work *Caste System, Untouchability and the Depressed*.²²

¹⁹See Kathare 2011, pp. 64-65.

²⁰See Robertson 2010, p. 38.

²¹See Kathare 2011, p. 122.

²²See Kotani 1999.

Mahar improvement would have been impossible without the annihilation or violation of Mahar *Vatan*. Largest chunk of Mahar society was devoid of education because of *Vatandari* system. Ambedkar was nominated as the representative of the Depressed Classes of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1927. He took special interest in Mahar *Vatan* system. He filed a petition on 19th March, 1928. Ambedkar once warned if the government did not release the Mahars from the clutches of the Mahar *Vatan* or if the Bill is not passed then we will call for all India level strike. I would even spend my entire lifetime for that.

The *Baluta* was a system of feudal relationship between the landlords and the Mahars, for the unending services. Ambedkar made revolutionary changes to the Mahar *Vatan*. The Mahars inherited *Vatan* or *Inam* (gifted land) from pre-British rulers in lieu of the services rendered by them. It was Ambedkar who made the British convert *Baluta* into money and allowed the Mahar holders of a small *Vatan* to free himself from the obligation to serve the landlords.²³ Renowned Dalit writer Daya Pawar's sensational autobiography *Baluta*²⁴ (a perquisite) 1978, discussed at length the plight of Dalits under this inhuman and heinous social system in Maharashtra.

Ambedkar formed Mumbai state senior villager association. He struggled rigorously for the passage of this Bill or to annihilate the Mahar *Vatan*. It was at last legally abolished by the Bombay inferior village *Vatan* Abolition Act of 1958.²⁵ Greatest historical contribution of Ambedkar is the liberation of Mahars from the slavish Mahar *Vatan* mentality. It is a golden leaf in terms of human liberation. Ambedkar's revolutionary legislations, a series of laws has forced caste society to face up its own tacit comfort with slavery.

²³See Kotani 1999, pp. 125-26.

²⁴See Pawar 1978.

²⁵See Kotani 1999, p. 129.

Another significant article throwing light on Ambedkar's social service and his great contribution to Dalit emancipation is "Dr.Ambedkar Ani Rajarshee Shahu Chhatrapati" (Dr.Ambedkar and Rajarshee Shahu Chattrapati) by R.N. Chavan²⁶ It deals with the social contribution of both these thinkers respectively. Shahu Maharaj always praised and appreciated Ambedkar's efforts and work of social emancipation of the untouchables in Maharashtra. Shahu Maharaj's prophecy came true in the later years. Shahu Maharaj always encouraged and motivated, the downtrodden community. "Self-progress" and "self-dependency" was the message given by him to the untouchables.

Rajarshi Shahu had great faith and aspirations in Ambedkar. Ambedkar chose Buddhism proposed by Shahu Maharaj in 1919-1920. Shahu Maharaj had a vision and a prophetic outlook of life. He relentlessly worked for the Dalit upliftment. He met Ambedkar, wrote letters to Ganesh Gawai. 1920 is considered to be the most important year in terms of jobs and opportunities for the untouchables. The All India Depressed Classes Conference held at Nagpur the same year Shahu proclaimed his decision to issue a stand (royal order) for assurance that Mahars, Mangs and others could get any jobs they wanted. It was also in this very year that Shahu formed a close relationship with Ambedkar. Ambedkar left for London for his study with the financial support from Shahu.²⁷ Shahu Maharaj took some bold steps and applied stringent measures for the improvement of the marginalised in society. He discarded the post of Kulkarni (village script) who held considerable influence in rural society and set up new positions for non-Brahmans including the untouchables. The significant contribution of Shahu Maharaj is his abolition of the *Vatan* (balut) system 1918, by which he liberated *balutedars* from village services. More importantly, he showed considerable interest in the emancipation

²⁶Asmitadarsha Diwali 11 (4) 1978.

²⁷Kotani 1997, p. 185.

of Mahars who were the victims under the *Vatan* system.²⁸

Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and Ambedkar all of these people collectively felt that the British government was a golden opportunity for the untouchables to grow and develop themselves. R.N. Chavan comments that Lokmanya Tilak did not welcome the British government. He considered it a disaster. He did not like the idea of social liberty. Maharshi Shinde also had inclination sometimes towards Tilak and sometimes towards Gandhi. Therefore, Ambedkar doubted his stand (credibility and credentials) on the untouchables. No doubt Shinde's contribution to the emancipatory work of the untouchables was noteworthy; as a leader of the untouchable he accepted the political domination of the upper castes over the rights of the untouchables, which was quite unconceivable and incomprehensible to Ambedkar and therefore, he proposed no confidence motion on Shinde's Depressed Classes Mission in a conference held in Nagpur organised by Bhartiya Bahishkrut Parishad 1st June, 1920.²⁹

Social democracy is more vital than political independence proclaimed by Mahatma Phule, Shahu and Ambedkar. Phule-Shahu-Ambedkar's ideology was more or less the same. They had similar aims and objectives. All of them wanted an egalitarian, liberal and a democratic society where people maintain brotherly relation with each other. What precisely Ambedkar, Phule and Shahu wanted was not simply a "political democracy," but also a social democracy." Ambedkar was quite articulate about the necessity of having democratic thought. He projected an essential "trinity" for democracy, which comprised the "principles of liberty, equality and fraternity as the principle of life."³⁰None of these principles, he argued, could be isolated or pursued in isolation if democracy should arise and exist in society. Shahu Maharaj always hoped to

²⁸See Kotani 1997, p. 184.

²⁹See Surwade 2010, p. 79.

³⁰*Constituent Assembly Debates* 25th November, 1949.

lead even a non-Brahmin movement. A confluence of Phule, Shahu Ambedkar ideology created great sensation in Maharashtra. Scholars, thinkers, and activists supported this view and wanted to have an organization under the ideology of these stalwarts. Ambedkar wholeheartedly praised Shahu Maharaj in his writings and speeches.

“Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Pranit Samajik Punarghatan”(Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar centric social reconstruction) in this article Vasant Moon takes an analytical survey of Ambedkar and his writings,³¹ focussing on Ambedkar’s ways of social reforms and reconstruction of society. Moon highlighted Ambedkar’s contribution in social upliftment of Dalits in this article. Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to reconstruct the Indian society in his own way. Because of his influence on Buddhism, he wanted to convert whole of India into a “Buddhist” nation. In fact; Ambedkar vowed to make India *Bauddhamay* (Buddhist) nation.

A close and minute analysis of Ambedkar’s moves and action reveals that Ambedkar really was impressed by the Buddhist philosophy that he ascribed everything to. For instance, in the last phase of his life he wrote *The Buddha and His Dhamma* a seminal text on Buddhism from his own point of view, and the 22 pledges he took along with his followers largely focuses on Buddhism. These two and other instances are indicative of the fact that Ambedkar by all means wanted to reconstruct the Indian society on Buddhist lines. Gail Omvedt remarks Ambedkar was acting, in this unique ceremony, not simply to adopt Buddhism but also to give it a new shape.³²

Pointing out Ambedkar’s programme or mission of social reconstruction Moon writes since Caste is an integral part of Hindu society and the Hindus cannot leave their caste wherever they go. Ambedkar thoroughly investigated the nature and functioning of

³¹*Asmitadarsha* Jan/Feb/Mar 12 (1) 1979, p. 3 and 10.

³²See Omvedt 2003, p. 262.

Hindu religion probing deep into it. Ambedkar maintained that the Hindu society has ruined completely because of the caste system. The pernicious caste system has destroyed the Hindu society. It became weak because of caste system. Humanity lost its face in Hindu society. Ambedkar commented Hindu ways, their practices, and their means in this article. Before Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule waged war on caste. Ambedkar annihilated the shashtras based caste ridden Hindu society. He said caste system is not division of labour but it is the division of labourers.³³This decision is unchangeable. The chaturvarna system systematically and skillfully divided society for their vested interests. Despite their willingness and desire some people were made to do mean jobs the Shudras were made to do menial professions which were considered very lowly and sub-standard in society.

Yogendra Meshram's article "Dalit Chalval Ani Marxwad" (Dalit Movement and Marxism) is an important comparative study of Dalit movement and Marxism in *Asmitadarsha*.³⁴In this article Meshram categorically states that Marxists and Marxism has totally failed in India. Marxism has not been rooted properly in the Indian soil therefore it has not been digested and chewed properly in India.

According to Meshram Marxism in India initially came in contact with Hindu mentality. In the sense, Marxism has spoiled and maligned Indian society. According to Yogendra Meshram Marxism was not based on real social and political issues. Marxism in India or the Indian Marxists followed fanatic "Hinduised" ideology they consider Lokmanya Tilak as their master. Therefore, the real socio-political issues in India have been sidelined. Meshram further asserts that Indian soil became infertile for the growth and production of Marxism in India. Yogendra Meshram opines that Dalit question is the biggest question in India which has not been addressed properly by the so called Indian

³³BAWS 2008, P. 67.

³⁴*Asmitadarsha* Diwali 13 1980, p. 122 and 129.

Marxists. Indian social life was grappled with Hinduised religion and culture. Hindu social system literally paralysed the untouchables depriving them from exercising their basic human rights. The social system in India thus put Dalits into a deep valley of ignorance.

Babasaheb Ambedkar did not oppose Marxism for its *Nyayadarshan* (Judgementalism) but he did not accept Marxism in its crude form. He formed his opinion on Marxism after a prolonged, thorough and comprehensive study. He advised his followers to stay away from Marxism. The author asks why Ambedkar suggested his followers to stay away from Marxism. Marxism could not address the socio-cultural issues of Dalits in India. Marx opposed all other religious beliefs in the world. Ambedkar formulated following equation regarding Marxist thought-

Labour revolution leads to liberation of labours, which further leads to Liberty of workers and ultimately it leads to the formation of workers state. Ambedkar further elaborates the distribution of private property will be accumulated by the powerful workers only. Labours with the fall of wealth and property will follow dictatorship and will try to destroy the democratic principles in society. It is inevitable and likely to happen in Marxist line of thinking. This inevitable circle is worst which is active and operational in society.

Ambedkar realized that the Dalit question was not confined merely to economic issues; it was also fundamentally and practically social and cultural in nature. Ambedkar believed in individual's liberty and wants the capitalists to co-operate with the state for the betterment of economic and social affairs.³⁵ Sharad Patil in his influential text *Marxwad Phule-Ambedkarwad* argues that argues that, "Not only the Marxists but also

³⁵See Dongre 2005, p. 213.

Marxism has been proved inadequate in facing or addressing the Indian circumstances and reality.”³⁶

Taking cue from Ambedkar, Meshram argues, Commenting the Marxists and socialists Ambedkar asked, “What justification Marxism would provide for ruling over one class by the other within the same country? Marx uses the word “exploitation” What remedy he provides against it?”³⁷ Emphasizing the need and necessity of having social revolution first than the economic or any other revolution Ambedkar reiterated without making social change or transformation in this country mere economic change would be in vain or meaningless. Ambedkar further interrogates only one particular section of society exploit the other social group in the name of tradition or custom do the Marxists agree to this? Is this fact acceptable to the Marxists?³⁸

The pain, sorrow and the misery of Dalit society rests in caste and caste system therefore, one should not take caste as class for granted caste in India is not or cannot become class or class should not be mingled with caste. They are two separate entities. Therefore, Marxism based on economic issues and class conflict cannot solve the political, social, cultural issues in India.

Meshram quotes from Nalini Pandit and her renowned book titled *Jatiyawad Ani Vargawad*. In the preface of the books Pandit state that caste and class are two different things, particularly in Indian context. European ideological think tank should consciously or continuously think over the social reality in India and then should come down to some conclusion. Nalini further make some important observations regarding class-caste

³⁶According to Sharad Patil all Brahmin Marxists in India claim that Marxist philosophy encompasses all walks of life. It touches every aspect of human life. In this sense, it has broader humanitarian vision and perspective. Refuting the false claim of the Brahmins Patil remarks that Brahmin Indian Marxists and Marxism both have failed addressing the Indian situations. See Patil 1993, p. 83.

³⁷See Ranga 2000, p. 143.

³⁸*Asmitadarsha* Diwali 13 1980, p. 125.

conflict in her book. The rise of Indian capitalist class was within the caste framework so they could not go against it. Socialist leadership also came from an orthodox, conservative and traditional Brahmins like Lokmanya Tilak therefore; it was influenced by Brahminism (filled with Vedic philosophy).

Sharad Patil also asserts that Marx's philosophy is not applicable to India. Patil comes down heavily upon the upper caste Brahmin Marxist. Vehemently opposing them and their Marxist literature he says, "Marxism definitely cannot address Indian social or political issues."³⁹

Arguably, Dalit literature is also affected by Dalit Marxists. The author rightly pointed out the integrity and honesty of these Dalit Marxists. He asks logical and pertinent questions to the so called "Dalit Marxist." He asks, are they really Dalit Marxists or Hinduised Marxists? His basic premise is that he sees faults in the integrity of these Dalit Marxists. Another question is can the literary value of Dalit be judged on the basis of the principles emphasizing Marxist class?

I totally agree with the author's views in this article. The questions and the apprehensions that Meshram pose are genuine and correct because most of the Dalit writers in Maharashtra write with the Marxist (class) perspective instead of caste though they are Dalits. Knowingly or unknowingly most of them turn towards Marxist ideology forgetting the fact that Marx is not the solution for their problems in society. And caste but not the class is the reality in the Indian context.

M.N. Roy made some significant observations in his concept of *Navmanavatawad* (new humanism) according to Roy, "Marx did not talk about how to construct a new society based on socialism. He even did not have framework ready for it." Marx always gave

³⁹Patil 1997.

preference to economic issues and pay not need to social, cultural or ethical values. Socialist ideology is therefore, “class” oriented. They have no other alternative but to form a worker’s dictatorship. Marx was a “political failure” Supporting his new economic policies Lenin quotes, “Marx did not utter a single word regarding socialist economy and its making.” Precisely, Roy criticized Marxism for its rejection of individuals.⁴⁰

Meshram remarks major and primary issues in Dalit literature or movement are kept aside with the intervention of Dalit Marxist or Indian Marxism. Why don’t the Dalit and non-Dalit Marxists understand this? This is distorting the original or fundamental thing and giving importance to insignificant and meaningless things. Raja Dhale’s thoughts aptly explain his stand of Dalit literature and Marxist ideology in this article.

Writing preface to J.V. Pawar’s collection of poems *Nakebandi*⁴¹(Blockade) Raja Dhale remarks referring to the Dalit massacres that has happened in Belchi Agra violent attacks, Velapuram brutal incident, Warali, Mumbai carnage and the Namantar issue Aurangabad, Maharashtra etc. In all these major incidents Dalits participated and were brutally wounded and mercilessly killed. Who were the killers? Why they (the upper castes) brought out the Dalit genocide? Dhale asserts that casteism based on this *Chaturvarnawyastha* (four Varna systems) is largely responsible for all these killings. Marxism cannot assimilate itself with the socio-political, cultural circumstances (ground realities) in India. The working class in India is mostly the lower class i.e. Dalit-bahujans therein also follow caste and hence, it is the victim of caste who cannot fight against caste. The responsibility of annihilating caste, therefore, exclusively rests on the Dalit.

From above all discussions and deliberations one thing is clear that is Marxism is not or cannot be applicable in the Indian context. Therefore, it is better to refrain from the

⁴⁰Roy 1959, p. 49.

⁴¹Pawar 2011.

magic spell of Marxism especially, the Dalit writers who write with Marxist inclination and influence. The Dalit Marxists in India are busy and interested merging Ambedkarite thought with the Marxist thought and trying to prove how Ambedkarite thought also have Marxist's tinge or shades. Whereas some authors are busy trying to prove how Buddha was also a materialist philosopher and thinker. V.K. Kamble's illuminating text, *Bharatratna Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkaranche Nau Tikakar*⁴² in this regard exposed Ambedkar's critics and some authors who are trying to take Ambedkar ideology towards Marxism. This has been the effort from the so-called Dalit and upper caste Marxists in India. The very duplication and falsity of the Dalit Marxists is actually creating an atmosphere of chaos and confusion in society and leaving it in great illusion.

Dalit tend to carry away with Marxist flow or tendencies. There is a need to study and comprehend the core problem of Dalits in India which is casteism not classicism. The progressive Marxist (Dalits) in India focuses only on economic reforms as if they have only one issue to be solved. The contradiction about Marxism is that history has dragged Marxism in India rather than Marxism dragging history.

The 1980, *Asmitadarsha* issue published articles on Ambedkarite thought and movements exclusively. Authors such as R.N. Chauhan, Sudhakar Gaikwad, D.V. Naik, Raja Jadhav, P.A. Gawai, devoted their illuminating articles in it. These articles reveal various dimensions attached to Ambedkar's life, they debated over Ambedkar-Marx and Gandhi ideology etc. The nature of Dalit literature is rebellious, rational and humanitarian in spirit. Communists primarily and precisely focussed on "class" to be the major issue whereas caste really matter in the Indian context. Marxism is great and powerful; but can a Hinduised Marxist be a loyal and honest Dalitist? Is it really possible for him to

⁴²Kamble 2011.

participate wholeheartedly and genuinely in Dalit struggle?

Meshram concludes this article expressing satisfaction over the efforts of Dalit writers and movement to mobilize the Dalit community under a common umbrella of unity, equality, liberty, and fraternity etc. At the same time he expressed sadness and anxiety over fractions in Dalit movement and anticipates their oneness with Dalit movement to strengthen it. The only desire that Meshram finally express is the Dalit writers at any cost should not lose their self-identity and consciousness. Commenting further on Dalit literature, its bearing, and motif and responsibility Meshram remarks Dalit literature is the result of Ambedkar's entire life struggle. It has come from Ambedkar's socio-political, economic, cultural thinking of India's social system. Dalit literature is human centric and therefore "man" is the centre of Dalit literature.

Hindu Code Bilawaril Pratikriyawa Tika"⁴³(Counter reaction and criticism on Hindu Code Bill) is an article by Ratnakar Ganvir. In this article Ganvir discussed at length on the controversy that went on in India regarding the Hindu code bill⁴⁴and its repulsions, the actions and the reactions that went on in socio-political sphere for a long time. The view and the counter view of different political parties and political leaders over it. The Hindu code Bill created great sensation in the mind of the Hindus. It awakened them truly from their deep slumber. It instilled hope and anticipation in the mind of Dalits. It came amidst mix reactions in India. Political leaders such as Rajendra Prasad, Vallabh Bhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitarammayya opposed thread bare from the

⁴³*Asmitadarsha* Jan/Feb/Mar 18 (1) 1985, p. 5-15.

⁴⁴Hindu Code Bill was basically prepared for the emancipation and betterment of the lives of women of all castes and creeds in India. This bill was introduced in the parliament on August 1st, 1946 but it was not taken seriously by the Member of Parliament. It was again re-introduced/presented in the parliament by Ambedkar the then independent India's law minister on April 11, 1947. Ambedkar relentlessly fought for the passage of the bill in the parliament consecutively for four years but, precisely due to his lower caste identity and the castiest attitude of the orthodox Hindu Parliamentarians it was deliberately differed. Ambedkar was deeply hurt and saddened by the incident as a result he resigned from the law ministry walked out of the parliament dejected.

initiation of this Bill in the parliament. From the strong opposition of the bill in the parliament it is clear that there was a deep internal and strong structure of Brahminical hypocrisy that works in India. The biggest contradiction and astonishing thing is the women for whose empowerment the bill was introduced in the parliament for consideration opposed it. It has been deliberately neglected by the upper caste women. Due to the strong opposition from the political leaders in the parliament the Hindu code bill was prevented from coming onto the floor of the house. They constantly and consistently rejected it and would not want it come in the parliament for discussions.⁴⁵

Member in the parliament expressed favourable and unfavourable views on the Hindu Code Bill till December 1949. Shankaracharya went door to door gathering consent over the opposition of the Bill. Shankaracharya and Jeshashtri Vehemently rejected the demand for the Bill. The orthodox and traditional-conservative people organized various meetings and conferences opposing the Bill. They criticized Ambedkar out rightly. They made many harsh statements against Ambedkar publically and seen and shown Ambedkar to be their rival in the public arena. Whenever, he criticized the Hindu unethical and unlawful practices Ambedkar was bashed and portrayed him to be the rival of the upper castes.

As a matter of fact; the very thought that an untouchable like Ambedkar daring to talk about such a highly liberative and emancipatory bill was utterly intolerable and indigestible for them. They questioned the unity, integrity and purity of Ambedkar and maligned his character calling and comparing his ideology with the drainage water. Precisely, they opposed the Hindu code bill because Ambedkar was a Mahar (an untouchable), which clearly shows the casteist outlook of the Hindus towards him.

⁴⁵BAWS 1995.

Opposing Jereshashtri's critique on Ambedkar in the same article V.S. Khandekar comments that the whole world knows Ambedkar as the greatest intellectuals and a learned statesman and a constitutional expert in India. He further asks who is this Jereshashtri? Nobody knows who is he?"⁴⁶ Jereshashtri who was considered and compared with Ambedkar's intellectuality Khandekar further add that Ambedkar's intellect and leadership has the capacity and potential to cleanse even the drainage like thoughts of Jereshashtri and his crooked Hindu parochial mentality.

Commenting further on the ways and the indifferent behaviour of the Hindus he adds how fair is this that a person like Shankaracharya who can't even stay more than five days in a town talk about social reform in this country. Posing these critical questions authors in *Asmitadarsha* defended Ambedkarite thought. Thus, in *Asmitadarsha* we find not only Dalit but the non Dalits also propagating and advocating Ambedkarite ideology.

Throwing light on the Hindu Code Bill Ranvir comments whenever the Hindu code bill came up for discussion in the parliament it was deliberately postponed, giving various reasons. Nasiruddin Ahmed also commented this bill he said the bill is confined only to a particular caste; therefore, it is against India's independent constitution. Ambedkar was surprised to see people who opposed the Hindu code bill demanded to have a common civil code all over India. Answering to a question that people's vote should be taken into consideration in passing the Hindu code bill Ambedkar said,

If every time the parliament is to be subjected to the vote of the ignorant people outside who do not know the *ABC* of the technicalities of the law, this parliament will have to be suspended. It would be much better not to have a parliament at

⁴⁶*Asmitadarsha* Jan/Feb/Mar 18 (1) 1985, p. 7-8.

all!⁴⁷

Ambedkar always felt that only an intellectual class can create law and the common man should support their law-making. Common man's opinion cannot be taken for granted therefore, Ambedkar's thought of supporting intellect is not contrary to democracy or not anti-democratic, it was rather thoughtful and logical.

There was a great controversy regarding the Hindu code bill, Rajendra Prasad has his fundamental objections to the passing of the Hindu code bill. He was of the opinion that the Lok Sabha was incapable to pass such a bill. Therefore, he wanted to minutely observe the proceedings in the parliament. Prasad wanted to safeguard the Hindu's by not coming to any particular decision on the Hindu code bill. He said if something goes beyond my conscience I cannot accept it. Ambedkar did not like the way he responded. Nehru also sounded like Prasad he rather voiced Prasad's words.

Ambedkar had strongly hoped that as long as his health would be good the Hindu code bill should be passed. His opponents were up on their toes opposing it. Fighting relentlessly for the passage of the Bill Ambedkar reckoned that there is no possibility of passing the bill he vehemently remarked, "I would not be wrong if I say that I have been mentally bullied due to Hindu code bill."⁴⁸ Ambedkar became disappointed due to strong opposition from the ruling congress party. He strongly commented on the conservative Hindu mentality on 20th September, 1951 in Loksabha. He was deeply moved by the non-passage of the Hindu code bill. He expressed this with a heavy heart, "It was killed and buried, unwept and unsung."⁴⁹ The very attachment of Ambedkar with the Hindu Code Bill is evident of the fact that he was deeply interested in the question of women

⁴⁷ Provisional Parliament Debates (PPD), Vol.III, Paragraph 2467. Cited in *Asmitadarsha* Jan/Feb/Mar 1985, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Khairmode 2002, p. 49.

⁴⁹ Khairmode 2002, p. 44.

empowerment and feminist rights in India.

“Dalitanche Rajkiya Prabodhan Awashakta Ani Swaroop”⁵⁰ (Necessity and Nature of Political reformation of Dalits) in this article R.K. Kshirsagar discussed Ambedkar’s views on the political awakening of Dalits. According to Kshirsagar Ambedkar was always at the forefront discussing, debating and voicing concern over Dalit issues. Rationalizing the Dalit liberation category he says the Dalit question is primarily a social question. Ambedkar argues that Dalit question cannot be solved unless power comes in Dalit hands; if the Dalit question and its form is political then politically the Dalits have to be empowered making them conscious about it. In this connection the Present article discuss at length what is political reform? Why it is necessary? How it should be given or imparted to Dalits?

Kshirsagar explains what is political reformation of Dalits? And how it has to be achieved? Dalits need reformations which bring about a radical change in the social and political life. The reformation should motivate them protect their rights. It prepares them to participate actively in the development and progress of the nation. The kind of reformation Kshirsagar is suggesting is really needed today especially after reviewing the condition of the Dalit movement today. In this regard, this article is very useful in guiding the Dalit politics and the Dalit movement.

Kshirsagar also demands that Dalit should also have understanding and knowledge of various issues like Gandhism, Utilitarianism, Socialism and Marxism etc. with all their pros and cons. They should know how “Ambedkarism” is qualitatively useful for them? Ambedkarism should be taught as an independent alternative in this country according to the author. The Dalits should be reformed in this way. Ambedkarism is not a stationary

⁵⁰*Asmitadarsha* Oct/Nov/Dec 22 (4) 1989, p. 8 and 10.

but a lively and moving thought therefore we should understand Ambedkarism or Ambedkarite ideology from various dimensions. Whatever may be the consequence Ambedkarism must be protected. This has been the tone and intention of most of the authors in *Asmitadarsha*. The periodical is committed to Ambedkarism the authors wherein defining Ambedkarism landing up supporting the case of Ambedkarism.

Kshirsagar concludes quoting Robert Dahl, “Skill of playing politics and political analysis are closely interlinked with each other.”⁵¹ Social propagation or reform of Dalits can be done through various meetings and conferences, forums and workshops etc. In this way, Dalits must be aware of their rights and duties.

To substantiate the valid and significant points Kshirsagar makes for the political liberation of Dalits. Appreciating and mapping the progress and development of Dalits in North India (Utter Pradesh) Sudha Pai states that in the last few decades there has been a tremendous wave of Dalit assertion in India. Dalit assertion has increased political consciousness, enabled greater political participation of the disadvantaged section, and helped shape the nature and direction of democracy in the country.⁵²

Thus, the Dalits have progressed tremendously in every field of life following the message and suggestions offered by Ambedkar. They are well aware and highly conscious today of what is called “Ambedkarism.” In Sudha Pai’s words, Ambedkarization has led Dalits to assert “everyday forms of resistance” at the village level and has also led to a growing protest literature.⁵³

Cultural Issues

⁵¹*Asmitadarsha* Oct/Nov/Dec 22 (4) 1989, p. 10.

⁵²2013, p. 13.

⁵³Cited in Sudha Pai and Singh, J. “Ambedkarisation and Assertion of Dalit identity: Socio-Cultural Protest in Meerut District of Western Utter Pradesh”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32 (4): 2611-18. *Sociological Review* 59: 1-22.

Asmitadarsha took prevalence to introduce the subaltern literature in the form of publishing articles on the neglected sections or personalities of society who have contributed enormously through their skill and talent. It has given enough exposure and support to the marginalised writings from its inception. Dalit scholars and movement activists like Raja Dhale, Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle, Arun Kamble, etc are the front rank leaders and the torch bearers of Dalit movement who gave a loud and clear voice addressing Dalit life through literature.

Raja Dhale introduced Shravan Yashwante a renowned Dalit folk singer in this article titled “Loknayak Shravan Yashwante Ani Tyanche Jag”⁵⁴ Focussing on Shravan Yashwante, Dhale takes a comprehensive view of the Dalit folk singing and singers precisely in this article. Singing and Mahars have an intimate old relation. Mahars have always been the contributors to culture through singing. Daya Pawar, eminent contemporary Dalit writer, in particular holds this opinion, and quotes a Marathi proverb to show acceptance of the idea of Mahar gifts:

In the Brahmin house--writing

In the Kunbi house --grain

In the Mahar house--singing⁵⁵

Mahars have the innate and inborn talent of singing with them. By making use of it they propagated Ambedkarite thought and philosophy throughout Maharashtra. Organizing *Kalapathak* (singing troupe) on the street or in the respective Dalit household or colonies is a current phenomenon; especially on the occasion of Bhim Jayanti (Ambedkar birth anniversary) every year in Maharashtra. Singing has enormous power and capacity to enthral the audience therefore, what books and speeches cannot do easily can be done by

⁵⁴*Asmitadarsha* 11 (2) Apr/May/June 1978, p. 22 and 30.

⁵⁵Zelliot 1996, p. 319.

a scintillating and magnificent musical performance by a singer according to Dhale.⁵⁶ The large vacuum that was created in Dalit movement after the demise of Ambedkar has been filled due to the advent of Gayan Parties (singing groups) in Maharashtra.⁵⁷

The folk singers belong to folk culture; they come from the downtrodden society. Their world, problems, their ideals and their life is thousand years old. They live in an unknown, unheard, untouched and boycotted world. If somebody wants to know their world and the pains and the suffering of their world they must listen to their pathetic, miserable tale through their songs. They have introduced altogether a different type of song format. Unless we attempt to understand the essence of their songs we won't understand them or we won't understand who Shraavan Yashwante is in particular.

Anand Patwardhan's movie *Jaibheem Comrade!* 2011 discusses the socio-political and cultural life of Dalit artists, their propagation of Ambedkarite thought and their everyday life struggle and the eventual tragic plight they met. The movie explores various aspects of the lives of Dalits and the politics of Dalits in India.⁵⁸

The entire world of Yashwante was filled with Ambedkarite songs. His emotive world would not be there if Babasaheb was not there. Dhale asks, "What Babasaheb did so that his world has formed?" The folk singers initially performed in Ambedkarite *Jalsas*, Jayanti, (Birth celebrations).⁵⁹ They spread the message of Ambedkarism in every household in Maharashtra in a very simple and lucid manner. Gradually, their production of songs and popularity increased. They reached every nook and corner of the towns and cities. Therefore, Babasaheb also promoted and supported these folk singers, he says

⁵⁶Asmitadarsha 11 (2) Apr/May/June 1978, p. 23.

⁵⁷Asmitadarsha 11 (2) Apr/May/June 1978, p. 28.

⁵⁸See web: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>.

⁵⁹Asmitadarsha 11 (2) Apr/May/June 1978, p. 22.

“What my hundred speeches won’t do can easily be done by a folk- singer alone.”⁶⁰

These songs touched the millions heart. They guided and mobilized people for Ambedkarite movement and action. Various, singing groups or “Gayan parties”⁶¹ spread the message of Ambedkarism in every household. One of the most talented folk singer is Shravan Yashwante who mesmerised the Ambedkarite audience through his captivating voice and brilliant compositions. Babasaheb knew the magic and the impact of such singers and singing on the audience therefore, he urged such Ambedkarite singers to sing and compose as many songs as they can to spread his message of equality in the nook and corner of the city. A dawn of a radical change or transformation evolved in boycotted Dalit world in 1931 with the birth of Shravan Yashwante, the advent of Waman Kardak and the rise of *Tamasha* or folk drama and its great artist Anna Bhau Sathe. Dhale further discussed about different singers and singing parties, their places of singing etc.

Yashwante established “Bhimkamal Gayan Party” in (1946) later it was converted into Shravan Yashwante and Party. Another singing group established namely “Bheem Sandesh Gayan Party” during (1946-48). Poet Shridhar Ramesh Oval, later Reverend

⁶⁰Asmitadarsha 11 (2) Apr/May/June 1978, p. 23.

⁶¹Even in the contemporary times the “Gayan Parties” or *Kalapathak* has got tremendous importance not only in the villages but also in the towns and cities in India. People gather around to listen to the singers and their mesmerizing numbers with great enthusiasm and interest. The Gayan Parties is seen as one of the greatest means to spread Ambedkarite Message to the people. Many singers in the recent times such as Wamandada Kardak, Anand Shinde came into limelight because of these Gayan Parties. The striking feature of these singers is they mostly compose their own songs and sing which really touches the heart of people and become immortal (the singer as well as the song) in the memory of the people for years to come. The Shahir’s began their Gayan parties much before the religious conversion of Ambedkar. Singers began gayan parties almost in every village household. A wave of Gayan parties aroused after Ambedkar’s religious conversion. Leftist Singer/shahir like Vilas Ghogare had his own singing troupe or *Kalapathak* whereas Ambedkarite singers had their Gayan parties. Since the Gayan parties took inspiration from Urdu Gayan parties the singers designed them (their songs) in similar format. The Gayan parties had Ambedkarite influence through their songs the singers totally avoided God, religion, superstition, etc. The singers purely maintained Ambedkarite democratic values and Buddha’s thought of egalitarianism while composing and singing songs. With the rejection of Hinduism the shahir’s also rejected other genres such as *Powada*, *Lawni*, *Bhajan*, *Kirtan*, *Potraj*, *Gondhali*, and *Bharud* etc. Later the singers took the help of orchestra and music produced for cinema. In music industry these singers may not be very popular but they definitely were popular keeping Ambedkarite movement alive through their songs and music. See https://prabodhntem.blogspot.com/2013/07/blog-post_15.html?m=1

Gaikwad's Gayan Party evolved. In this way, the age became "a singing party age." These Gayan Parties had the legacy of *Jalsa* other art folk songs. There is a difference in *Jalsa* and Gayan parties. Dhale explains *Jalsa* song is the song in a real *Shahiri* nature. It has to be sung by more than ten people by standing. There was a tone of folk singing in Yashwante's and Kardak's songs. Shravan Yashwante and Waman Kardak both dominated over the folk singing culture in Maharashtra. Yashwante's songs became popular everywhere in 1971 they almost ruled over the heart and mind of the youngsters. Frankly speaking, Shravan Yashwante became a "rock-star", a celebrity and an iconic Dalit folk singer. Some of the songs sung by Yashwante are:

Uddharali Koti Kule Bhima Tuzya Janmamule

(Crores of clans have been born because of your birth Bhima)

Zizun Jivacha Ran Mazya Bhimana Kela ⁶²

(My Bhima has laboured hard to its core)

(Translation mine)

Listening to these mesmerising numbers one becomes highly emotional. Dhale particularly mention the sound track record within the song. In this way, Yashwante's songs dominated the mind and the heart of billion over the years. Their contribution through Gayan Parties is highly commendable. They sang songs on various topics ranging from Gandhi-Jinnah controversy to the struggle for joint Maharashtra, to the invasion of foreign country on India. To the internal Dalit atrocity. These Gayan Parties are homogenous with Ambedkar's Dalit liberation movement. They specially filled the vacuum formed after the demise of Ambedkar. They played pivotal role in terms of galvanizing, mobilizing, mesmerizing people in post-Ambedkarite period triggering Dalit

⁶²Asmitadarsha 11 (2) Apr/May/June 1978, p. 2.

movement in Maharashtra.

Yashwante wrote only 30-32 songs in all in his 20-22 years of life that is not actually much but whatever songs he wrote, composed and sung became popular among the audience. Shravan was on the peak of popularity during 1972 narrates affectionately connected many minds through his songs. He harmonized people's relationships through his eclectic and electrifying performances in Maharashtra.

Sharmila Rege in her seminal text *Against the Madness of Manu*, commenting on Ambedkar's writing on Brahminical patriarchy also made use of the songs and cassettes exclusively on the life of Ramabai. The musical compositions represent Ramabai as mother to all Dalits extol her invisible contributions to Ambedkar's character and politics. The cassettes such as *Deen Dalitanchi Aai Ramabai* (The mother of the oppressed Dalits-Ramabai) 2004, *Kunkawacha Tila* (The Vermillion Mark) 1999, *Dalitanchi Aai Lakhat Ek Ramaai* (Mother of Dalits Ramai one in a Million) 1999, *Barrister Saheb Maazha* (My Barrister Husband) 2003, and *Tu Hoshil Ka Ramai* (Will you be my Ramaai?) 2002 etc.⁶³ have galvanized the Dalits for years together preparing many Dalit women for their self-emancipation and mobilization. Prior to the Cassettes and Compact Disks there were folk singers who initiated the folk tradition and culture in Maharashtra. The folk singers published their compositions in the form of books earlier later in the advanced stage their songs were recorded and thus began cassette tradition all over Maharashtra.

Asmitadarsha brought out its "Dalit Stree Special Issue" in 1981 in order to give wider exposure and footage to women issues from all walks of life across India. This special issue was brought out to address various women question such as Can a Dalit women face male centric hegemony today? Has she become bold enough to achieve her

⁶³See Rege 2013, pp. 34-35.

aspired goals and targets? Has she been able to discard traditional age old rituals and customs? The special issue on women is aimed at receiving answers to all these questions and queries according to Pantawane. It is an attempt to take stock of the past, present and the future of Dalit women their role and contribution to literature, culture and society etc.⁶⁴

Continuing in the same spirit of the Dalit folk singing tradition Asha Thorat in her article titled “Lokgeetatil Dalit Stree”⁶⁵ (Dalit Women in Folk-Songs) makes the following argument. The social mind of the people reflect through the folk songs. The sorrows of Dalit can be experienced through folk songs. They reflect the real history of Dalits. The life values in Dalit’s life have been reflected in folk songs. Picture of a true Dalit life reflects through Dalit folk songs. Folk songs are the means through which history and culture of a particular society and region can be studied and understood. Dalit folk songs are different from Marathi folk songs. They are free from word play like the Marathi folk songs. N.R. Shende took a review of Dalits life through folk songs he explained the treatment given to them from the non-Dalits. The sorrow and pains of a Dalits life reflects through the folk songs.

Grinding grain, and pulses upon a stone instrument called *Jata* in Marathi, the Dalit women composed many songs they are called “Jatyawarchi Geete.”⁶⁶ The songs later became an integral part of Dalit women’s life, literature and culture. It became essential part of Dalit aesthetics. The Dalit women often talked about the glory and greatness of Ambedkar through these songs. They expressed their loyalty towards Ambedkar through their songs. Extensive amount of research is being done on this subject in Maharashtra.

These 20th century folk songs are more effective and visionary in nature compare

⁶⁴Asmitadarsha Dalit Women Sp.Issue 1981, p. 64.

⁶⁵Asmitadarsha Dalit Women Sp.Issue 1981, p. 133 and 140.

⁶⁶See Karnik 2011, p. 83.

to the earlier folk songs that have been written in Marathi folk-culture. These Dalit folk songs are based on a Dalit society in consonance with humanity. They have life essence. They throw light on the harsh reality of Dalit life. There is manifestation of public mind through folk songs, which include the dreams and aspirations of common man.⁶⁷ There is a touch of folk songs at the generic level to human mind therefore, everyone feel attached to the pain, suffering and agony of each other. Due to all these elements folk songs have become powerful means to reach people and have brought radical transformation in their ways of thinking.

“Ambedkari Bayanchi Shahiri” (Ambedkarite Shahiri) Ranpise⁶⁸ Ranpise’s following inspirational poetic verses galvanized Dalit movement for generations together:

1. *Maharacha Pwar Bitya lai Hushar*

(Son of a Mahar is very clever.) – Ghegade 1941

2. *Sattawis Gadh Sharyatit ya Mardacha Maan Amrutnak* 1926

(In twenty-seven forts competition

There is greatness and glory of that Mahar Amrutnak) – Khairmode

These are some of the popular lines from *Shahiri*⁶⁹ composed by some renowned poets in Maharashtra. These highly sentimental and motivational lines describe the bravery, chivalry, valour and courage of the people who supported Ambedkar in his socio-political

⁶⁷See Limbale 2007, p. 140.

⁶⁸See Baban Londhe and Sudhakar Gaikwad 2012, pp. 520-527 Londhe and Gaikwad edited a separate text compiling selected articles of *Asmitadarsha* under specific categories in 2012. The text covers a period of forty years selecting writings from *Asmitadarsha*. The text covers a wide range of literary articles published in *Asmitadarsha* on social, cultural, literary issues. There is reflection of converted Buddhist movements after 1956 in Maharashtra.

⁶⁹Maharashtra has a rich tradition of *Shahiri*. In the last few decades of the 18th century, under the influence of Mahatma Phule’s Satyashodhak Samaj, it was transformed into a musical weapon of the masses, against the caste system. By the 1930s, the *Satyashodhaki Jalsa* was in decline, but a powerful new force had emerged in its place. Ambedkarite Jalsa. or *Ambedkari Jalsa* represented the teaching and philosophy of Ambedkar in oral form, accompanied by songs. Over a journey that is close to completing a century, many Ambedkarite shahir’s have helped hone shahiri as an anti-caste tool. Dalit Shahir’s with their songs and performances set music to the history of Anti-caste movement in India. In the recent times Sambhaji Bhagat and Shital Sathe are performing *Jalsa* through which they are propagating Ambedkarite thought and philosophy in Maharashtra.

movements. It also reminds us of the small booklets and their titles (contemporary small books written by the poets) likes: *Samateche Ransing* by Gadkari, *Krantigarjana* by Chapade, *Manuskicha Mantra* by Kholwadikar, *Samatecha Navbat* by Ranpise, *Amrutnak* by C.B. Khairmode, *Ranadanka* by Rokade etc.⁷⁰ These small booklets and the poetry that has been published in these highly catchy poems have inspired the Dalit world over the years.

Ranpise claims that these writes (Shahirs) worked as a catalyst and accelerated Dalit movement, at the time it was much needed. The Shahirs sung revolutionary numbers to enliven Dalit movement and atmosphere. Tamasgir Shahiri singing with the help of an instrument called *Tuntuna*. According to S.R. Kulkarni, “Shahirs are basically people’s poet and artists. They use their talent of singing and performing for people. As Shahir is basically a composer of *Lawni*⁷¹ (a significant dance form in Maharashtra) and *Powada* (a ballad song) *Powada* and *Lawni* are the developed and extended form of *Bharud* and *Gawlun* (important cultural art forms of Maharashtra).”⁷²

According to Prakash Atre eminent writer in Marathi literature, these types of poetic composers are found in Maharashtra. They are poets, *Lawanikar*’s and *Shahir*’s. To entertain the public was the sole aim of poets and *Lawnikars*, whereas motivating the public is the aim of *Shahir*. Poets and *Lawanikars* mesmerised, and extinguished the readers; *Shahir*’s agitate and lit the fire and ignite people’s mind. The words of the *Shahir* are very powerful; they are fiery, inflammable and sublime. They prepare people for action. *Shahir* is a charioteer in daily life struggle. Atre’s comments are apt and true even today. Intellectuals and philosophers have studied the history of *Shahiri*, *Lawani* etc. and

⁷⁰See Londhe and Gaikwad 2012, p. 520.

⁷¹Song often erotic, mostly accompanied by dance in the popular theatre of Maharashtra called *Tamasha*. SeeDeshpande 2002, p. 121.

⁷²Dahake 2008, p. 57.

interpreted it. The writer has discussed briefly about the history of *tamasha*, *shahiri* etc. in this article.

According to M.N. Sahastrabuddhe the word *Shahir/ shayar* has come from the Arabic language. *Shahiri* literature came into being with the Bahamani state. *Tamasha* is a Parsi word. Its poetry is called *Lawani*. The *shahirs* made use of classical music *lawani* in *Anustubh* form during Peshwarule in Maharashtra. The *lawani* flourished, different forms of *lawani* were known by different names in different states such as: *Tamasha* is called nautanki in the north, in Europe it is called *kazani*, and in Iran it is called *Mutayawat* or *Khawiyat* etc. According to Vasant Desai these village songs have developed through self-praise. In Marathi *Nath Bharuda's* various folk songs and their forms and there they are *Waghya*, *Gondhali*, *Bharadi*, *Kolhati*, *Dombari* etc. All these forms kept the Marathi tradition alive and intact. *Lawani* has three prominent forms in it. *Baithi Lawani*, *Khadi -Dholkichi*, *Tabla Petichi Lawani* etc. First type of *Lawani* is insignificant, the second one is wholesome and lengthy it is called *wag*. The third one is based on filmy Kawaali songs. Speech showing reference between two *Lawani* forms is called *Batawani*. The doer is called *Songadya*. It has a lengthy and tone elevating tone. *Dyaneshwari* has the reference of *Lawani*. Later it was divided into (1) Veer *Shahir*, Politically and socially inspirational songs (2) *Bhakti* (devotional) *Shahiri*, it includes Shivshakti Turewale is problem-oriented play song. (3) *Shrungar* (aesthetic) *Shahir*. He is also called *Tamasgir*.

It is painful and sad to say that *Mauj-Diwali* issue *Shahir Naubat* Special issue, *Shakshatkar Shahir* issue many books have been published but there is no reference of Dalit-*Shahiri* in these periodicals, weekly and monthly. Through this thought-provoking article Ranpise express his sadness and anguish that the Dalit *Shahiri* or *Shahir* is neglected and sidelined. It is a deliberate move of the social system. Dalit artists still

begin their *Shahiri* by citing Bhau Fakkad's verses. Bhau Fakkad is a renowned name in Dalit *Shahiri*. He was an excellent, terrific and outstanding *Shahir* (folk singer) in Maharashtra. He defeated Patthe Bapurao (an eminent Brahmin *Shahir* existed at that point of time) Bhau Fakkad beat Patthe Bapurao publically in Pune city Maharashtra.

Saddest thing is Bhau Fakkad's *Shahiri* is not available or rarely available today because he was a Dalit whereas Patthe Bapurao's all *Shahiri* has been published because he belonged to the Brahmin community. Bhau Fakkad's literature is not available anywhere. Interestingly, he was also a member of Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha established by Ambedkar. Nobody bothers about such a brilliant personality like Bhau Fakkad. Ranpise express sadness over the fate of Bhau Fakkad. Special articles were written on Patthe Bapurao and his dancer Pawli but there is no mention of Bhau Fakkad or his teammate anywhere in Maharashtra. *Asmitadarsha* take efforts in giving enough coverage and exposure to the subaltern people and Bhau Fakkad is one of them.

Ranpise further states in the same article that the Dalit *Shahiri* originates from Mahatma Phule who composed *Shahiri*, ballads or poems on the life of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.⁷³ Ranpise also gives a list of the modern *Shahir's* in this article. Ranpise talks about Jalsakar or *Jalsa* another form of *Tamasha* oriented, socially propagative folk tradition in this article. Ambedkar praised and valorised *Jalsa* (folk singing) tradition in Maharashtra. The fact is *Jalsa* as a major art form came into being from Mahatma Phule's time. Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj (Fact Finding Committee) has developed it for people's mobilization and mass gathering. The Marathi authors like K.P. Kulkarni, V.K. Rajwade, G.P. Nene, Gokhale and Joshi have attempted to trace the origin of the word

⁷³ Mahatma Phule wrote extensively on Shivaji Maharaj using Powada or the Ballad form titled *Chatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhosale*. Writing Powada or ballad Phule made use of Grant Duff's *History of the Marathas* vol. I. Phule has divided this Powada into eight parts. Phule's Powada is considered to be authentic and well researched because he has borrowed references from the renowned British historians and scholars at that point in time. See Keer and Malashe 1969, pp. 37-38.

Jalasa.⁷⁴It is a gathering for singing and dancing. It is a singing forum, a platform for jubilation and excitement of a kind. At times, he used to listen to it with keen interest.

Ranpise also talked about the *Jalsa*'s before independence. Saddest part is the artist never talked about Marathwada agitation; they did not compose ballads on injustice and atrocities on Dalits. Many social topics were neglected by the artists claims Ranpise. The real artists are dead and gone but they challenged the upcoming artists for social change. Ambedkarite Jalsakars have presented real Dalit problem. They emphasize on annihilation the pain and suffering of Dalits. Ambedkarite Jalsa this way became a platform for the Artists to talk about the human rights of man.⁷⁵ It was seen to be a strongest means to address grievances of Dalits. Thus, the contribution of Ambedkarite Jalsa cannot be neglected in terms of successfully leading the Dalit struggle.

A close study of *Shahiri* in Maharashtra reveal that it has been one of the most powerful cultural tools of Dalit assertion, protest, and resistance against the existing caste and social system over the decades, it has transformed itself into the manifestation of democratic Ambedkarite principles of Equality, liberty and fraternity etc.

“Shahirancha Shahir-Bhau Fakkad”⁷⁶by Bandhumadhav is yet another important contributor in the propagation and popularising the genre “Ambedkarite Shahiri.” He is one of the most acknowledged people in the socio-cultural history of Maharashtra. Bhau Fakkad is one of the prominent names in Dalit *Shahiri* in Maharashtra. *Shahiri* or folk singing tradition in Maharashtra is one of the prominent cultural forms in Maharashtra. He became popular throughout Maharashtra through his tremendous talent of composing and singing Ambedkarite songs. He was an excellent *Tamasgir* (Tamasha performer) in Maharashtra. Two folk singing traditional groups were famous in Maharashtra namely the

⁷⁴See Kirwalwe 2006, p. 74.

⁷⁵See Kirwale 2006, p. 76.

⁷⁶See Londhe and Gaikwad 2012, p. 501 and 519.

Kalagiwale and the *Turewale* Baby Kamble talked about the *Kalagiwale* and *Turewale* tradition in her autobiography *Jina Amucha* or *The Prison We Broke*.⁷⁷ Kamble informs us about some of the important social practices that indicate resonance with modernity and its sphere of influence.

According to Krishna Kirwale Fakkad talked about *Gan*, *Gaulan*, *Batawani*, and *wag*⁷⁸ in his Tamasha.⁷⁹ Bhau Fakkad's Tamasha reached its peak from 1920 -1930 which was simultaneously Ambedkar's period of his socio-political movements in India. The fact that the subaltern people like Bhau Fakkad despite having enormous calibre remained unacknowledged. They are given enough exposure and weightage by the authors in *Asmitadarsha* by publishing their writings.

Babasaheb himself was of the opinion that through singing one can galvanize society at most, therefore he was on the side of singers and artists. It is learnt from Bandhumadhav's article that Ambedkar expressed his desire to meet Bhau Fakkad. Babasaheb appreciated all those who helped contributing to Dalit movement for its growth and development. Ambedkar was also fond of music he belonged to Kabir tradition. The purpose of writing this article is to make reader aware of the fact that such a talented (subaltern voices) singer like Bhau Fakkad existed in Maharashtra. He is almost forgotten or rather made to be forgotten by the upper castes social system in Maharashtra. *Asmitadarsha* relentlessly worked for publishing literature of the subalterns like Bhau Fakkad. In this sense *Asmitadarsha* played a significant role nurturing Dalit literature.

It has played a pivotal role in terms of giving enough space and exposure to the literature across the globe such as Afro- American literature and culture. Authors like Janardan

⁷⁷See Kamble 2008, p. 163.

⁷⁸Important component in a play or natyaprakar in folk music is "Lawani" in Maharashtra. See Karnik 2011, p. 81.

⁷⁹See Kirwale 2006, p. 76.

Waghmare, Kashinath Ranveer, and Vidya Gauri Sakrikar have contributed profusely through Afro-American literature and culture in *Asmitadarsha*.

Kashinath Ranveer took a critical view of black theatre as a cultural revolt in this article titled “Black Theatre: Yek Sanskrutik Chalval.”⁸⁰ According to him the blacks in America have established their own, unique culture through their skill and talent i.e. through their art and crafts they formed their own culture and aesthetics. The blacks rejuvenate their culture; on a contrary to this the white man in America tried to destroy them. The white man destroyed them. The white man destroyed their humanity, existence, self, art and identity.⁸¹ Thus, the saga of black man is full of sorrow. Janardan Waghmare's influential text *American Negro: Sahitya Ani Sanskruti* discussed the Negro issues in detail. In fact, all his scholarly writings on the Afro-American literature initially appeared in *Asmitadarsha*. Therefore, his text mentioned above is a compilation of all his articles written frequently on Black issues and on individual authors in America. Ranveer remarks that the blacks had inferiority complex in them. They destroy the sense of shame through their symbolic act by systematically arranging their past life history (glory) they established their glorious tradition.

The Negroes have used black theatre to enhance their moral / spiritual tone. They brought out change in the mind of the people through writing plays. Negro play is also a play of celebrating glorious history of the blacks. The Negro plays motivate, inspire, guide, provoke, and rekindle the spirit and hope in the Negroes. The Negroes wanted to preserve their art of drama and skill of acting forever. The Negro created their Own English language. They formed their own references and contexts. Directly or indirectly they formed their own signs and symbols. They developed great musical form “Blues.”

⁸⁰*Asmitadarsha* Oct/Nov/Dec Diwali sp.1986, p. 70-74.

⁸¹See Waghmare 2008.

They developed “spirituals” (prayer songs). They also developed “work song” (singing while working). They used “minstrel” a folk play art in America.

The blacks used this cultural form very effectively. In this way the blacks developed minstrel art in America. Through minstrel construction and through manifestation of actors and through the sufficient music supplied the Negro depicted how they were different from the whites in America. According to Ranveer, the description of blacks in white plays was stereotypical. The Negro character has been shown as a drum card, impure English speaking, Era Eldridge's popular actor played “Mgo” the protagonist's role in the play. The Negro's identity, in white play was just a comic relief for the audience. The white man portrayed Negro as a joker a stupid man, an idiot. A mild, soft-spoken submissive character, The Negro was a “Sambo” in white world plays. That's why the white man accepted the Negro for their own purpose. The real Negro was “invisible” in the eyes of white man. Like the Dalits in the eyes of the upper castes. Some Negroes decided to establish a drama company to entertain the Blacks. Blacks thus formed their own aesthetics in white America; following the model Dalits in Maharashtra also established their own literature and aesthetics in 1970s.

Ranveer writes, at the beginning of the 20th century the Negroes collectively entered in theatrical activities. The author gives a detailed account of Negro plays in this article. The author concludes his article stating the fact that the Negroes established a platform for Negro plays in America. The Negro plays contributed heavily to Harlem renaissance in America. The Harlem town in America became a popular centre for Negro art and crafts music and dance, folk-art folk-songs etc.

Hrishikesh Kamble's article on “Lokmanasatil Bheemo Owya” highlight the significance

of *Owi*'s⁸² in Marathi tradition.⁸³ *Owi* is one of the prominent literary forms as well as the invaluable heritage in Marathi literature. It is the classical example / invention of the creativity of man. *Owi* directs the society in a way. We can see social relationships and inter-relationships between one and the other through *Owi*'s. The language of *Owi* is that they are written in people's language (dialects) or common language. They are produced or uttered by the illiterates. Women in villages while grinding grain on their, traditional instrument called *Jata* or hand mill creating beautiful *Owi*'s or the village folks after a tiresome day after reaching home they hymn a particular tune is called a *Owi*. In this way, an *Owi* is produced orally by the village folks.

It is their personal creation. According to Kamble the hired writers or the so called intelligent writers cannot produce such writings which the illiterate folks can produce. Kamble seem to be commenting on the poets and writers who take pride in their writings. There is no word play in the *Owis*. The *Owi* writers are closely related to writings emotionally. There is a reflection of social ways and means rules and regulations in the *Owi*'s. There is representation of the cultural life of people in their *Owi*'s. Kamble also pointed out a danger in *Owi* writing i.e. there is a possibility of exaggeration and contradiction in *Owi* writing; but since they are produced from the illiterates this is unavoidable or inevitable. Kamble presents a brilliant picture of *Owi*'s role, contribution and usefulness to society through this insightful article.

Through this article "Dalit Shahiranchi Bheemgeete"⁸⁴ (Bheemgeete/songs of Dalit poets) Rushikesh Kamble traced the contribution of Dalit *Shahir*'s (singers) in galvanizing

⁸²Is a poetic metre used in Marathi poems for "rhythmic prose", generally used in narrative poems. It is one of the oldest Marathi song genre still performed in today. It has been in use since the 13th century in written poetry; however, women tradition of *Ovee* pre-date the literary *Ovee*. While literary *ovee* is used by the Varkari saints in bhakti or devotional literature, women's *ovee* is passed via the oral tradition through generations of women, who sing them while working or for pleasure.

⁸³*Asmitadarsha* Diwali 20 (3) 1987, p. 85 and 89.

⁸⁴*Asmitadarsha* Diwali 22 (3) 1989, p. 100-106.

enhancing Ambedkar's social movement in Maharashtra. According to his opinion the Dalit *Shahir's* immensely contributed to Dalit movement, through their appealing, enthralling, enchanting and forceful compositions. They not only mesmerized the Dalit but also captivated and mobilized them for social reforms in Maharashtra. Their compositions and songs truly transform the mind of the people; it prepared them for social cause in the real sense.

Through this article Kamble tried to take stock of the factors responsible for the success of Ambedkar's movement. In his opinion the Dalit *Shahiri* is one of them. Dalit *Shahir's* played a pivotal role spreading Ambedkar's message to the people through the effective medium of songs they reached the audience. The Bheemgeetkar's took Ambedkarite thought straightway to the masses. They cultivated and propagated it. The ordinary people understand Ambedkarite thought through songs and *shahiri* only. Thus Song and music became an important medium to spread Ambedkarite thought. Through songs they expressed the pain, sorrow and suffering in their life. Renowned Shahir Wamandada Kardak asks for the share of Dalit Bahujans in the social-economic system to the industrialists and owners of big companies in India. Expressing dissent over the plight of Dalits, he asks:

Sanga amahala Tata, Birla, Bata

Kutha ahe ho?

Bahujanacha wata kutha aahe ho?

Sanga dhanacha satha amucha wata kutha ahe ho?

English translation of the stanza:

Tell us Tata, Birla, Bata

Where is the share of the backward castes?

Tell us where is treasure of money,

Where is our share?

(Translation mine)

Through this straightforward stanza Wamandada ask for Dalit their due share referring Tata, Birla and Bata the affluent people in society he asks where is our share? Babasaheb relentlessly struggled for the rights of the untouchables. He ignited their minds. He conducted different struggles be it Mahad Satyagraha (agitation) or Ambadevi temple Satyagraha or Nashik's Kalaram temple Satyagraha. Ambedkar claims that we also have the right to enter temple or to prey god why do they present us? Why are we prohibited? Wamandada Kardak brilliantly described this entire episode through his arresting compositions and songs:

Godatiri padala jari ladhla sainik maza

*Ughadalacha nahi kalya Ramacha darwaza*⁸⁵

English translation of the stanza:

Though my soldier struggled and fought

And fall flat at the bank of Godawari

The door of Kalaram temple

never opened.

(Translation mine)

These stunning lines by Wamandada Kardak reveal the relentless struggle led by Ambedkar for temple entry for the untouchables at Kalaram mandir Nasik. Waging a constant and fierce battle for self-respect and dignity Ambedkar had to undergo many hardships and difficulties occasionally, he had to make helpless compromises with the rivals. His opponents troubled and tortured him now and then. Still Babasaheb rejected

⁸⁵Asmitadarsha Diwali 22 (3) 1989, p. 102.

their offers and did not accept their demands because he believed in himself.

Thus, Bheemgeetakar's propagated Ambedkar thought among the people. Laxman Kedar, Atmaram Chalurkar, Sahebrao Kokate, Surendra Naik are remarkable Bheemgeetkars. These people did splendid job in galvanizing, propagating, and popularizing, motivating and inspiring, people through their Ambedkar thought laden songs and compositions.

Gangadhar Pantawane aptly talked about a staunch Ambedkarite folk-poet Rajanand Gadpayale in his article "Ambedkari Banyacha Lokkavi- Rajanand Gadpayale"⁸⁶ (Ambedkarite folk poet Rajanand Gadpayale) According to Pantawane once a man is influenced by Ambedkarite thought it resides in his mind and soul. His whole being becomes Ambedkarite. Ambedkarite thought has the potential and strength to take you to the highest pedestal. It inspires, motivates, galvanizes, and mesmerizes, influences and impacts largely on the heart and soul of man. The Ambedkarite folk artists have taken life lessons from Ambedkar.

According to Pantawane Ambedkarite thought is breath of Rajanand. He is a belief, a trust, and a tendency and a new culture for him. Babasaheb is his loyalty and faith. Rajanand completely swallowed the tonic of Ambedkarite thought. And hence, Ambedkarite thought resides in his heart, mind and breath. Rajanand's internal being is entirely filled with Ambedkarite ideology. He has therefore devoted, committed and sacrificed his entire life for the spread, propagation and disseminations of Ambedkarite thought. His composition of poems comes from the bottom of his heart. He has a great impact of Ambedkarite thought and action on him. Not only Rajanand but the entire nation was influenced by Ambedkar's thought, movement and actions at that point of

⁸⁶ *Asmitadarsha* Annual issue Oct/Nov/Dec 1998, p. 90 and 98.

time. Most of the men directly participated in his movement. People who were inspired by Dalit composed many songs and contributed the Dalit movement. They were inspired by social bondage.

Patacharachi Kahani, *Sonbachi Satyakatha* and *Geetabheemayan* are the story-based compositions of Rajanand. Among all these *Geetabheemayan* became very popular. The famous singer Satish Adasul beautifully vocalize it and the songs sung by him reached every nook and corner of society in every household making the Dalitwada's (localities) Ambedkarite. *Geetabheemayan*, was contrary to *Geetaramayan* wherein Lord Ram has been valorised the poet took quite opposite view of this where he praise Ambedkar. Implicit comparison is done between Ambedkar and Lord Rama.⁸⁷

Through Rajanand's mesmerizing and enchanting compositions he presented each and every minute incident in Ambedkar's life so beautifully in his *Geeta Bheemayana*. This very composition became very popular in the 1990s. The first move towards Dalit liberation was a struggle of Mahad liberation led by Ambedkar, "Nasik Kalaram" temple entry was the second one. The temple entry movement gave the untouchable spirit to fight for their rights political or social etc.

In this way, Babasaheb seem to have challenged time. It shows his indomitable spirit, courage, optimism and conviction upon himself. Ambedkar was a great visionary, a man of strong determination and courage. An untouchable who was not even allowed to touch others could do such a stupendous and herculean task of writing nations constitution was something beyond imagination. Only a person like Ambedkar could do that. The principles and values such as liberty, equality and fraternity he bestowed through constitution. There was no parallel to Ambedkar's intellect indeed. He strongly

⁸⁷*Asmitadarsha* Annual issue Oct/Nov/Dec 1998, p. 97.

urged to make this country united under common umbrella of Buddhism. Those who hated Ambedkar initially started liking him later. They also acknowledged his sense of patriotism. He was later glorified as an ardent patriot and a great statesman. Babasaheb accelerated the Dhammachakra by converting himself into Buddhist fold.

The composition in *Geetabheemayana* mesmerized the audience for forty odd years. In this respect, Gadpayale could be compared with Anand Shinde a contemporary Dalit poet of our times. I have discussed about Anand Shinde in my first chapter in detail. Strengthening and nurturing Dalit movement is the task undertaken by the Dalit folk poets / artists greatly in Maharashtra. Some of these even have not gone to schools but could produce such powerful compositions. The name of Ambedkar has power to melt even the stone. Rajanand without expecting anything from society selflessly worked for the cause of Ambedkarite ideology. Folk poets / artists could produce such great compositions because Ambedkar was their inspiration. Like the *Geetbheemyana* Rajanand Gadpayale similar attempt (more or less) has been made in recent times by Shrividya Natarajan and S. Anand and published *Bhimyana*.⁸⁸

“Dharma Ani Sanskruti” (Religion and Culture) Bhalchandra Fadke begin his thought provoking article criticizing Hindu culture.⁸⁹Fadke assert that our (Dalit) culture is the culture of “hunger.” Therefore, it should be termed so. Basic formula of history is “change” Ambedkar was for modernity he followed it. Commenting on the concept of a “liberated” man he says, “The one who is totally dependent upon himself is a liberated

⁸⁸*Bhimyana*: Incidents in the life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is a graphic biography of B.R. Ambedkar published in 2011 by Navayana and was hailed by CNN as being among the five political comic books. It was created by artists Durgabai Vyam and writers Shrividya Natarajan and S. Anand. The book depicts the experiences of caste discrimination and resistance that Bhimrao Ambedkar recorded in his autobiographical illustrations, later compiled and edited in *BAWS* by Vasant Moon under the title “Waiting for a visa.” See *Bhimyana*-Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org>

⁸⁹*Asmitadarsha* Religion and Culture sp. Issue 32 (3) 1999, pp. 13-14.

man in the real sense.”⁹⁰ This means a liberated man must depend upon himself for all his decisions, endeavours and attempts. Ambedkar has rightly defined the concept of a liberated man. Speaking in a gathering Ambedkar discussed at length how Hinduism is largely responsible for the destruction of human being. “Hinduism has taken away your mental freedom. It has made you slave, if you want freedom you must convert.”

Babasaheb Ambedkar’s famous speech *Mukti Kon Pathe* or liberation which way”⁹¹ is highly impressive, educative and provocative in nature. Ambedkar took a meeting in (1935) 13, October at Yeola wherein he put a proposal got it passed he said, “Hindu framework of social system is based on “inequality” therefore, Hinduism is useless the untouchables feel” Ambedkar reiterated the same caste problem in Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal (Lahore) wherein he says the Hindus made no effort for the humanitarian thought of civilizing the savages but the higher castes Hindus have deliberately prevented the lower castes who are within the pale of Hinduism from rising to the cultural level of the higher castes.⁹² Unless Hinduism liberates itself from the clutches of orthodox / conservatism it cannot be free/liberated. They must liberate themselves through their conduct, behaviour and thoughts.

Through his innumerable discussions and thoughtful deliberations Ambedkar tried his level best to remove untouchables from the clutches of Hinduism. Ambedkar’s life was a life of unending struggle. He always said if we enter in any religion our struggle will persist. He said, “Man is for religion; religion is not for man.”⁹³

Therefore, the setting of Buddhism should be on the basis of Equality because Buddha fought against Varna system in order to gain equality. Buddha liberated women

⁹⁰Asmitadarsha Religion and Culture sp. Issue 32 (3) 1999, p. 13.

⁹¹See Surwade 2010, p. 153.

⁹²See Ambedkar 2004, p. 42.

⁹³See Surwade 2010, p. 186.

and the Shudras through his Dhamma. Buddhism annihilated Caste and castesim. Buddha believed in connectivity between religion and moral behaviour. It is essential to include liberty, equality and fraternity in the Dhamma. Buddha popularized the notion of non-violence and truth.

Buddhism is a Dhamma of universal equality and unity. Ambedkar discussed on Dhamma and Dharma in depth in his last book *Buddha and his Dhamma*.⁹⁴ Buddhism is nothing but perfect blend of “Pradhnya, Sheela and Karuna.” (Knowledge, Character and Compassion respectively) Babasaheb wanted a life of self-respect for the untouchables. Buddha always advised his disciples to be the “light of themselves” he wanted them to believe in themselves; he advised them to stick fast onto the truth, take refuse in your own intelligence. Fadke conclude urging people to follow the Buddha and Ambedkar to emancipate them in the real sense.

In the beginning of her article “Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Yanche Dharmavichar”⁹⁵(Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar’s religious thought) Sushila Jadhav comments on politics of religion or religion in politics in this article. According to Jadhav, it has become a matter of regular chores today to talk on religion and politics. Jadhav criticized the shrewd politicians and their dirty politics they play within the society. Using religion for politics has become the need and trend of the leaders today. Everything is being politicized in her opinion. She discussed the prolonged case of Ram-Janma Bhoomi and Babri Masjid⁹⁶ and the politics involved in it. She talks about major incidents in India and their aftereffects on the socio-political development in India. The case of Namantar

⁹⁴See Ambedkar 2011, p. 97.

⁹⁵*Asmitadarsha* “Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank” 32 (3) 1999, p. 58 and 63.

⁹⁶The Ayodhya dispute is a political, historical, and socio-religious debate in India, centred on a plot of land in the city of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. The issue revolves around the control of a site traditionally regarded among Hindus to be the birthplace of their deity Rama, the history and location of the Babri Masjid at the site, and whether a previous Hindu temple was demolished or modified to create a mosque, the Babri Masjid. See https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayodhya_dispute

battle⁹⁷ for re-naming The Marathwada University, Aurangabad as Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University about which I discuss in the upcoming chapter in detail. Shushila express grave concern over some of the major brutal atrocities on women in general in this article.

Vilas Ghogre became a prominent name in Dalit struggle in post-Ambedkarite phase in Maharashtra. He carried forward the Dalit cultural tradition through singing and shahiri etc. Ghogare's song sung on Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University's *Namantar* Struggle titled "Jaltoy Marathwada" (Marathwada is burning) became very popular. The song describes the brutal Dalit atrocities and killings committed by the opponent of caste. This song triggered a flame of revolutionary consciousness among the Dalit community. Citing incidents of brutalities and Dalit oppression *Shahir* Vilas Ghogare urge and alert Dalits to unite and fight collectively for their cherished agenda of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice.

Shushila's article discuss various issues such as rape on Christian nurses, destruction of churches in Gujarat, murder of an Australian missionary Graham Steins⁹⁸ who devoted his entire life in the service of leprosy patients. Graham Steins was a Christian missionary he was mercilessly killed along with his two innocent boys. On January 23, 1999, The RSS activists set fire to Graham Steins and his seven and nine year old sons Philip and Timothy.

⁹⁷ *Namantar Andolan* or issue was a Dalit and Navayana Buddhist movement in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra to change the name of Marathwada University, in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India, to Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar University. The issue went on for 14 long years. Dalit youth gave their life for renaming the university. Finally, the movement achieved success in 1994 and extended its name to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University. V.D. Gaikwad, D.G. Deshkar, Manohar Garud edited and published all the reports related to the agitation in the form of a text *Marathwada Vidyapeeth Namantar Virodhi Atyachari Andolan: Yek Abhyas* 1978. The text is a detail and a comprehensive study of the entire *Namantar* issue, Aurangabad Maharashtra.

⁹⁸ Graham Stuart Staines was an Australian Christian missionary, who along with his two sons, Philip and Timothy, was burn to death in India by members of a Hindu fundamentalist group named *Bajrang Dal*. In 2003, *Bajrang Dal* activist Dara singh was convicted of leading the murderers and was sentenced to life in prison. See Wikipedia://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham_Staines

Taking recourse to Charwak Sutra Sushila Jadhav comments, the Charwak sutra is indeed right, “Religion is a conspiracy of the crooked, and only few fall prey to it.”⁹⁹ Nobody can have difference of opinion on this. Religion is a tablet of unconsciousness.¹⁰⁰ Religion stimulates and instigates people, it provoke them to carry out illegal, unlawful acts. Religion promotes indirectly anti- social activities. It diverts the common man from his goal. It could take him into the dungeon of disaster and destruction.

According to Sushila Mul-Jadhav only Buddhism is an exception to this. Because it is based on intellect and rationality therefore, Ambedkar liked it he accepted it and got converted in it on 14th October, 1956. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a contemplative personality, he was rational, and practical, logical and therefore, he chose Buddhism because Buddhism has all these qualities. He deliberately chose Buddhism. After thoroughly analyzing major religions in India in general and Hinduism in particular, he chose Buddhism only after closely scrutinizing and critically analysing it. Ambedkar publically announced the audience; if you want freedom choose Buddhism. Buddhism became synonyms with liberty, equality and fraternity. Thus, Buddhism is nothing but a combination of liberty, fraternity and equality. Babasaheb relentlessly fought for the rights of the untouchables. Babasaheb converted the untouchables into Buddhism which was much needed.

The way Buddha talked about the Dhamma no other religion had done it. Nobody spoke so frankly, openly, vividly and easily what Buddha did therefore, Buddhism is greater than any other religious faith. According to Ambedkar, “The way it was essential for India to have political freedom from the British similarly; the untouchable wanted

⁹⁹Charwak Philosophy rejected the supremacy of the *Vedas*. Charwak propounded the theory that the *Vedas* should be analysed on the basis of logic and rationality. Charwak gave human freedom utmost importance. See Salunkhe 2009, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁰*Asmitadarsha* “Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank” 32 (3) 1999, p. 58.

equality and liberation from the upper castes.”¹⁰¹ If there is no social liberty for the untouchables political freedom will be of no use? What is the use of the religion where man is the enemy of it? Ambedkar strongly advocated and reiterated the case of the untouchables in India.

Ambedkar strongly remarked freedom, liberty, equality and fraternity is highly essential for a man to survive. Hinduism was not ready to give any of these things. Ambedkar asks what use of such religion is where there is restriction on public life. There is no use sticking to such religion. Ambedkar stated this emphatically in his writings and speeches. According to him morality is the essence of Dhamma. *Pradnya* (knowledge), *Sheela*, (character), *Karuna* (compassion) must go hand in hand. They cannot work individually. Strengthening Indian democracy is a must by strengthening liberty, fraternity and equality. Dhamma is nothing but a good conduct. Society cannot survive without a Dhamma. Dhamma is morality and morality is Dhamma. There is no place for “God” in Dhamma.

The place of God is occupied or taken by morality in the Dhamma. Babasaheb further says like *Pradnya*, *Sheela*, *Karuna*, liberty, equality and fraternity must go hand in hand. Buddhism invited you to experience and realized it here and now. (The one, who follows the Dhamma, sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma.)¹⁰²

In Babasaheb’s words Buddhism is the religion of justice. He believed in a rational intellectual, objective, and logical religion such as Buddhism. He experienced and realized its significance and therefore, accepted it. Ambedkar contributed enormously to the Indian culture accepting Buddhism. Birth of such a charismatic personality like Ambedkar is quite unusual in history, the country as well as the community in which a

¹⁰¹Asmitadarsha “Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank” 32 (3) 1999, p. 59.

¹⁰²Asmitadarsha “Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank” 32 (3) 1999, p. 63.

person like Ambedkar is born is bound to progress.

“Bhartiya Dharma Ani Stree” (Indian religion and women) in this article Kumud Pawade deals with the Indian religion and the position of women in this article. At the outset she makes a statement that all over the world women are far ahead than men in terms of preservation and conservation of religion and culture though they are given the least status in society by men.

According to Pawde religion / religious sanctions of Hinduism troubled, tortured and oppressed us. It has given lowest status, it has derated us. Each and every act of human being is related to religion in India. The so called protectors of religion imposed various restrictions on us. Pawde talks about the heinous treatment of religion given to us. The male dominated culture made women Devdasis.¹⁰³ She has given examples of various atrocities inflicted upon women by the male community. Killing of Christian pastors in Orissa, riots took place after the demolition of Babri Masjid; atrocities on Buddhists in Ramabai Nagar, Mumbai are few incidents. In this way Kumud Pawde explains the plight of Dalit women in India. She concludes her article saying the women in India will have to struggle a lot to realize Babasaheb Ambedkar’s vision in the Indian constitution.

Shrirang Talware’s thought provoking article “Dharma wa Sanskruti ani Fascist Hindutvawad”¹⁰⁴ takes a critical view of Indian social reality taking the Hindu religion and its Dharmashastras into consideration. He criticized the Hindu culture terming it as “Hindu Fascism.”¹⁰⁵ The article surveys Indian history tracing from the ancient times to

¹⁰³It is a religious practice whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple. The marriage usually occurs before the girl reaches puberty. *Devdasi* means the slave of God or wife of God. Serving God was her work. *Devdasi* became a victim of sexual exploitation in the name of serving God. People made different stories out of this heinous tradition and attributed it to God. See Kamble 2008.

¹⁰⁴*Asmitadarsha* ‘Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank’ 32 (3) 1999, p. 49.

¹⁰⁵Fascism is a form of far-right, authoritarian characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition and strong regimentation of society and one of the economy which came to prominence in early 20th century Europe. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism>

the modern. In his estimation Hinduism and the rotten, conservative Hindu ideology both are corrupting the Indian psyche.

The author rightly pointed out that the Brahmins have taken education and property under their control. They roam freely and exercise their control in society. The Brahmins have monopolized everything under their control. The dominant Hindus think that nobody else but they are only the creators and producer of Hindu culture. Unequal social system, maintenance of caste and class system is Hindu-culture. The Hindus have destroyed generations of the untouchables keeping intact the vested interest of the Hindu religion, culture and society. The charges on Hinduism made by the author may sound repetitive but they are true even today. Whatever facts the author has presented has relevance in the contemporary society. The Hindu's have captured all market business, trade, commerce, and industry etc.

Caste system will persist in society as long as domination of Brahmins will exist in society. Class and caste system is the breath of Hindu society. Hindu Dharmashastras and culture depends upon the Varna system. Talware remarks that Ambedkar threw enough light on Hindu Dharmashastras and culture. He asked pertinent question on caste, religion and culture. He asked what culture is. What is an "ideal culture"? He asserted that Hindu culture has troubled and tortured us for such a long time. The Hindu culture has given us nothing but pain and sorrow. The Hindus think that Hinduism is nationalism. They want to make this nation a Hindu nation. Since the agenda of their political party is "Hindutva" they are involved in spreading Hindutva message to the nook and corner of India.

Ranjit Pardeshi rightly argues that the Brahmins govern the Hindus in a very strategic and systematic way under different terminologies such as Safronisation, Hinduisation or Brahminisation. The Brahmins have popularised the word Hindutva in

such a manner that everybody talks about Hindutva they say Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. Their whole point is to maintain their supremacy in society.¹⁰⁶

Talking about Buddhism and Brahminism Talware propounds that there has been a constant struggle between the orthodox Hindus and the Buddhists since a long time. The downfall of the Brahmins really came at the time of *Baliraja*.¹⁰⁷ Bali was a noble, liberal and a just ruler. He had an egalitarian view of life.¹⁰⁸

According to Talware the Brahmins destroyed everything. They beheaded numerous Buddhist monks. They made them run from India to some other parts, mercilessly vanished all Buddhist sculptures. The plight of the miserable Buddhist monks and the brutality of the Brahmin atrocities could be best understood by the following quote from Gail Omvedt:

The Brahmin king Pusyamitra, along with other Tirthikas, started war and they burned down numerous monasteries from Madhyadesa to Jalandhara. They also killed a number of vastly learned monks. But most of them fled to other countries.

As a result, within five years the Doctrine was extinct in the north.¹⁰⁹

During Pusyamitra's period Buddhism was under severe criticism and violent attack. Buddhism brought a new revolution and produced revolution in society; Brahminism was a counter revolution to it. Because of the dominant behaviour of the Brahmins the Bahujan Samaj or the backward castes suffered enormously. In the name of preservation of religion and society Brahminism became superior. The Brahmins always support

¹⁰⁶Jamanadas 2014, pp. 158-59.

¹⁰⁷King Bali was a just, honest and people's ruler. He was known for welfare policies for the people. Bali is remembered throughout India in various festivals. The Asura traditions are linked to the Indus Valley Civilization. The Vamana Bali episode in *Rigveda* indicates that the *Asuras* were a pre-Vedic people. Bali was, it seems, so mighty king that the *Aryans* could not forget his greatness and ended up mentioning in all their scriptures. Mahatma Phule wrote extensively on Baliraja in his seminal text Mahatma Phule Samagra Vangmay a compilation of his writings in Marathi. There are over 20 references at different places on Baliraja in Phule's text. See Keer, Malshe and Fadke 1991 and O'Hanlon 1985, p. 317.

¹⁰⁸*Asmitadarsha* 'Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank' 32 (3) 1999, p. 52.

¹⁰⁹Omvedt 2013, p. 170.

Hinduism and their Brahminical Hindu culture.

The author rationally argues and comes to the conclusion that Brahminism has inflicted several injustices and atrocities in our country. They prevented the Bahujan society from their basic rights. They supported the caste system and inequality. Whether it is Golwalkar Guruji or Shankaracharya both supported caste system. Caste system and Varna system is their breath and life. They keep on insisting the usage of Hinduism in this country¹¹⁰ which is in fact a striking reality of the contemporary Indian society today.

Literary and Historical issues

This Section will exclusively focus on literary and historical Intellectual prose writings that have been published in *Asmitadarsha* since 1967-68 till 2000. Eminent scholars all over Maharashtra as well as the literary scholars from the neighbouring states contributed to *Asmitadarsha* and widened its sphere. This section also deals with the important streams in Dalit literature. It includes various thought-provoking literary issues vibrant in Maharashtra at that point of time. It also take stock of the Afro-American literature produced in America after the 1960s as well as the western Philosophical thought used in literary world. I have selected the issues which largely focus on Ambedkarite thought and philosophy. Articles in *Asmitadarsha* are highly insightful, informative and deep seeded in Ambedkarite thought. It has a lot to say about the historical issues published in *Asmitadarsha* from time to time. I have tried to dig deep into the historicity of India in this section. In fact, *Asmitadarsha* has created a kind of history in terms of its enormous contribution through its high profile and thought provoking issues in Maharashtra.

¹¹⁰*Asmitadarsha* 'Dharma ani Sanskruti Visheshank' 32 (3) 1999, p. 54.

Literary Issues

“Nakar: Dalit Sahityacha Chirkalin Prerana Ghatak”¹¹¹ (Rejection a motivational force or element of Dalit Literature) in this article, Umakant Randhir discussed various dimensions of Dalit literature. According to him Dalit literature is “self-illuminating.” Characteristically it is also different and diverse in many respects such as essence; language, rebellion and expression are the features of Dalit literature.

Most striking feature of Dalit literature is the rejection in it. He further explains what does Dalit literature reject? It rejects Indian culture and tradition, Indian literature and Indian intelligentsia / ideology. The rejection in Dalit literature goes beyond any traditional meaning attached to it since, it is wider and deeper in nature it has to be understood in Dalit context and in Ambedkarite perspective. The rejection is unique in Dalit literature. It is a complete rejection of the culture, literature, tradition etc. therefore, it is one of the fundamental features of Dalit literature. The very word “Rejection” carries tremendous repercussions in Dalits context. The paradox is earlier (In Indian socio-political Context) the then untouchables were rejected by the upper castes; now in the post-colonial context the Dalits reject the upper caste language and literature. A question is always posed therefore, i.e. can rejection only become an inspiration for Dalit literature?

Definitely, not but it is true that Rejection itself is an essential binding force which stimulate Dalit literature, culture and society to the largest extent. It has therefore, to be understood on a wider frame. One can understand the concept of Rejection in a much better way in the context of the emergence of Dalit literature. Dalit literature begins with the sense of Rejection. It rejects certain things and accepts and upheld certain norms and values with this notion it has moved ahead on its own terms and principles in my

¹¹¹Asmitadarsha Jan/Feb/Mar 9 (1) 1976, p. 10 and 13.

estimation.

Elaborating further the author says, “The Dalit writer differs from the non-Dalit writer in terms of his experiences (lived). A Dalit experiences a different life world around him. His world is at the outskirts of the village, unknown, unnoticed world, poverty-ridden, full of humiliation and insults; he bore all this in the name of a chronic disease called untouchability. In such an insensitive world a Dalit is rejected by all means. The mainstream literature rejects him. In this way, a Dalit experiences rejection from all corners. He experiences similar things in the rural as well as urban area. Nagnath Kotapalle has talked about the concept of “Rejection” in detail, in an edited text by Prithviraj Taur *Sahitya Ani Vidroh*. He remarks in the beginning of his article that the concept of rejection has larger dimension; we cannot just confine it to mere literature only. It is therefore, understood keeping in mind every aspect of life. It is basically against the oppressive and unjust social structure of society.”¹¹²

Commenting on the so called pretensions progressive organizations and its politics and propaganda Randhir says, “the upper castes often claim that the relation between the Dalits and non-Dalits are cordial and friendly, which is a lie, caste prevents the inter relationship between the Dalits and the non-Dalits. It hampers their unity. Therefore, their outlook, their experiences, their brought-up everything differ. It cannot be the same. The world of a non-Dalit is the world of upper-caste. His interests and the vested-interests of the establishment are same, hence he find similarity between his mentality and traditional Hindu mentality. So, it is impossible for him to take stock of the Dalit life. He has been maintaining a complete sense of rejection from a Dalit world;

¹¹²See Taur2008, p. 26.

therefore, he had a vague knowledge of a Dalit world.¹¹³

A Dalit writer experience two things at the same time as an untouchable in his day-today life. These two different life experiences come to the share of a Dalit by birth. Because of these bitter experiences in his life the Dalit writer develops a third eye (eye of enlightenment); therefore he sees that there is a difference between the mentality of a Dalit and non-Dalit writer.

There is a blocked to even social circulation, co-ordination between people in such circumstances compel to reject the oppressive social structure. It becomes inevitable to rejects such a situation in order to safeguard one's own identity and existence precisely which means rejection has come Dalit literature not all of a sudden or suddenly it has its reason. It is the result of a prolong history. Therefore, it is an eternal motivational force for Dalit literature. Another question posed regarding rejection is can one be really free if he rejects culture, literature, tradition? Through this question they wanted to say that nobody can escape from culture, literature or tradition.

These kinds often of illogical or irrational questions are always posed by the so called supporters of culture, tradition or literature. According to the author, he gives the example from Buddha's life. He says, "By rejecting Vedic and Brahminical culture, tradition, literature Buddha freed lakhs of people. This is a historical truth nobody can deny. G. Aloysius has brilliantly put Buddha's views in his thought-provoking text, *Dalit-Subaltern Emergence in Religio-Cultural Subjectivity* quoting Iyothee Thassar that, Buddhism was not like a religion like any other, that by subjecting himself and his message to the rational criterion, the Buddha had undercut the very principle and formation of the religious orthodoxy and that the role of the Bhikkhus was not parallel to

¹¹³*Amitadarsha* 9 (1) 1976, p. 11.

that of the *Purohits* and priests.¹¹⁴

Moving on the author makes significant proposition here, he says, “the literary tradition and culture based on injustice and inequality favoured people to gain prestige and highest positions to acquire property, money immensely. It does not provide them the necessary strength or moral force to free from it whereas the people who do not have any kind of right or power in society; the people who are kept away from experiences any sort of prestige or honour, cultural, social or otherwise can be freed / escape themselves from such culture and literary tradition. Therefore, lakhs of people converted with Babasaheb Ambedkar within a fraction of time in Buddhism. Randhir gives an apt example here: Rejection in Dalit literature came very consciously, decisively and deliberately not just like that because it has the foregrounding of Ambedkar Thought behind and therefore, it has become a motivational force in it. Because it has come from actual (lived) life experience cannot be considered external. It has to do with Dalit life.

Further, Randhir asserts that due to this in no way it affects their artistic manifestations. Another criticism on Dalit literature is due to the sense of rejection the literature is likely to become monotonous. Replying this Randhir defends that due to rejection the Dalit literature cannot become monotonous rather these are the suppressed emotional tremors which have come out from thousand years of repression. He asks tremors which are felt before an earthquake can they be called monotonous?

Elaborating further, Randhir claims that on the contrary to this the real monotony is there in upper caste Brahminical literature. They have the same age old themes in their literary writings. They have this because they do not have anything to reject i.e. they do not have the sense of rejection in their literature. Therefore, the Dalit literature or Dalit

¹¹⁴Aloysius 2007, p. 27.

authors should not bother about it. Rejection in Dalit literature has raised it to a definite standard; it has given it a new dimension. With this sense of rejection only can lead it to new social movements and with this sense only one can trace one's own identity and existence affirms Randhir.

Concluding this article Randhir remarks that the source of Dalit motivation actually lies in Dalit life, Dalit movements and in Ambedkarite movements. Rejection is an incredible gift of Dalit literature given by Ambedkar. Ambedkarite thought as an ideology is the decisive representation of thousands of years of Dalits psychological brought up. Therefore, rejection and Ambedkarism go hand in hand (together) they are inseparable, indivisible intricately connected together, therefore rejection and Ambedkarism is closely connected and therefore, rejection took a decisive stance in Dalit literature.

In fact, Ambedkarism is the inspiration of Dalit literature and Dalit movement. Rejection is a part of it. Overall development and upliftment of Dalits lies in Ambedkarism and hence, it is not reactionary or oppositional to anything else. In rejection, lies the principle of cultural emancipation of Dalits. There is a sense of social integrity in Dalit literature because of Dalitism. There is a kind of Sociality and similarity found in Dalit and American Negro literatures incomparable to any other literature. Rejection in Dalit literature is life-based and therefore, it is also an integral part of Dalit literature.

Rejection and Dalit literature are homogenous today. They are a perfect blend. If rejection is lost in Dalit literature, it will lose the whole revolutionary spirit in it. It will lose its soul. It will be ineffective. Therefore, it is wrong to look at rejection in Dalit literature from traditional criticism point of view. Traditional critical point of view or parameters cannot measure it because it rejects traditional criticism as well.

“Negro Jivnacha Samartha Bhashyakar”¹¹⁵ (An able commentator of Negro life) Ralph Ellison by Janardan Waghmare, in this thought-provoking article Waghmare took stock of Ralph Ellison’s major writings. As per the title of the article Ralph Ellison was really an able commentator of a Negro life and literature. Ellison is one of the prominent and prolific American Negro writers. His great novel *Invisible Man* has been described as a modern classic by the critics. According to Waghmare the literary writings of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin greatly impacted American literature and life. The Jews enormously impacted on American literature such as Soul Bellow, Bernard Mellamod, and Norman Mailer etc. Similarly, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin have created their impact on American literature and culture.

Waghmare presents a graph of Ellison’s *Invisile man*¹¹⁶ and his life in this article. Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man* is a three-dimensional work of art. Its subject matter is social, its essence is moral and its appeal is artistic. The novel tries to raise social consciousness on humanitarian grounds. The author traces eternal values of art through this novel. It is a novel of meditative and serious tone.

Waghmare has summed up his discussion of Ellison’s literature with the following significant observations: To Ellison blackness is both “the barb” and the “spur.” It has moved him to achieve distinction in the Province of American Art and letters. Ellison understood that protest writing cannot go beyond a certain limit. It has its own limitations. But it cannot go a long way. This kind of literature cannot go a long way. It cannot touch all dimensions of life. Therefore, Ellison proposed that one should not follow blindly protest literature. Ellison’s thought did not match with Richard Wright’s thinking. Richard Wright’s theory “art as weapon” did not suit Ellison. Therefore, he did not admit

¹¹⁵Asmitadarsha 9 (2) 1976, p. 17 and 24.

¹¹⁶See Ellison 1965.

himself in the army of proletariat.

According to Ellison literature is an art and hence, literary production must be our aim. Literature should not turn away from society. Social life must be reflected through literary production. Universality to literature can be attained only through manifestation of literary values. Only art has the capacity to take human experiences beyond space and time. Negro writer has a lot to say. But unless his experience is not stated through the medium of art it cannot reach beauty or perfection. The literature in which the manifestation of art does not happen cannot attain its own status. The writers who do not subscribe this preposition should stop producing literary writings according to Ellison.

Ellison tried to search for the folk-mind and folk-character of the Negro through almost four hundred years. Overall these odd years the Negro mind and psyche went through different experiences, trials and tribulations etc. Through this effort Ellison believes that he could find the real image and identity of an American Negro.

Negro life is a full of sorrow. Despite this he has created his own image, identity and tradition in America. He has created his own music dialect, style and in a different identity in America for himself. Negroes have their own cultural stream (that they have created) the same stream is flowing through the similar cultural and social stream. It has no special tribunal. In fact, in this variety lies Negroes real identity.

Ellison's writings we find a perfect blend of mainstream American and Negro way of life. Ellison is a staunch supporter of American life. There is depiction of human values, egalitarian perspective and a down to earth approach in Ellison's writings which paved way for Dalit writers and their writings in the Indian context. Waghmare has done splendid job writing on the Negro or Afro-American literature, culture and society through the pages of *Asmitadarsha*. It is really a great gift to Dalit writers to move forward taking inspiration from it.

Invisible Man is writer in search of the Negro identity. It takes stock of the life of a Negro in American culture, and history and its iconography. The writer wants the real image of the Negro should come forward. He wants to create not the distorted but a real image of a Negro through this novel. The word invisible can be used as a counter- part of the word untouchable in the Indian context. Ellison has brilliantly used the word to show the invisible existence of the Blacks in America. The Negro writing in *Asmitadarsha* can be compared with the Dalit writings in India on many counts. There is similarity between the Blacks in America and the Dalits in India. In fact, Dalit literature and the Dalit Panther Movement borrowed a lot from the Afro-American writings. The protagonist thinks that this black colour has created tragedy in a Negro life. Dalit writers have been asking the same question through ages what is their crime? Why do the upper castes discriminate them?

To use Chandra Bhan Prasad's words why do they hate Dalits? Prasad argues that Dalits have been relegated for centuries in this country. They have faced social boycott for centuries together. He asks how could have been done to them unless there was a design or conspiracy behind it? According to Prasad Dalit phobia among non-Dalits is being subjected to discrimination and exclusion. For this reason alone, Dalit phobic patients must be treated, and this can happen only if the international community join hands and make India submit before the United Nations (UN) that its citizens visiting foreign countries will be treated if they are found to be Dalit phobia positive.¹¹⁷ Whether it is a Dalit or Afro-American their sorrow is more or less similar. They suffer from the same issues from the oppressive structures in society.

The pain, suffering and sorrow of a Dalit life has been explained by Eleanor

¹¹⁷See Prasad 2006, p. 19.

Zelliot in her article focussing on Dalit literature. Eleanor Zelliot's article "Dalit Sahitya" (literature)¹¹⁸ is actually an inaugural speech delivered by Zelliot in Bauddha Sahitya Parishad; Mumbai in 1976 later published in *Asmitadarsha* in the form of an article. Zelliot express her thoughts on Dalit literature in comparative and historical perspective. She states that Dalit literature is most appropriate and essential to be studied.

Zelliot has been studying Ambedkar's movement since 1962. In fact; she is the first person in the post- Ambedkarite Maharashtra to have done extensive research on Ambedkar. She was a student of history and therefore, has a better knowledge and understanding of any movement, its time period, its ups and downs, transitions and transformations in it etc. She says that she is well-aware of equality and social justice because she comes from America which has the history of social movements and struggles for equality and justice. She has expressed her views on Black literature, new American literature etc at the end this article.

In the beginning of this article, she discuss about Chokhamela, a Fourteenth century Dalit poet in Maharashtra. She remarks that though Chokhamela was a devotee of Vitthal he had an anti-untouchability tone in his Abhangas. He protested against untouchability in his own (submissive) manner. Religious integrity was the crux behind every *Bhakti* (devotional) movement in those days. Hence, the cry of Chokhamela was against untouchability it was a cry of Dalit literature according to Zelliot. Chokhamela paved the way for "rejection", which is considered to be the most significant element in Dalit literature. But the voice of Chokhamela was suppressed by the upper castes. According to Zelliot there is discontent in the songs of the medieval Mahar saint poets, there is protest of the very idea of a polluting caste, but the overriding feeling is one of

¹¹⁸See *Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, pp. 28 and 30.

joy in devotion to God. “Chokha is uncouth, but his devotion is not uncouth.” Why to judge him by his exterior¹¹⁹

Zelliot also talked about another prominent figure in Dalit literature existed at that point of time i.e. Gopalbaba Walangkar¹²⁰ in the second half of the nineteenth century. Walangkar openly challenged the Hindus maltreatment to the untouchables. He appealed the British to recruit the untouchables into military services. This was indeed an act of bravery at that point of time. Pandit Kondiram express his view that how the upper castes treat the untouchables in a different way? He criticized them in his poems. Kondiram’s poem exposes the wicked deeds of the upper castes. It is definitely the movement poetry opines Zelliot. Literature always paves way forward for the betterment of society. It shows direction to people in general.

Zelliot takes a review of movement literature in this article. One can see liveliness of movement through newspaper articles, pamphlets, etc. published in the contemporary society. Movements could also be seen through songs, ballads, Jalsa’s by different poets. Songs and poems written on Buddha and Babasaheb Ambedkar become immortal over the years. Zelliot admits that when she came in India, she came across movement’s literature a lot newspaper was its base. Zelliot read extensively on movement literature. She read Dalit intellectuals like Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul etc. The Times of India published a supplement on Ambedkar on 25th Nov. 1973 which widely discussed on Dalit literature.

Dalit literature is a reality today. It is an integral part of Marathi literature. We

¹¹⁹See Zelliot 2005, p. 56.

¹²⁰See Gopal Baba Walangkar was the first known leader of social movements among the Mahars, working in social reform and concentrating his efforts on fighting the unjust exclusion of Dalits from the military at the end of 19th century. He was the author of the first petition of grievances in 1890. He also, since his retirement from the army, had attempted to institute a movement among Mahars to encourage Mahar holy men to replace Brahman *joshi*’s. Walangkar, however, was one of those who was concerned about his fellow Mahars, and who devoted the period of his retirement to the social service. See Omvedt 2011, p. 51.

cannot deny this asserts Zelliott.¹²¹ Dalit literature is the outcome of Ambedkar's movements. His movement concentrated on education of people and through education it leads them to writing literature. Zelliott is highly appreciative of Dalit literature. Comparing Dalit literature with the American literature rigorously in this article Zelliott seems to be showing the drawbacks of the literature produced in America.

In today's Dalit literature there is a tone of rejection of the age old tradition and culture. Today's Dalit literature has gone much beyond Chkhamela's and Pandit Kondiram's literature (poems and Abhangas). From primitive submissiveness it has come a long way to become radical voice today.

Pointing at the post- Ambedkarite poets and writers she states that they have their own unique expressions, style, methodology, aesthetics and stringent humanitarian consciousness in their writings. Zelliott further claims that she has read Dalit literature extensively also she has read the writings of Dalit critics / criticism. She brings in an interesting debate on Dalit questions in this article. Two questions are always raised on Dalit literature i.e. can there be Dalit literature or only literature? The second is it is good that the Dalit writers are adding to Marathi literature? They are portraying life which was not there in Marathi literature but what next? Do they want to be the same Dalits for generations?

To answer this question, one has to consider the American black literature. She takes help from Janardan Waghmare's article's comparing Dalit and black literature. It is in vain to discuss on the question that Can there be Dalit literature or not? Dalit writer is conscious about his aim. He is proud of himself being different at the same time he writes with independent name hence above discussion on the question of Dalit seem

¹²¹*Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 30.

meaningless.

Appreciating the efforts of Gangadhar Pantawane's periodical *Asmitadarsha*, Zelliott comments that *Asmitadarsha* has been spearheading and propagating the Dalit cause for the last eight years. We do not have such kind of literary writings produced in America. In fact, Dalit writers in Maharashtra have a greater tendency to write about literary movements and new literary consciousness.

Black theatre or drama and black autobiographies are popular that is not the case with Dalit writing. Dalit writer should pay attention to these genres. The stronghold of Dalit literature is stories and poems it is important from Marathi literary writing point of view. This is not so popular in American literature.

According to Zelliott Dalit literature is gracefully gaining grounds through its capability. Autobiographies must be produced in Dalit literature. The Dalit writing should also probe into drama. In today's, Dalit poetry there is an element of drama in it. It also has the contours of olden form of *Jalsa* and *Tamasha* in it. Folk literature must be conserved. Buddhist philosophy should be reflected in Dalit literature. There is a need to have commentaries on Buddhist literature by the Buddhist scholars. The purpose of social movement or social revolution is to free man. Dalit literature is the literature of the mind and lives who want to liberate themselves. Babasaheb made Dalits able organizers instilling confidence in them. He educated them for their self-development and upliftment. Man should be able to search for his own productivity and creativity out of it. The world around him must reflect in his literature. It should happen not only in India but all over the world I desire.¹²²

Most of the things have already been achieved in Dalit literature envisioned by

¹²²*Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 31.

Zelliot. Dalit writers have depicted a comprehensive vision of life through their literature. Dalit writing is more creative, rational, and realistic today. Pantawane took a comparative review of Dalit poetry and the mainstream Marathi poetry in this article “Dalit Kavita”¹²³ (Dalit Poetry). Pantawane draws our attention to the nature of conservative social system and the need to change that is required in society. According to him social consciousness emerged out of fundamental changes in social life. Person’s naturalness or spontaneity is its sociality. This sociality is both binding and non-binding.

Indian social system is like a wingless bird; therefore, its orientation is not transformative. Transformation is nothing but progress. Change gives new outlook to life. This has not been accepted by the rigid Indian social system. It was engrossed in preserving the age-old traditions and customs which gave rise to a confined surrounding. Their world became restricted. They have formed a world of an enclosed society around them. There is always a conflict between different ideologies in society but the social system did not change or transformed at all.

Analysing ancient Marathi poetry and the reflection of Dalit life in it Pantawane remarks that the Dalit poetry is almost invisible in the mainstream Marathi literature.¹²⁴ Due to traditional social values, religious scriptures and religion, *Karmkandas* (rights and rituals) it was impossible to have any kind of reflection of social life in it. Due to the rigidity and influence of old-Dharmashastras and the orthodoxy of Varnashramdharma it has created a rigid circle in society. Impact of conservatism narrowed down the thinking capacity of the people. The ancient Marathi literature did not feel ashamed to narrate the *Shudras* and the *Antyajas* (wretched condition) in their literature. Precisely, the Marathi poetry, completely neglected the literature of the subalterns.

¹²³ *Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, pp. 25 and 28.

¹²⁴ *Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 26.

Pantawane quotes from *Dnyaneshwari* and *Dasbodh* the ill-treatment meted out to the Shudras. He quotes from *Dnyaneshwari*, Abhanga 3, Page.216 and 18, Page.879, 880). Saint Tukaram and Chokhamela also protested against this social inequality but their voice was suppressed. They were made to believe in the following Shlokas.

*Thewile Anante Taisechi Rahawe*¹²⁵

God kept you like that (wretched) condition

You have to be like that.

(Translation mine)

Which means you cannot question God. Chokhamela also was satisfied serving them. Nobody among these had guts to go against the Hindu rituals. It was acceptable to them. Overall Marathi saint poetry no longer expressed anger against them. Marathi saint poetry was overall “submissive” in its stance. The Marathi saints did not protest against it. Their poetry does not talk about social sorrow / misery; therefore, it is anti-human. Dalit poets reject this notion. The ancient Marathi poetry did not talk about the pain, suffering and sorrow of the social life in general and the downtrodden in particular. Therefore, it is unacceptable for Dalit poets. They do not subscribe it. The Dalit poets do not entertain the notion that they are (Dalits) surrender beings; they are inferior, lowly, history less people. They hate this kind of feeling. They go against it. They hate it, they reject it outrightly.

Due to advent of the British in India new thoughts, new ideology emerged. Science and technology strived on the medieval thinking. Hindu traditional belief, superstitious thinking everything was at stake. Social reformers like Jyotiba Phule came on to the scene. He wrote from emancipatory point of view to re-construct the society. The advent of colonialism brought a ray of hope for the subalterns and Dalit groups. The

¹²⁵ *Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 26.

educational policies and the reformatory agenda truly emancipated the lives of the downtrodden. Mahatma Phule emerged on the scene as a radical reformer who transformed the society through his educational attempts.

Phule, in a way, waged a war against religious dogmas, social ills, precedence, and exploitation in society through his poems (*Abhangas*). At the same time, he highlighted and emphasized on social and ethical values like human freedom, liberty, rationality, dignity effectively in his poetry. Prominent Marathi writer Keshavsut also might have taken lessons of social reforms from Phule; therefore, he talks about social reform in his poetry. The famous Marathi poet Keshavsut did not support Hindu ideology and Hindu social system in his poetry.

Pantawane reviewed modern Marathi poets and their poetry in this article. From the second decade of the twentieth century modern Marathi poetry emerged with new-consciousness, devotional poetry, patriotic poetry, humanitarian poetry etc. were the subjects of the poetry. Renowned Marathi poets such as Kusumagraj, V.R. Kant, Powale, Anil etc. talked about love for humanity, Karandikar, Muktibodh wrote with progressive outlook, whereas the poetry of Mardhekar, Bhave etc. talk about the psyche of the war-stricken soldiers (people) and those who are stuck and troubled in technological and mechanical world.

The poetry in *Laghuniyatkalikas* rejects family as an institution. It revolved around round context less whirlpool. Importance to man is not given in this poetry. Man is not free / liberated in this poetry. Some poets do talk against tradition out rightly while others surrender themselves to the system.

Poetry of new “social consciousness” arose after 1901. A huge chunk of Dalit poet’s emerged still the mainstream Marathi poetry did not take note of this; they neglected it. The Marathi literary intelligentsia believed that the literary ideology must

bear out of a special or particular category only. This is the reason why renowned writers and social reforms like Kisan Fagu Bansod, Shahir Ghedage, Korubuwa Gaikwad, Patitpawandas, Dinbandhu Waman Kardak, and Shridhar Rajanand etc remained unknown to the world. Marathi writers deliberately neglected them. The theme or the message of their poetry was social propagation therefore they did not talk about superstition, religious dogma or egotism, etc. They criticized the caste system, exploitation, etc. Their poetry was truly rational, logical, realistic and real life. They claimed that today's poetry is based on the social freedom of the soldiers.

We have come a long way, we adopted principle of democracy in the post-independence period but still we have an orthodox social system working against the social, political emancipation of Dalits. We welcome and glorified science on one hand and rejected the emancipations of Dalit on the other Pantawane asks why this contradiction still exists in society? He categorically states these anti-social elements are there in our country and the Indian culture witness all this openly. It accepts or supports the stringent policy of punishing Dalits blindly and deafly i.e. without reason, therefore the Dalits feel they have nothing to do with the culture the poet criticize their culture, the tradition etc. Pantawane quotes Waman Nimbalkar and his poetry in this periodical. Nimbalkar thinks if darkness is an integral part of his life because this country never considered him. His dreams shattered at every step. The eyes of the Dalits are broken. They are brutally wounded and massacred in this country. In another poem the poet question the oppressive social system Tryambak Sapkale asks:

Gawai bandhuche dole gele panawalya nahit

Tumchya dolyanchya kada nahit kuthe nishedhachya sabha

Batamya alya don-char vartamanpatrat ani sara

*Kahi kasa shant, shant!!*¹²⁶

English translation of the stanza:

Gawai brother's eyes were scratched
Nothing has happened to you
Nowhere there are protest marches
Newspapers paid lip service
Publishing two-three news
And everything became fine, calm and quite.

(Translation mine)

The fanatic Hindus killed Gawaibandhu mercilessly scratching his eyes; what was his crime? Nothing has happened to the society; nobody was affected by his death! As if there is no value to Dalit life. Dalits life is thus bifurcated, destroyed and put an end by the upper caste and the orthodox social system. Ambedkar gave them the strength to fight against them. He boosted confidence in them Pantawane quotes Dhasal's poem here. Dhasal challenges the fundamental beliefs and tries to dig-deep into his own soul to find out the very meaning of his being.

Ambedkarite thought inspired them, encouraged them and prepared them to fight against the unjust unequal society. His thoughts gave them wings to fly. His thoughts made trace their being. After acquaintance and encounter with books and knowledge therein the poet was totally disturbed and restless. The following poem describes his state of mind:

Kharacha Kashala Zali Pustakanshi Olakh

Bara Ohalacha Gota, Gawachi Gure Walali

¹²⁶*Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 27.

Asti. Aslya Inglya Daslya Nastya.

English translation of the stanza:

Truly, why did I acquaint myself with books?
I would have happily grazed animals in the village;
Had I not been acquainted with them
I am restless today
My acquaintance with books,
is not letting me to be silent.¹²⁷

(Translation mine)

Daya Pawar expresses the situation of Dalits who they were? What was their identity in his writings? His poetry reviews the past, present and the future of the Dalits. There is touch of social-political and cultural angle in his poetry. His poetry talks about the realization of having self-respect.

The pain, sorrow and the suffering in Dalit poetry comes with experience. These images and experiences have the element of the truth. Pain and suffering is an integral part of Dalit. But the poetry do not stop there it goes ahead, it challenges everything in life. Dalit poetry is a discovery of his cultural life. The Dalit poet therefore, welcomes change or transformation. He cannot separate or put aside the feeling of Dalitism or Dalitness from him because it is rooted in him. Dalitism is the system working against social oppression. Therefore, the personal pronoun 'I' in Dalit literature is the commentator of Dalit life.

Dalit poetry is born basically out of "pain rebellion, and rejection" which is the soul of Dalit literature. Dalit poetry is deeply rooted in the soil; therefore, it is manifested

¹²⁷ *Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 28.

through its unique culture and novelty. Therefore, it cannot always be artificial or imaginative. It has the tinge of realism in it. It does not require the support of others. It is self-revelatory in itself. It is revolutionary, transformative and has its own beauty and aesthetics. Revolutionary poetry is always new. The newness or novelty in it is the novelty of a different kind therefore it is different and more fertile than mainstream Marathi poetry.

“Dalit Kathakaranche Kathalekhan Yek Adhawa” (A review of Dalit stories and story writers) by Sukhram Hivrale¹²⁸Hivrale’s article takes a review of Dalit story writers writing from (1950-1975) roughly of 25 years. According to him the Dalit story writers began writing from Babasaheb Ambedkar’s *Janata* (published from Mumbai) times. This kind of writing published sporadically since 1950 and gained momentum in 1954. Bandhumadhav, Ramesh Shinde, Nirguna Kamble, Bhai Narendra More, Yadavrao Gangurde etc. were the prominent Dalit story writers writing at that point of time. These writers wrote gradually through magazines, weeklies, etc. These writers wrote in an age when no publishing houses were ready to publish them. They talked about social consciousness through their writings. Present article takes a review of major Dalit storywriters and their writings such as Bandhumadhav, Annabhau Sathe, Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul, Keshav Meshram, Waman Hoval etc.

Bandhumadhav is considered being the first storywriter in Dalit literature. He wrote on the social issues. He wrote extensively on inter caste marriages, dowry, question of education, caste defilement. He expressed the revolt in the mind of Dalit youth against caste system and the efforts of social reform. There has been a greater transition in the life of Dalit from 1954-1956. It was a crucial period for Dalit writings Ambedkar’s social

¹²⁸*Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, pp. 29 and 35.

reform movement was on the rise in these years. He arranged different conferences and meetings to spread awareness among the people.

Ambedkar criticized “Baluta System” (barter system). Bandhumadhav wrote stories critiquing Vatandari or stories on Mahar Vatan (published them from *Prabuddha Bharat*) through these stories Bandhumadhav exposed and criticized bonded labour system, slavery, poverty, helplessness among it. He portrayed Dalit life story after conversion in his stories.

Sukhram Hivrale takes a review of Annabhau Sathe’s story-writings. After Bandhumadhav, Annabhau Sathe and Shankarrao Kharat were the prominent Dalit story writers in Maharashtra. Entire Marathi society came on a common platform during joint Maharashtra movement for the first time.

To materialize the dream of a united Maharashtra everybody came together. Annabhau wrote, through Acharya Atre’s *Navyuga* extensively. His stories roused social consciousness among the people. This period was the period of rural stories Annabhau Sathe came forward as a prominent story writer. Marathi writers such as Thokal Dighe, Vyankatesh Madgulkar, G.N. Dandekar, Shankar Patil, D.M. Mirasdar, R.R. Borade, Anand Yadav etc. portrayed village life of Mahar, Mangs, Chambhar and Dhor etc. They presented stories from the life of Dalit, representing their pain and sufferings. Prominent among these were, *Barbadya Kanjaryachi Katha* etc. Annabhau Sathe’s characters protest against Dalit slavery, their destitute condition etc. He criticized the Inamdar’s and the Savarkar’s exploitative tendencies in life. He seems to be revolting against it.¹²⁹

Hivrale also reviewed stories. Kharat started his career from *Navayuga* in 1958 from his *Manuskichi Haak*. It was based on Ambedkar’s conversion to Buddhism in

¹²⁹*Asmitadarsha* 9 (2) 1976, p. 30.

1956. Shankarrao Kharat talked about bonded labour (sorrows and pains out of it); inter caste marriage and conversion in his novel in an effective manner. Kharat's most famous stories are *Bara Balutedar* and *Curtail Katha*. Kharat talked about Ramoshi, Kumbar, Kola, Pardhi, Navi, Sutra, Lohar, Sonar and Guar etc. Kharat commented and criticized the Balutedari system (traditional system) in villages. This system made Dalits slave due to which the problem of Dalits was solved (occupational or otherwise).

Shankarrao Kharat effectively portrayed the painful life and suffering of twelve Balutedars through his stories. He portrays life of criminal communities, ostracized and boycotted people, their emotions and feelings etc. He talked about the nomadic tribes, Aradi, Ghisadi, Bahurupi, Kudmude Joshi's, Gosavi, Vasudev, Holar, Gandhali, Bhamte, Faseparadhi, Bhoi, Kaikadi, Vanjari etc. communities through his stories. Kharat use the traditional tone in his stories. He seems to be of the opinion that one should write how one experiences one's life. His characters are ready to face the challenges of times rather he portrays them to be so.

Marathi stories were completely unaware of the realities of Dalit life.¹³⁰ They never thought that stories can be written on their lives. Criticizing the Marathi mainstream writers Bhalchandra Fadke remarks that though S.M. Mate wrote on the life of the marginalised his writing lacked the pain and the rebellion that was required to express and address Dalit issue effectively. Mate's stories never bothered to address genuine Dalit issues in the real sense.¹³¹ Famous collections of stories written by Kharat are *Bara Balutedar*, *Tadipar*, *Sangawa*, *Titwicha Fera*, *Sutaka*, *Daundi*, *Gava Shiv* etc.

Baburao Bagul's *Jenvha Mi Jaat Chorli* and *Maran Swasta Hot Aahe*¹³² are famous collection of stories written by him. Bagul's stories also contributed profusely to

¹³⁰See Fadke 2000.

¹³¹See Fadke 2000, p. 179.

¹³²See Bagul 2012.

Marathi short story writing tradition. Bagul portrayed life of Dalits dwelling in hutments, people on footpath, people in quest of shelter etc. Bagul expressed their cordial relations, their amicability, and their harmonious relationship, their sorrows, pains, suffering, anxiety, anger, love etc.¹³³

Bagul's stories are considered effective in present time. There is a reflection of problems and difficulties of the modern age and a realistic portrait of it in his stories. Bagul's stories are popular because of his style of presentation and way of writing. Bagul's stories have realistic touch hence; they appear to be brutal but true. Rebellion or *Vidroh* is one of the characteristics of Bagul's writing. His characters / protagonists protest against caste, religion, traditions, and customs etc. They wage a war against it. Bagul criticized pertinence, priesthood, injustice, exploitation, bullies etc. In the entire tradition of Marathi writing Bagul's writing is unique because of its inflammability.

Bagul's protagonists grab the attention of readers through their effective dialogues and deeds. They impress the readers. His style is aggressive, explosive and almost like a fire. His stories made reader think; he becomes conscious of the realities of life, and makes him protest against it. Bagul's commentaries on life and issues are powerful and there is a spark in it.

“Dalit Sahitya-Disha Ani Marxwad”¹³⁴ (Dalit literature- direction and Marxism) by L.S. Rokade. He begins his article announcing that, “If Dalit Marxists in India are evaluating Ambedkarism on Indian Marxist lines then they are committing a blunder.”¹³⁵ Rokade's major criticism is on the fact that Dalit Indian Marxist comparing Ambedkarism with Marxism in India. Rokade ask straightforward and pertinent questions regarding Ambedkar and Marx ideology in this article. Replying to the question on

¹³³See Bagul 2011.

¹³⁴*Asmitadarsha* 11 (4) 1978, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁵*Asmitadarsha* 11 (4) 1978, p. 14.

Ambedkar-Marx ideology to Baban Londhe and Sudhakar Gaikwad in an interview Pantawane made his stand very clear he said, “some writers while writing on Ambedkar and Marx clubbed them together stating both ideologies are complementary to each other; I thought they are creating blunder stating so therefore, I clearly stated that “Ambedkarism” is only the inspiration behind Dalit literature.” I thought it was my moral duty to say so.

The writers who wanted to bring coordination between Ambedkarism and Marxism were indirectly putting the Dalit writers in great confusion. Perhaps they thought that both ideologies are incomplete without each other and therefore in order to complete it they wanted to club both the ideologies together in one. Moreover, these Marxist writers consider the Dalit writers castiest who followed Ambedkarism, which was quite strange. But their difficulty is they cannot talk about Marx without talking about Ambedkar. Hence, I declared from *Asmitadarsha* that “*Asmitadarsha* want Ambedkarite literature.” It doesn’t want artificial/masked literature.” And then I realized that those who were Marxist stopped giving their literature to *Asmitadarsha*. The fact is nobody (no writer) in *Asmitadarsha* including me ever criticized Marx in our writing.

To put it in Ambedkar’s words:

Karl Marx is no doubt the father of modern socialism or communism but he was not interested merely in propounding the theory of socialism that had been done long before him by others. Marx was more interested in proving that his socialism was scientific.¹³⁶

Ambedkar agreed to the fact that Marx was the father of modern socialism and communism but he did not accept Marx’s perspective on history. When it comes to the

¹³⁶See Londhe and Gaikwad 2012, p. 575.

Indian context and social structure more than the economic need the social and religious morality is gruesome.

Therefore, the pain and rebellion in Dalit literature has cultural and social element attached to it. Most importantly the very creation of Dalit literature is from Ambedkarite thought. Therefore, Ambedkarism and not Marxism is the inspiration behind Dalit literature. Taking cue from Rokade's article, I argue that why the Dalit literary writers are trying to find parallels between Ambedkarism and Marxism. What is the need to find such similarity or difference between them? In the process of doing so what are they trying to prove?

According to Rokade they are wrong if they try to compare Ambedkarism with Indian Marxism. Indian Marxism cannot be compared with Ambedkarism in India but comparison can be done or made with Marx's fundamental principles but not certainly with the polluted Marxism in India. Rokade's major objection seems to be on the Dalit Marxist writers in India and their ways and means of equating Marxism with Ambedkar. I totally agree with Rokade's view that the Dalit writers in India should not judge Ambedkarism on Indian Marxist background. It is quite incomprehensible that why the so called Dalit Marxists want all the time to compare Ambedkar with Marx when it is very clear that the India's major problem is "Caste" not the "Class."

Following intriguing questions are posed by Rokade to the Dalit Marxist writers: why the Dalit Marxists in India are trying to co-relate Marxism with Ambedkarism? Why are they accepting the slavery of Red Manu? Do they accept the fact that Ambedkar had in-depth study and knowledge of Marxism than any other Indian Marxist in India? Rokade argues that despite knowing Marx so thoroughly why Ambedkar did not adopt or follow Marx? Finally, at the end of his life why Ambedkar took refuge in Buddhism?

Have these so called "Indian Dalit Marxists" ever studied this asks Rokade.

Probing further deep in the issue Rokade remarks that the Indian Dalit Marxist would not be able to answer these core and crucial questions because these are very straight forward and direct questions. They find it difficult to answer them; but these intriguing questions cannot be left just like that they have to be addressed diligently because they can hamper the entire social movement of Ambedkar. There is no doubt that Dalit literature is an integral part of Dalit social movement. Rokade remarks “why these Dalit Indian Marxists do not understand Ambedkar’s views on Marx? Do they pretend to understand it? That is a big question. How can they form their opinion without properly comprehending Ambedkarism and Marxism? The author presumes perhaps they do not have the capacity and capability to understand and grasp Ambedkar’s thoughts or deliberately they are trying to misinterpret Ambedkar thought. The author asks why they do so.¹³⁷

Rokade comments on the double standard attitude of the Indian Dalit Marxists through this article. Rokade further elaborate why do the Dalit Indian Marxists think that Ambedkarism is incomplete and reactionary compare to Marx. Rokade suggest the Dalit Indian Marxists to go through Ambedkar’s fundamental text *States and Minorities* and his historical speech delivered in a Buddhist conference at Kathmandu where he makes his stand very clear regarding Buddhism and Marxism. Ambedkar’s thinking become very wide and vibrant than Marx in this speech. Babasaheb Ambedkar has accepted Marx’s one or two principles that do not make Ambedkar a Marxist. Ambedkar took some articles from England and America’s constitution does not mean the Indian constitution becomes English or American? Babasaheb and the other constitution framers adopted the best principles of the world and that’s how the Indian constitution framed. Ambedkar formed his own independent thinking accepting or adopting excellent life values.

¹³⁷ *Asmitadarsha* 11 (4) 1978, p. 15.

Therefore, one needs to ponder over the fact that despite studying Marx so intensely and profusely Ambedkar did not follow Marx? Why he did not label him to be a Marxist it is because Marxism in India was a failure, insufficient, incapable to cope with the Indian reality, therefore he took refuge in Buddhism. Marxism failed in all fronts. It cannot work at all in India. The Indian Dalit Marxist must not confine all Dalits in the name of class and labour only; because caste is a reality in India.

Reiterating the fact that Marxism is not an option to Indian reality but Buddhism is Rokade quotes Babasaheb's speech on 5th February, 1956 Ambedkar says, "Buddhism is an antidote to communism." Ambedkar categorically stated it so clearly still the Indian Dalit Marxist's are confused why?¹³⁸

The reality is that Marxism is perverse and therefore, Buddhism is an option to it. Rokade brings in here criticism from the Marxists on Ambedkar. The critics pose following questions was Ambedkar's ideology viable to solve Dalit question? Rokade further re-question the Marxists asking was Marxism either a viable solution for Dalit question? Contrary to this the Rokade remarks wherever they had power the injustice and atrocities increased in India.

According to Rokade the Dalit Marxists in India are thoughtless beings. He appeals them to be clear in their stand. The Dalit Marxists do not see anything wrong in joining hands with the Indian Marxists; in the process they become hard core Marxists and eventually they become intellectual slaves to the Indian Marxists.

Historical Issues

¹³⁸ *Asmitadarsha* 11 (4) 1978, p. 15.

“Jatak Kathetil Yaksha Mhanjecha Prachin Kalache Narbali”¹³⁹(Yaksha in Jataka tales mean ancient periods sacrificial beings) Zumbarlal Kamble’s historical article draws attention to a heinous practice and tradition prevalent in ancient India. The author refers to the Jataka tales¹⁴⁰ and the victims therein. The title of the article is suggestive of the fact that the Yaksha’s (the protagonist) in the Jataka tales were the victims of the upper castes. Kamble begins his article talking about the atrocities inflicted upon the untouchable Mahars by the upper castes in the ancient times. He talks about the history of slavery (slavery of the untouchables) in this article. According to him the untouchables were treated as slaves. *Manusmruti* gave slavery a status of law.¹⁴¹ Manu made laws in the interest of the Hindus and the upper castes. *Manusmruti* prevented these untouchables from all walks of life.¹⁴²

The casteist society developed out of the notion of slavery. Ambedkar mentioned in his historical text *Who were the Shudras* that the untouchables were basically Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas and the Brahmins confronted with each other as result untouchability was imposed on them.¹⁴³ In this way, untouchability and slavery was imposed on the Kshatriyas, they were ostracized, thrown out of the village, they were hated, humiliated, insulted and treated very badly by the upper castes. Thus, the heinous tradition of giving Bali (sacrificial killing) of the untouchables began in the ancient times. In the process, youngsters were killed in the name of God. Chandrakant Waghmare’s seminal text *Mukta Salve*¹⁴⁴ throws light on this heinous tradition of killing the Mangs (the

¹³⁹*Asmitadarsha* 14 (2) 1981, pp. 5 and 8

¹⁴⁰*Jataka* tales are a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of Gautam Buddha in both human and animal form.

¹⁴¹ According to Sharmila Rege is of the view that Manu did not give the law of caste and that he could not do so. Caste existed long before Manu. He was an upholder of it and therefore philosophized about it, but certainly he did not and could not the present order of Hindu society. See Rege 2013, p. 96.

¹⁴² See Smith and Doniger 1991.

¹⁴³ See BAWS 2010.

¹⁴⁴ See Wankhede 2011.

lower caste) untouchables offering them as sacrificial beings.

Mukta Salve's (an untouchable girl) essay on "The pain and suffering of the Mangs and Mahars" 1855 Bombay presidency ask pertinent question on the integrity and authenticity of the Brahmins towards society.¹⁴⁵ Omprakash Kamble critically analyzed the inhuman, barbaric and brutal tradition of killing these youngsters for sacrificial purpose in his thought provoking article "Mukta Salve: The early emergence of a protest voice in Mid –Nineteenth Century Bombay Presidency, 1855." He explains elaborately how and why this happened in the ancient past. The tradition of killing innocent lives (the untouchables) in the name of auspiciousness continued in *Shivshahi* and *Peshwai* tradition as well for instance, in the foundation stone of Raygadh fort of Shivaji Maharaj an untouchable was sacrificed. In Sarja fort a Mahar called Wadkar was killed in the foundation stone by the Marathas. According to Anil Kathare,

Mahar (Atishudra caste) was one of the most prominent castes during Shivkal (period of Shivaji maharaj the Maratha empire in Maharashtra) and Peshwai (during the reign of Peshwa in Maharashtra). The Mahars were treated inhumanly in the name of untouchability during this period.¹⁴⁶

Kamble quotes Ambedkar's words,

The Naglokas spread and propagated Buddhism in India for the first time. The Naglokas were the enemies of the Aryans. The Aryans and Anaryans fought and confronted each other. The Aryans burnt alive the Mangs. The Agastamuni saved only one Naga from all these battles and we are the off springs of the Nagas left.¹⁴⁷

The tales from Mahabharata talks about the 'Yaksha' stories. They tell us about the

¹⁴⁵See Rani 2017, p. 73.

¹⁴⁶Kathare 2011, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷*Asmitadarsha* 14 (2) 1981, p. 6.

history of these untouchables. The stories of the Yakshas are told in Mahabharata about Yaksha's as a protector of pond has relevance in history. The "Raynak Mahar"¹⁴⁸ was killed from Raygadh fort by the Peshwas. He became God for the people. It is the general understanding that the soul of Raynak wonder in and around the valleys of Raygadh fort. People worship Raynak. The protectors of pond are the Nagas. In the ancient times these Nagas were killed in the pond so that it will have water so these Nagas were the victim of the upper castes society. They were killed illogically and irrationally. There is influence of Hinduism on all Jataka tales. The Yakshini's also were the representatives of Dalit woman. The history of *Narbali* (killing man) had been mentioned in the ancient times by the Marathas. Kamble reiterated in this article that the history needs to be studied with more scientific approach.

In connection to this article another article titled "Buddhakalin Awarniya Striya"¹⁴⁹(Lower caste women during Buddha's time) by Sushila Mul. She throws light on the position of Indian women and their glorious time before Manudharma Shastra's inception and implementation, the women in India experienced, all kinds of liberty in the pre-Manu days on the basis of their knowledge and wisdom. Maitrayi, Gargi, Sulabha are the examples of some of them. With the inception of Manu raj the position of women in India deteriorated and simultaneously declined. The perception of looking at the women changed. They were hated in society. Manu's stringent laws change the entire dynamics and equation towards looking at women and society.

One could imagine if this was the condition and status of women in general what

¹⁴⁸Tracing the history of Raynak Mahar Gail Omvedt writes Rayba Janba Gaikwad, known as Raynak. "Nak" was the ending usually used for Mahars in the Military. Raynak usually used for *Mahars* in the Military. Raynak had been in the service of an overlord of Raigad fort, Yashwant Potnis, who battled the Peshwas for control of the fort in 1772-73. Raynak was active in its defence, and when the fort fell he carried the flag of Potnis to his camp. But Raynak and his companions were captured by the Peshwa forces and executed. See Omvedt 2011, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴⁹*Asmitadarsha* 14 (3) 1981, pp. 77 and 80.

might have been the condition of the untouchable women in society? Interrogate Sushila in her thought-provoking essay. Manu's stringent laws made woman slave ultimately resulting in making them prostitutes. Sushila's article also concentrates on the position of women in society. In the initial phase of Buddhism the condition of woman was precarious and pathetic. Buddha attempted to improve it. (Removing all kinds of social evils and restriction on women) Buddha did it through his acts, deeds and the policies he adopted in his time. Buddha radically changed the attitude of the people towards woman in society.

Sushila narrates the condition of woman through the Pali stories from Buddhist texts or literature. According to her sixteen *Ganarajya* (republics) were there during Buddha's period. The condition of the concubine (woman) was very pathetic, miserable and wretched. It was considered to be the weakest section in society. She had to depend on the upper castes (man) for her livelihood. The Brahmins harassed her mentally and physically. The Chaturvarna system even captured the mind and heart of the Chandalini (lower caste Matangi woman). Sushila narrates the story of a Chandalini¹⁵⁰ Matangi a lower caste girl who had the influence of Brahminism/Chaturvarna system on her mind. Ananda, the disciple of the Buddha changed Chandalini or Matangi's whole approach towards at life.

Through this story Sushila wants to highlight the fact that there were many women like Chandalini who became the victim of caste due to the practice of Brahminism in society. Later, Chandalini converted herself into Buddhism. Many lower caste women also joined Buddha's Sangha and experience liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice etc. Woman like Amrapali also surrendered Buddha and became Bhikkhuni later. The

¹⁵⁰Ambedkar 2011, pp. 152-53.

women belong to “Dasi” community were looked down upon both by the men and women equally. Buddha allowed all caste women in his Sangha irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, race, tradition, culture etc.

The impact of Buddhism on them Purnika’s example is one of them. Many rich and affluent people followed Buddha’s liberal philosophy in his time. Buddha’s period experienced a radical change in the position of woman from Manu’s times. Buddha allowed woman to be treated like human beings. The beauty of the woman became bane for her for example the beauty of Amrapali was for everybody declared “Vajji” of Vaishali. We can see from the example of Amrapali that how hard it was for her to survive in such strange condition. The social system was very patriarchal and male-centric. Amrapali could only experience loftiness in Buddhism. Buddhism led her to eternal peace and satisfaction. Amrapali became Bhikkhuni. Because of the influence of the Vedic religion, the spread of religious rites and rituals of the Hindus, the woman was always neglected and sidelined. Buddha showed them the path to knowledge and wisdom. He instilled confidence in them. Buddhism liberated women from all kinds of restrictions and bondages. He allowed women to work and contribute in his Sanghas. He involved women in all religious functions. Women in the Buddhist Sangha experienced immense joy, pleasure, loftiness and sublimity of the highest order. Buddha revered woman by giving her respect and reverence. He fought for equality, liberty, fraternity, and social justice for them. In this way, Buddha liberated, motivated, inspired, cultivated, cultured educated and enlightened women from all walks of life in his time.

“Buddha wa Tyanche Buddhadarshan” ¹⁵¹(Buddha and his Manifestation) R.N. Chavan focuses on the philosophy of the Buddha remarks that Buddhism is a natural

¹⁵¹*Asmitadarsha* 14 (4) 1981, pp. 5 and 21.

religion. It is our indigenous religion; there is nothing foreign in it. It is based on morality and not on traditional rites and rituals. Buddhism rejects traditional conservative thinking. It dealt with orthodoxy and conservatism courageously in his time. Buddha taught us to give precedence to intellect. Therefore, Buddha got name from Buddhi i.e. (intellect). Hence, Chavan propose people to have sound knowledge of Buddhism. He urged them to grab knowledge on Buddhism. Because he believes that Buddha's thought is democratic and egalitarian in creed.

Chavan asserts that Phule also followed Buddha's path in a way. He supported the freedom of man, he opposed idol worship, and he never imposed any sort of compulsion on man. He gave all kinds of liberty to man. In this regard Phule come closer to the Buddha. Either Buddha or Phule did not put restriction on democracy. The writer further opines that to curb explosion of the religious priesthood Buddha and Phule's path is the right path. Buddha laid the foundation of religious reforms. Ambedkar also surrendered himself to Buddhism. Because of Ambedkar Dalits got attracted towards studying Phule. Had there been no influence of Buddhism in Dalit literature it would have remained confined itself only up to pain and rebellion. Buddhism studies both ethics and morality. Buddhism has universal appeal.

According to the author, Buddha rejected Vedic religion. Rejecting the sanctity of Vedic dharma he preferred intellectuality and rationality. Buddha was a fact finder in the real sense. Acceptance of truth and rejection of the false was the welfare policy of Buddhism. This is the crux of Buddhism one has to understand. Ambedkar cleaned Buddhist mirage many a times. Buddhism essentially is a universal religion. According to Chavan, in this regard it is open to all Dalits and non-Dalits. Ambedkar adopted truth from both the sects of Buddhism namely the *Mahayan* and *Hinayana* and thus prepared his own Yana or (vehicle) called *Bhimyaan*. Through *Bhimyaan* one can easily reach

towards the indigenous and original Buddhism. Babasaheb made it easier for the Dalits and non-Dalits to pursue Buddhism from an Ambedkarite perspective. “Ambedkarite Buddhism” is the real, genuine version of Buddhism I presume.

Talking elaborately on the social system existed during Buddha’s period Vasant Moon’s article takes historical account of “Bhagwan Buddha and Yadnyasanstha.”¹⁵² (Bhagwan Buddha and Yadhna system) According to the Buddhist suktas Buddha did not accept violence. He promoted non-violent *Yadhnas* (Hindu religious ritual). According to Moon, Buddha rejected the supremacy of the *Vedas* (religious scriptures). He broke the Yadnyasanstha, he rejected caste system. He valorised equality, fraternity and unity. During Buddha’s time Yadnyasanstha was there and observed in Ganrajyas. Siddhartha never follow rights traditions and rituals. Buddha primarily objected Yadnyasanstha to oppose killing of animals during Yadnyas.

Many innocent animals, cows, bulls, ships, goats were sacrificed enormously during Buddha’s time. All these animals were to be forcibly taken from farmers using any means. Different harsh laws were made in performing Yadhnyas. Buddha played multiple roles in terms of curbing the heinous practice of the Yadhnya system. Buddha showed them the path of knowledge and wisdom. Because of Buddha’s intervention the Yadnyasanstha had collapsed in his time. Buddha’s dream of liberty fraternity and equality gave a cultural platform over 11000 years. Yadnyasanstha was not applicable to anybody. Buddhist thought is the centre of the creation of Jataka tales. Prabhkar Pohre critically analyzed the Jataka tales based on the life of Bhagwan Buddha.¹⁵³

Buddhist Dhamma and Sangha played a pivotal role in mobilizing and taking Buddhism to the world stage in world history. Buddhist culture has a vital place in world

¹⁵²Asmitadarsha 18 (2) 1985, pp. 30 and 42.

¹⁵³Asmitadarsha 18 (2) 1985, p. 27.

history. The Jataka tales give a detailed account of people (Social, political, religious and otherwise lives) and highlights on the effect of this on common man. Roughly the time period of Jataka tales could be 3rd century B.C. Buddha proposed *Ganarajya Vyavastha* (a republic system) Brahmanism was getting stronger and stronger in those days. The rules and regulations in Brahmanism became too rigid. Low status was given to the Shudras by the Brahmins. Due to the age old traditional and rigid Vedic education system of the Aryans course of extensive and developing education scenario changed altogether. The process of social deterioration began; wherein Karma (Deeds) became the deciding factor for the class of the person. The Buddhists were told the stories of re-birth with the help of Vedic method. We also know the line of the thinking of people changed because of Buddhist thinking. The Buddhist philosophy thinks of common man's liberty i.e. the liberty of an individual. The Buddha supported the thought of equality and liberty of an individual. The Buddhist thought or philosophy had spread in society through local dialects Buddha rejected the superiority and inferiority in Brahmin ideology and maintained equality, liberty, and fraternity throughout his life.

“Milind Prashnaya Buddhagranthatlaya Patranchi Aitihaasikta”¹⁵⁴(Historicity of the Buddhist text Milind Prashna) in this article B. S. Shinde discusses the historicity of characters in Buddhist texts *Milind Prashna*. The protagonist in the story is the Bhikkhu/monk ‘Nagsen.’ There was an intellectual discussion between the Nagsen and the Greek Ruler/Emperor Menander Milind. B.S.Shinde discussed at length about King Milind. *Milind Prashna* or *Milind Question* became widely popular in those days. *Milind Question* was written after Buddha's Mahaparinirvan (500 years) after the Buddha's. The senior most Buddhist monks translated it. Milind was a ‘Yawan’ king. He was born in

¹⁵⁴Asmitadarsha 20 (3) 1987, p. 90 and 95.

Kalasi (village) in Sindhu river tributary. He was considered to be the most talented kings. His coins were found in Kabul to Kashmir and in India from Mathura to Bhadoch etc. *Milind Prashna*, as a text is considered to be one of the most popular texts in ancient India. Certainly, the significance of this text lies in the Buddhists life, nature as well as in Pali literature rarely we find any parallel to this text in the ancient times. Thinking from the essence or language (style) point of view the text is unique and incomparable therefore, this text has been translated in many languages. South-east part of India as well as in many European nations this text is considered and used to study Buddhist philosophy, literature and religion. *Milind Prashna* Visudhuddhi Marga and Abhidharmastha Sangraha have studied Buddhist philosophy seriously. *Milind Prashna* is considered to be one of the standard, authorized and significant Buddhist texts, because it is based on original Buddhist Philosophy. Theoretical Buddhism has been explained in *Milind Prashna* in greater detail. According to Rhys Davids,

I venture to think that this book is undoubtedly the masterpiece of Indian prose and is indeed the best of its class from the literary point of view that had, been produced in any country.¹⁵⁵

“Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Ani Bhartiya Itihasatil Kranti wa Pratikranti”¹⁵⁶(Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Revolution and Counter Revolution in India) this article talked about N.G. Bhaware's view on Ambedkar regarding Indian History and its critical analysis. Bhaware rightly calls Ambedkar Indian Voltaire for his objective and open minded critical approach. In this article Bhaware deals with Ambedkar’s critical texts *Revolution and Counter Revolution* in India. He compares and contrasts between Buddhism and Brahmanism from the ancient times i.e. from the Vedic period. Ambedkar writes in *The*

¹⁵⁵*Asmitadarsha* 20 (3) 1987, p. 92.

¹⁵⁶*Asmitadarsha* 24 (4) 1991, p. 92 and 105.

Untouchable (1948)¹⁵⁷ that “the Brahmin is a learned man only he is not an intellectual.”

An intellectual thinks about society’s welfare all the time whereas a Brahmin has nothing to do with it. An intellectual thinks with rational mind without caring what people say; he serves the common man despite all odds, a Brahmin can’t do that. He confines himself; he is restrictive, limited, and the old stick in mud. Elaborating further Ambedkar ask why have the Brahmins not produced a Voltaire. He explains because Voltaire had the intellectual honesty to rise against the doctrines of the Catholic Church in which he was brought up; Brahmins can never do that. It is a remote (rare) possibility in future as well that person like Voltaire will be produced. Thus, it is a grave reflection on the scholarship of the Brahmins that they should not have produced person like Voltaire.¹⁵⁸

Brahmins closed mind and irrational thinking prevent him from interacting with others. According to Ambedkar all great people in the world created or put ideal before others because of their objective and impartial thinking. Ambedkar proves his point taking the example of his texts *Revolution and Counter Revolution* in ancient India. According to Ambedkar the rise of Buddhism in India was a great revolution. Buddha’s birth heralded a true revolution in the ancient history. At the beginning of the book Ambedkar makes it clear that Buddhism was a revolution. It was as great revolution as the French revolution, though it began as a religious revolution, it became more than religious revolution. It became a social and political revolution.¹⁵⁹

Ambedkar discusses at length the history of ancient India. According to him the severe caste system became operational in this country because of Chaturvarna system. The Chaturvarna system is largely responsible for the monstrous caste devil in India. The caste system kept the Brahmin at the highest pedestal and considered them to be superior

¹⁵⁷See BAWS 2010, P. 240.

¹⁵⁸See BAWS 2010, P. 240.

¹⁵⁹*Asmitasarsha* 24(4) 1991, p. 93.

to others. The Chaturvarna system led the Brahmins dominate over the others. As a result the Brahmin Purohit (Saints) behaved the way they wanted; they exploited and bullied the common man. The Yadhnyasansthas (sacrificial ceremony) made the Brahmins the beneficiary of wealth and became a means of their self-centred. Ambedkar also talks about other ill-traditions or rituals during Vedic period.¹⁶⁰

According to Ambedkar Buddha created revolution in society. Buddha made striking changes reforming Brahminical Vedic society. Buddha pointed out the faults drawbacks in Brahminical social system and set the things right in society. Buddha created ideals/role model of himself for the common man to behave Buddha became an iconic being creating ideal society. Buddha avoided everything detrimental in the progress of common man. Buddha avoided all which was barrier in social emancipatory struggle, through his behaviour and acts Buddha created an ideal image of himself in society. Buddha never imposed things on others. Buddha never kept watertight compartments of caste, religion, race, community in his religion; Buddhism was far away from it. Ambedkar quotes what the Buddha taught he says,

Buddha rejected the dominance of the Vedas, he rejected the Yadhya Sanstha as a part of religious conduct and the third thing is Buddha opposed the caste system Buddha strongly opposed the *Yadhnyasansthas* in his times.¹⁶¹

Ambedkar elaborately discussed about *Manusmriti* in this book. *Manusmriti* opposed Buddhism. It valorised the revolution brought by Pushyamitra Sunga became he followed the precepts of Vedic religion and *Manusmriti*. He kept intact the supremacy of the Brahmins. Thus, the Brahmins created counter revolution to Buddha's revolution in

¹⁶⁰Asmitadarsha24 (4) 1995, p. 95.

¹⁶¹Asmitadarsha24 (4) 1991, p. 97.

Vedic India. Commenting on India's history Ambedkar rightly puts "Indian History is nothing but a constant struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism."¹⁶² Brahminism rejects principle of equality, fraternity and liberty. To sum up, the Brahmins adopted all unfair, brutal and inhuman ways to dominate or superimpose themselves in society.

"Vedkalin Samajik Jivan Kahi Vichar" (Vedic social life- some thoughts) this article was published in *Asmitadarsha*, 1977 focus on the Hindu way of life.¹⁶³ In this article, P.R. Deshmukh analyse the social life during the Vedic period. He has taken an historical account of the life of Aryans and the non-Aryans during the Vedic period. The article gives a detailed account of the life of Aryans where they have come from, their colour, complexion, their culture, tradition, marital status, religious beliefs etc. It also talks about Sindhu culture precisely, this article has historical implications.

The author gives a real portrait of *Aryans* of whom we have an idealistic picture in mind and consider them to be peace- loving, kind- hearted, truth-loving, great ascetics, living in poor and miserable conditions, having control over senses etc. is a false or an incorrect explanation of the *Aryans* according to the author. The Vedas described *Aryans* as contradictory to the above explanation. According to the author, the *Aryans* were warriors, aggressive, selfish and self-centred, beings they were ready to go to any extent to achieve their goal. They were practical in their approach. They spoke Sanskrit and were conscious of being *Aryans*.¹⁶⁴ They took pride in being so. This way they dominated the society exhibiting their superiority and power of race. In Nilkantha Shashtri's words,

They took pride in being *Aryans* the superior and dominant race no one doubts that there was much mixing of *Aryans* with the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India but in the resulting culture the dominant note was the

¹⁶²*Asmitadarsha* 24 (4) 1991, p. 102.

¹⁶³See *Asmitadarsha* 10 (4)1977, 10 (4) pp. 52 and 56.

¹⁶⁴See Lannoy 1999, p. 10.

Aryans dominated wherever they went this process was called Aryanization.¹⁶⁵

Deshmukh remarks that the Varna-Vyawastha the Vedas and the other Hindu texts were deliberately created or produced in society to keep the Hindu tradition alive by the Hindus. Deshmukh express utter astonishment over the fact that how the Vedas could survive in society without (people deciphering) their actual meaning for such a long time. Moreover, the so called protectors of Hindu culture had made it more and more interesting adding aesthetic meaning to it making it (its recital musical and ear soothing) beautiful. According to him only two Varna's existed during the Vedic period one was the Aryans and the other one was Das Varna of the Shindhus. The Aryan word for the indigenous was *Dasa*, which in classical Sanskrit means "slave", "bondsmen", or "helot"; in the later Aryan period the word was already acquiring that meaning. The Rig Veda refers to the *Dasa* as two footed beast, or *Pasu*.¹⁶⁶

S.M. Dahiwalé also argues in the similar tone in his insightful article "The Broken Men Theory of Untouchability" like Lannoy that the "Aryan invaders called the Dasas original enemies, viz., the Dasas-Dasyus and the Nishadas."¹⁶⁷ The Dasas did not practice the Aryan rituals. In encounters, the Dasas and Dasyus were slaughtered, their fortresses and walls settlements destroyed and they themselves defeated by the Aryans and made slaves with the function of serving others. Aryans were known for their institution of sacrifice" Dahiwalé also exposed the cunning and crafty practises of the Aryans in the Vedic times.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵See Sastri 1967, p. 48.

¹⁶⁶See Lannoy 1999, p. 12.

¹⁶⁷Romila Thapar's argumentative essay, "The Historiography of the concept of Aryan" in which Thapar points out that the Aryans developed hostility towards the dasas they invaded and enslaved the indigenes and eventually settled in India. See Thapar 2009, p. 9.

¹⁶⁸Dahiwalé 2006, pp. 88-89.

The author vividly describes the cunning and crafty nature of the Aryans to rule over the non-Aryans in this article. The author wonders how the Vedas could survive for six thousand years without their proper comprehension and interpretation. The sole purpose of the Brahmins was to protect and preserve the Vedas and to glorify their Vedic history and tradition. Mahatma Phule severely criticized the cunning and crafty practice, nature and behaviour of the Brahmins in his masterpiece *Brahmananche Kasab* or (Priest craft Exposed) in 1869. Phule clarify his stand behind writing this book in his introductory remarks he says,

The Brahmins do not treat every other caste equally; they show utter Brahminism with Kunabi's, Mali's and the Shudras. The other community people do not know about these cunning Brahmin practises. The importance of the Brahmin priesthood is gradually decreasing among the educated people. This is not the case with the Shudras who are still trapped in the Brahmin fold.¹⁶⁹

Philosophy and progressive religious thinking evolve during the *Upanishadik* period in India. There was monarchy everywhere during the *Aryan* rule. There was also monarchy and Dharmasatta during Panini's time¹⁷⁰ *Ganarajya* system (The Republic) was also established (during Buddha's period i.e. 563 B.C.) before the *Aryans* in India. Precisely, Deshmukh's article is an eye-opener in this regard in many ways. It makes the reader aware of the realities of the past and paves the way for the critical reflection of it in the present.

¹⁶⁹See Keer and Malshe 1991, pp. 92-93.

¹⁷⁰Panini was a Sanskrit grammarian who gave a comprehensive and scientific theory of phonetics, phonology and morphology. Sanskrit was the classical literary language of the Indian Hindus and Panini is considered to be the founder of the language and literature. See <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panini>

Chapter Four

Ideological thought in *Asmitadarsha* Symposium

This chapter predominantly focus on the discussions and deliberations over wide range of contemporary issues in *Asmitadarsha* Symposium. Initiating discussion via symposium is a peculiar and unique feature of *Asmitadarsha*. The discussion revolves largely round literature, society and culture in Maharashtra. The issues in *Asmitadarsha* symposium carries same importance as that of the “special and the Diwali issues” in it. Since channelizing and promoting thought provoking writing has been the feature of *Asmitadarsha* it has given impetus to writers, activists, thinkers and philosopher to think through various issues in Maharashtra conducting brain storming sessions to express themselves.

The philosophers and thinkers are from different, distinct and diverse knowledge backgrounds therefore, it helps us in the expansion of discussion in the symposium. Maharashtra is well equipped with the rich history, culture, literature and tradition of its own. Going through the discussions and debates in the symposium we get a glimpse of the rich and varied intellectual legacy that the state of Maharashtra has. The symposium is inclusive in nature. It includes both the subaltern as well as the dissenting intellectual voices. The participants and the discussants include activists, authors, literary figures and organic intellectuals as well.

Asmitadarsha symposiums revolve round Ambedkarite thought which is the crux of the thesis. The aim of this chapter is to apply Ambedkarite egalitarian thought of (Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Justice) and to see how it is reflected through the discussions and debates in *Asmitadarsha* symposium. At the same time the chapter will highlight the intellectual stand and legacy of Dalit literature, society and culture in post-

Ambedkarite Maharashtra. It discusses the fundamental issues related to Marathi literature. It will also talk about Dalit aesthetics at length. The symposium provides a real treat for the knowledge loving and avid readers across India.

This chapter mainly focus on the discussions and debates over the contemporary issues in *Asmitadarsha* symposium. I focus on the major issues in the symposium in *Asmitadarsha* came up for discussion. *Asmitadarsha* periodical has indirectly launched a literary movement and a social crusade through its inception in Maharashtra. Due to annual gathering and conduction of writer-reader conferences, discussions and debates, the entire atmosphere in *Asmitadarsha* symposia become vibrant and dynamic. Symposiums, reading of research papers and articles, presidential speeches, inaugural speeches etc have a lot to say and share in the contemporary society in Maharashtra. They give rise to the development and improvement of literary art and culture. Critically analysing the debates and the discussions in the symposium I will analyse the connectivity of the issues involved in *Asmitadarsha* and their present relevance in our times. The basic idea of the chapter is to take up the burning and contentious issues in Maharashtra and initiate discussion over it. The discussion will help us understand many issues that came up for discussion in the post-Ambedkarite literature, culture, and society. I discuss the major issues that have been debated in the symposium in this chapter.

Glancing through the topic for the discussion in the symposium such as “Dalitanchya Sanskrutik Chalvalichya Bhavitvyacha Vichar” (Dalit cultural movement and its future) it is explicitly seen that there is relevance of contemporariness of Dalit issues in *Asmitadarsha*. When we think about the cultural legacy of Dalit literature we are bound to think of Ambedkar and his legacy for the development and progress of Dalits. Different thinkers, authors, philosophers came together on a common platform of *Asmitadarsha* to discuss their valuable thoughts over multiple thought-proving issues

which ultimately pave the way enlightening the readers for future course of action.

Another peculiar feature of *Asmitadarsha* symposium is its “openness and inclusivity” because of this uniqueness any writer irrespective of any caste, creed, religion, culture, ideology and mentality contributes wholeheartedly to *Asmitadarsha* symposium as well as to *Asmitadarsha* periodical in particular. Creation of thought-provoking writing through the conduction of symposium has been the characteristic feature of *Asmitadarsha*. It is natural to have such kind of an arrangement in *Asmitadarsha* which believe in the literary and social enhancement and encouragement of society. The nature of symposium is diverse and multi-dimensional and hence, the literary and social discussion revolves round “Ambedkarite thought” in *Asmitadarsha*. Hence, the discussion in the symposium revolves round the “Dalit Question” largely. Anupama Rao’s bold statement substantiates and supplants the major argument of *Asmitadarsha*. In the introduction to her seminal text *The Caste Question* she asserts that “the Dalit Question and the Caste Question is a major issue and the Dalit emancipation is an unfinished project”¹ which needs concerted and rigorous efforts and a special way to deal with. The very purpose of *Asmitadarsha* is to live upto the expectations of Dalit literature. Infact, the periodical has been designed and established to fulfil all aspirations and desires of Dalit literature.

The ideology present new thought in the symposium there is creativity and critical thinking among the participants in the discussion. The participants are from different socio-cultural, political and economic background, they are both Dalits and non-Dalits. They specialize in their respective field or literary genres. From the multiplicity of

¹Anupama Rao gives a sustained and deep analysis of the modern history of caste in Western Maharashtra connecting various issues directly or indirectly attached with caste. This is the most politically and theoretically engaged book on caste. Rao offers a profound reflection on the caste question looking precisely into the intricacies involved in it. See Rao 2011, p. 11.

subjects the philosophers, thinkers and critics have handled, and the precision, judgement and the justification they gave to each and every subject one can understand the richness of ideological tradition or legacy in Maharashtra. Credit goes to different philosophers, thinkers, critics and subject experts in their respective fields who wholeheartedly contributed making *Asmitadarsha* a great success.

One of the noteworthy features of *Asmitadarsha* symposium is it has given enough exposure and support to the marginalized writers who have innate urge to change the society. They are great activists and organic intellectuals who have enormously contributed in *Asmitadarsha* as well. Producing thought provoking writing has always been the priority of *Asmitadarsha*. Therefore, it has published articles on crucial issues such as society, religion, education, culture, art, history, democracy and Buddhist Philosophy etc.

The symposium in *Asmitadarsha* can be roughly divided into two broad categories.

1. Symposium related to literary issues.
2. Symposium related to social and cultural issues.

In order to give gist of the wide range of topics that have been discussed and debated in the symposium in *Asmitadarsha*. I present here a list of the topics came under the symposium related to literary issues.

Symposium Related to Literary Issues:

Gelya Aath Varshatil Marathi Wangmay (Marathi literature in the last eight years 1960 to 1968, Published in Diwali issue, 1968), Anna Bhau Sathe: Wyakti wa Wangmay (Anna Bhau Sathe: Person and Literature, Diwali issue, 1969), Swatantryotar Kaleen Marathi Sahitya Mhanje Dishahen Sahitya (Post Independence Marathi literature means directionless literature, Diwali issue, 1971), Dalit Sahitikanche Atmakathan: Mi Ani Maze Lekhan. (Autobiographies of Dalit writers: Me and my writings. Diwali issue,

1976), Marathi Wangmay Ani Krantsanmukhta (Marathi literature and its affinity, Diwali issue, 1973), Marathi Shahirichi Badalati Rupe (Changing forms of Marathi Shahiri, Diwali issue, 1982), Maze Aatmakathanpar lekhan: Mate Ani Matantare (My autobiographical writing: views and counter views Diwali issue, 1982), Sahityache Mulyamapan: Vichar and Punarvichar (Evaluation of literature: considerations and reconsiderations Diwali issue, 1984), Dalit Katha: Wata Ani Walane (Dalit story: ways and turns Diwali issue, 1986), Dalit Sahitya Wa Saudaryashashtra (Dalit literature and Aesthetics Diwali issue, 1987), Swantryottarkalin Wangmayin Pravah: Pravas Ani Sahpravas (Post Independence literary stream: journey and co-journey Diwali issue, 1992) etc.

Symposium Related to Social and Cultural Issues:

Navdixit Bauddhanchi Andolane Ek Chintan: (Struggles of New-Buddhist converts: a contemplation summer issue, 1968), Marathi Sahityatil Samajik Lokshahiche Vichar. (Socio-democratic thought in Marathi literature, Diwali issue, 1970) Dharmadasya, Lokshahivivek Ani Dalit Mukti. (Religious enslavement, democratic thought and Dalit liberation, Diwali issue, 1972) Dalitanchya Sanskrutik Chalvaliche Bhavitvya. (Future of Dalit Cultural Movement, Diwali issue, 1974) Aamhi Ase Jagalo: Aamhi Ase Gajato (This is how we lived: this is how we live Diwali issue, 1979) Namantar- Ek Sanskrutik Chalval. (Nomination Cultural Movement Diwali issue, 1980), Dalit Stree: Kal, Aaj Ani Udyat. (Dalit woman: Yesterday, today and tomorrow Diwali issue, 1981) Dharmantar Ghoshanechi Pannas Varsha. (Fifty years of declaration of conversion ceremony Diwali issue, 1985) Parivartanwad, Punarujivanwad Ani Aamhi (Transformism, revivalism and us Diwali issue, 1990) Samajik wa Arthik Lokshahi Shivay Bhartiya Lokshahichi Sankalpana Apuri Ahe (The concept of Indian Democracy is incomplete without

social/economic democracy, Diwali issue, 1991) etc.²

The position and place of Dalit literature is unique in Marathi literary stream today. Looking at the present scenario one can see the enormous expansion of Dalit literature encompassing every aspect of life. In fact, Dalit literature has expanded the literary, cultural and social sphere of Marathi literature. It is omnipresent today. So much so that it has even overpowered the mainstream Marathi literature.

Dalit literature has broken the age-old deadlock of Marathi literature. Therefore, the place of Dalit literature should be considered differently in the contemporary literary streams.³ There has been a wide-ranging discussion and debate in *Asmitadarsha* on Marathi literature as well as on Dalit literature; in fact Dalit literature became a focal point among the discussion in *Asmitadarsha* symposiums. Almost every aspect of Dalit life and literature has been discussed in *Asmitadarsha*. In this respect, *Asmitadarsha* became a family for Dalit writers and writings produced on Dalit literature.

New trends and new consciousness in contemporary Marathi literature has been the characteristic feature of *Asmitadarsha*. For instance, the issue published in 1968 titled “Gelya Aath Varshatil Marathi Wangmay 1960 to 1968” has been discussed in detail in *Asmitadarsha* and in this chapter. The period of little Magazine was the period of “angry young man”⁴ The youth in the movement broke the age old literary conventions imposed by the so called mainstream Marathi literature.

² Meera Ghandge has done a brilliant job of publishing a systematic chronology of the issues in *Asmitadarsha* from 1967-2007. This is the first systematic attempt to publish the entire chronology of the issues in Marathi. According to Ghandge *Asmitadarsha Suchi* (Chronology) is nothing but literary and Cultural document. The researchers and scholars are greatly benefited by Ghandge’s *Asmitadarsha* chronology. See Ghandge: 2008.

³ See Limbale 2007, p. 115.

⁴ According to Arjun Dangle Narayan Surve’s poetry was highly influenced by the Marxist philosophy. The third stream of thought evolved in the sixties was nothing but the Dalit writers. It was the movement by the Angry Young Men to publish the Little Magazines. This new stream revolted against the establishment. Both Dalit and Non Dalit writers profusely wrote in the Little Magazine. Prominent Dalit writer Baburao Bagul published his poetry through the Little Magazine *Fakta*. See Dangle 1994, p. 244.

They protested against the Marathi literature; they had a different voice but at the end the movement end up gaining nothing. This experimental generation of little magazine lost its way in between never knew what exactly they want to do, where exactly they want to go? One gets the feeling as if *Dishahinata* (directionlessness) was the aim of it.⁵ Raosaheb Kasabe vehemently criticized the little magazine movement. But whatever may be the case the impact of the movement was felt. A new kind of literary style was seen during the 1960s in the form of little magazine movement. Participants in the symposium were mostly connected with the movement itself such as Tara Reddy, Madhu Tamhankar, Daya Pawar, Raja Dhale, Chandrakant Khot, Ashok Lachake, Satish Kalsekar and Bhalchandra Nemade. All these writers expressed anguish over the mainstream Marathi writings.

Different views have been expressed by the Mainstream society regarding the initiation of the little magazines in Maharashtra. Referring to *Abakadae* a non-periodical issue 1970 Ashok Shahane draws attention to the views and counter views expressed by the people in general on the production of little magazines movement. I take up questions raised by the mainstream society to get a glimpse of what exactly they wanted to say:

- 1) If your struggle is against the establishment what exactly you want to do?
- 2) Today, you have been termed as rebel, militant, agonised generation of angry young man why is it so? Do you have any proof?
- 3) You have been criticized that you have no creativity, that your literature is Propagandist in nature that the people in the movement are exhibitionist what's your take on this?
- 4) When you compare the little magazine movement with the Marathi movement

⁵See Raosaheb Kasabe's article "Abakadae" in *Asmitadarsha* 1 (2) 1969, p. 43.

what difference do you find? What is the future of little magazine movement?⁶

These kinds of highly intriguing questions were posed to the little magazine movement writers by the mainstream writers very often to dissuade them from writing this kind of realistic articles. Indirectly, the message was the Mainstream Marathi writings wanted people to write in harmony, interest and spirit of the Marathi literature. Whenever, one goes against the established standards or norms of the society and want to reform or set it right; it is likely that people raise many doubts or questions this is exactly happened with the little magazine movement in the 1970s.

According to Shahane our struggle was not exactly any struggle against the establishments; but this is for sure that the absence of “Liveliness” in the present literature really hurts. By liveliness, Shahane intends to point out the reality of life in society. The real, genuine issues are absent in the literature of the mainstream writers. In the happy world of the mainstream society the common man and his day today life struggles have no place. Expressing his deep anxiety Shahane adds we pity the people who admire excessively for the mainstream literature (Marathi). The so called established people are everywhere even in the publishing industry they are there they won’t allow us to publish what we want.⁷

Like Ashok Shahane, other supporters of the little magazine movement reacted strongly against the hegemony of the established mainstream Marathi writers. Bhalchandra Nemade in *Wacha* says, “If unreal literature conceives from the unreal tradition; then the real tradition will have to be investigated or traced by the thinking authors.”⁸ Commenting on Marathi criticism Satish Kalshekar remarks, “the criticism of any particular period is not decisive and final in nature; it keeps on changing and is

⁶Shahane 2005, p. 51.

⁷Ibid 2005, pp. 52-53.

⁸Kamble 2003, p. 245.

dynamic in nature”⁹

Ashok Lachake states that even today the Marathi drama is “experimental” in nature.¹⁰ One can draw a common conclusion from all these thoughts of the little magazine movement people that they expressed resentment and dissatisfaction over Marathi literature. Through the movement of the little magazine they introduced new trends and new tendencies. They have shown how literature can be comprehended or contemplated upon. They say no to tradition, conservative and orthodox literature.

Asmitadarsha is unique in terms of welcoming newness and novelty. It has always given impetus to progressive, radical and logical thinking. A writer for “change” has always been the motto of *Asmitadarsha* therefore, it has all types of people (people with different ideology) they are Marxist, socialist writers such as Narayan Surve, Sada Karhade, P.S. Nerurkar, Narhar Kurundkar etc.¹¹ There has always been discussion in the symposiums on burning issues. Creating symposiums *Asmitadarsha* has created a new trend in the literary circle.¹² In fact, it has opened up opportunities for the youngsters to express themselves vividly.

Holding symposiums, talks, debates has been the tradition and fashion of *Asmitadarsha* since the beginning i.e. 1967-1968. In the very first year December issue on 16 November, 1967, a debate titled “Maharashtratil Aaj-Udyacha Sanskrutik Sangarsha Ani Wangmayin Samasya” (cultural revolt in Maharashtra and the literary question) was published in *Asmita* in a symposium. *Asmita* as it was initially called¹³ from

⁹Ibid 2003, p. 245.

¹⁰Ibid 2003, p. 24.

¹¹Gaikwad 2015, p. 45.

¹²Limbale 2007, p. 118.

¹³In order to materialize the new identity given to Dalit Community by Ambedkar M.N.Wankhede the then principal of Milind college Aurangabad and his colleagues Gangadhar Pantawane, Sukhram Hivrale, L.B.Raymane, Waman Nibalkar and others collectively began a trimonthly journal called *Asmita*. R.G. Jadhav was the first editor of the journal. Later in 1968 the journal was renamed as *Asmitadarsha*. See Ganorkar, Takalkar, Dahake, Dadkar and Bhatkal 2004, p. 25.

then onwards, the Dalit literary discussion gained momentum it reached people and in a very short time, *Asmitadarsha* came into prominence, different periodicals and non-periodicals came forward for Dalit literary question and thought. Thus, 1967 onward Dalit literature was acclaimed in the Indian literature.¹⁴

The symposium discuss the significant issue that came up for discussion in 1970s i.e., “The Socio-Democratic Thought in Marathi Literature.” This issue came up in the backdrop of the upsurge of a radical Dalit voice in the post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. 1970 to 1980 was a crucial time where many Dalit authors began writing on Ambedkarism developed strongly. They questioned the mainstream Marathi writers on the authenticity and reliability of their socio-democratic credentials. Both the writers Dalits and Non-Dalits discussed comparing their respective literature. This was a period of the cultivation and formation of the concept of Ambedkarism, Ambedkarite identity and consciousness among the Dalits.¹⁵

I chose to discuss this particular debate because it was one of the most vibrant and lively debates that took place at that point of time. This debate raised many issues on art, culture, aesthetics and literature. The entire Marathi literary world was analysed and investigated by the Dalit authors.

In this regard, Sharankumar Limbale’s much debated text *towards aesthetics of Dalit literature* is worth discussing here. In which, he strongly argue Dalits to have their own aesthetics quoting Sharad Patil’s words on Dalit aesthetics he make his argument substantial. He strongly demands Dalits to have their own aesthetics. Patil made us aware that since Dalit literature did not have its own aesthetics; it had to rely on Brahminical aesthetics: “It must be considered why counter-revolutionary literature have the weapon

¹⁴Khanderao 2006, p. 67.

¹⁵Limbale 2004, p. 113.

of aesthetics but revolutionary literature does not. Patil further claims that aesthetics is a weapon, and believes that revolutionary literature (Dalit literature) must acquire this weapon. Agreeing with patil's view Limbale argues for Dalits to have their own aesthetics. In a conversation with Alok Mukherjee in his text he says:

Dalits have created Dalit literature it is the progressive savarnas who have promoted it. Dalits started writing, found their publisher and published their own papers and magazines and established their independent identity. They have attracted the attention of the savarnas. They have created their own distinct identity.¹⁶

1970s was a crucial time as I said Dalit scholars all over Maharashtra began doubting and questioning the upper caste savarna literature. The reflection of it was also seen and felt in *Asmitadarsha* symposium 1970 on Marathi literature and the socio-democratic thought. Renowned Marathi scholars, thinkers and philosophers participated in the deliberations such as D.K. Bedekar, M.B. Chitnis, R.B. Joshi, M.N. Wankhade, Vasant Pulshikar and Raosaheb Kasabe etc. They discussed on the place and position of Dalit literature in society. In order to make this discussion much fruitful and lively the scholars have been invited from different knowledge backgrounds A questionnaire was put up before them to have their say on it and to make this symposium much more concentrated and to the point. The questionnaire is important because it speak volumes regarding the socio-democratic scenario in general in Maharashtra.

Prior to the debate Gangadhar Pantawane, editor *Asmitadarsha* lamented over the place and position of the Dalit literature in mainstream Marathi literature. According to Pantawane,

¹⁶Limbale 2004, p. 131.

It's a matter of grave concern that even today we find no portrayal of Marathi mind, sorrow, consciousness, emotions or a Marathi (man's) religion in Marathi literature.¹⁷

There is a lack of all these issues in Marathi literature; these important issues altogether constitute the core of Marathi literature. Pantawane expressed categorically the role of this debate and the responsibility of the Marathi writers towards Dalit literature in his initial remarks. Pantawane further elaborate on what should have been there in Marathi literature, and what is not there in it. The issues related to Dalits have been extensively discussed in this forum. According to Pantawane, the Marathi literature has utterly failed in properly co-ordinating or collaboration a relation between society and literature. He points his finger at the drawbacks of the Marathi literature. If we look at the nature of the questions raised in this discussion they provide food for thought, and therefore, they are crucial.

The role behind this deliberation is to ponder over one of the most significant field of life i.e. Dalit literature in the arena of literature at large. The discussion of such type could have been possible due to the exploration of the Dalit/consciousness related to Dalit writers and their writings Pantawane exclaim with a sense of anxiety, "I doubt whether Marathi literary writers have forgotten the social cause/responsibility or what?"¹⁸

This discussion is significant in the wake of the rise of the Dalit literary movement during the 1970s because, this was a time the Dalit literature had made its mark on the global scale, but still the mainstream Marathi writings were turning blind eye towards

¹⁷*Asmitadarsha* 3 (3) 1970, pp. 128-29.

¹⁸Important part in the deliberation titled Socio-Democratic thought in Marathi literature was dissent and delusion of the Dalit literature/writers over the Marathi literature which needs to be understood in the context of the socio-political background of evolution of Dalit literature in Maharashtra. Because of the constant negligence of Dalit literature writers like Pantawane, D.K. Bedekar, M.B. Chitnis, R.B. Joshi, M.N. Wankhade, Vasant Palshikar, and Raosaheb Kasabe came forward to discuss over the necessity of the socio-democratic thought in Marathi literature. See *Asmitadarsha* 3 (3) 1970, pp. 128-29.

Dalit literature. There was an emergence of the radical Dalit voice creating a critical discourse in the post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra comparing and contrasting between the Dalit and the Marathi literature.

In order to make the deliberation much more structured, systematic and pointed a questionnaire was prepared accordingly the discussants responded to it. The questionnaire was very important to understand the nature of diverse issues in Maharashtra. The responses of the discussant to this questionnaire set the tone for further deliberations and discussion to the issues related to Dalit life and literature. The nature of the questions in the questionnaire was multidimensional. The range of questions was diverse; it touched upon all sphere of life, i.e. social, political, economic, religious, and ideological etc. as discussed earlier in the discussion the respondents are also from the humanities, and social science background and therefore, their responses to the questions are of mixed and of different kind. The questions raised in the (questionnaire) symposium were very crucial and have relevance and connection with the contemporary issues. India and the Dalit's in particular are facing today. Their resonance is heard even today the Dalit question is like an open wound which has not been treated; kept it so for further damage.

The questions have a tone of contemplation. They are thought-provoking in nature. They are laden with social essence, straightforward and pertinent. Important information regarding Dalit literature and life has been discussed in these questions. They inform us what is, and what is not there in Marathi literature and what should be there in it. Gangadhar Pantawane has clarified the role of Marathi literature very categorically in his initial remarks.

Questionnaire:

- 1) If the Indian society is pro-democratic in its stance then why the Indian government is a failure in this country? Is it not necessary to pose a challenge to

this age old religious loyalties of the upper-castes?

- 2) The Marathi writers should have raised their voice against the oppressive “Chaturvarnya and the caste system” in order to establish a sound society why didn’t they do so? They should have challenged all sorts of old and traditional thinking through their literature, why they failed to do so?
- 3) Why there is no reflection of Dalit upliftment in the mainstream Marathi writings? The Marathi writers spend almost a century or so to bring about a change in the upper caste mobilization right from Lokhitwadi to Savarkar why they didn’t do anything likewise for the Dalits? Why this sort of discrimination with the Dalits only?
- 4) The target of the upper castes should have been towards the annihilation of caste/class, instead they remained silent or disinterested towards core issues why? Is it not a crime to be silent over such crucial and burning issues?
- 5) This is the reason why the Dalit writers rebelled against all oppressive structures/systems. The Dalit writers looked at such traditional upper caste writers with vehemence.
- 6) When the issue of Dalit betterment was raised in the society by the Dalits themselves then why the Marathi upper caste writers praise or rather insisted upon the “pure artistic standards” or the *Shuddhakalawad*. Why the thought of change of the socio-political and intellectual leadership came at this point in time only?
- 7) There was an attempt to establish the role art or artistic forms therefore, the literature that is produced out of social inspiration cannot become a literature of the highest magnitude is the statement from the upper caste quarters is it correct to say so? Such type of claim of the upper castes creates a rift in the minds of the Dalit writers. Is it not an obstacle on their part?

- 8) The upper caste Marathi writers popularized the notion of *Kalawad* (artistic standards) so much so in the entire society that it had become a buzz word. Even the Dalit writer lost his way by engrossing himself into this vicious circle of the *kalawadis*. In a way, it is a big loss to the Marathi literature don't you think so?
- 9) Against whom the Dalit writer should rebel? What are the ideals before Dalits? How far the reflection of Dalit rebelliousness finds a place in their literature?
- 10) Considering "Ambedkarism" as their standard the Dalit writers wrote with new social consciousness. This sort of writing was against all sorts of anti-democratic views. Therefore, can't we look at Ambedkarism as an answer to the oppressive forces that are working against democracy?¹⁹

In my view these kinds of questions were essential to be asked to the Marathi mainstream society and literature to open up their close minds. These are not merely questions but the genuine problems that the Dalit face in life and literature. Thus by raising these questions *Asmitadarsha* Symposium paved the way for the progress and development and liberation of Dalits life and literature.

Responding to the questionnaire Raosaheb Kasabe in his article titled "Dalit Sahitya ani Sanskrutik Sangarsha" (Dalit literature and cultural revolt) remarks that present questionnaire is very useful and relevant to understand the direction and the nature of Marathi literature. It has the ability and the potential to create a new stream or ideology in society. Raosaheb Kasabe appreciates the efforts taken by Pantawane to come up with such a thought-provoking and brilliant questionnaire.

Elaborating further, Kasabe goes back to the Buddhist tradition tracing it he propounds that in the post-independent Indian society we adopted a democratic form of

¹⁹*Asmitadarsha* 3 (3) 1970, pp. 129-30.

government, but we had a democratic tradition in our society existing only during the “Buddhist Ganrajya system.”²⁰ Prior to the Buddha, there was no social equality. It was only Buddha who relentlessly fought for the establishment of social equality. Buddha was attacked for his rejection of the Karma theory and the existence of soul in his time the same thing happens even today. The sangha established by the Buddha was an apt example of how an ideal society should be keeping this sangha system Buddha wanted to establish or reconstruct a new society.²¹

Taking cue from the Buddha, Ambedkar also wanted to reconstruct the age old traditional Indian society into an ideal Buddhist society. Babasaheb had the vision of an “ideal Buddhist society” for a long time. He had attraction towards the Buddhist *Ganrajya* system one can predict this from his Kathmandu address in Nepal. There were several *Ganarajyas* or the Republics during the Buddha. These were nothing but the preliminary socialist system existed propounds Kasabe. Buddha fought against all types of social injustice prevailed in his time.

The mainstream Marathi writers did not abstain themselves from such mentality, therefore, they failed in addressing the issues relevant to society or social relevance. If there would have been attempts likewise our society could have improved a lot. In fact; such attempts were made by the Dalit writers, but their literature was considered weaker and inferior it was attacked by all means by the so called upper castes terming it to be inferior or sub-standard or non-artistic right from Chokhamela, 14th century a Dalit poet the ‘literature from below’ or the marginalised literature has been rejected. His voice was suppressed.²² Meeting the artistic standards was a norm established by the upper caste

²⁰See Kasabe 2006, pp. 335 and 37.

²¹*Asmitadarsha* 3 (3) 1970, p. 145.

²²See Zelliott 2004, p. 46.

cruel and crude society at that point of time.²³ Different charges were levelled against Dalit literature. Because of the form, purpose and role of Dalit literature, many accusations and baseless allegations have been made against it. It has been charged that it is propagandist, univocal and negative; that it does not represent the individual person; and, that excessive resentment is heard in Dalit literature. If Dalit literature appears to be propagandist, it is because it presents their anguish and genuine problems.²⁴

Responding to another question in the questionnaire i.e. should a literary writer do social service or not? Kasabe replies that as far as Marathi literature is concerned most of their writings revolve round the “literariness.” The production of knowledge system, creating a discourse, setting of norms etc, was in the hands of the Marathi writer. They opposed the hair cutting of the women, foeticide, re-marriages etc. through their literature how come they did not mention anything about the “Dalit Question” or issue in their writings. Kasabe asks another crucial question i.e. the knowledge seeking class like the upper castes demanded for an independent nation from the British how come they sidelined the social inequality that was existing in the society at that time? It is very clear from the behaviour of the upper castes that they did not bother at all about highlighting the Dalit issues in their writings; it was a deliberate act Kasabe further inquires the social reformers and leaders such as Shahu Maharaj, V.R. Shinde, K. Jedhe, More and Ambedkar galvanized the social movements and activities in Maharashtra. They created a new vigour and vitality of the downtrodden community through their relentless struggle

²³Parimala V. Rao discussed the Brahminical maintenance of hegemony in the name of standards or norms developed by the Brahmins themselves and sanctioned in the society. Rao takes the example of Vishnushashtri Chiplunkar who vehemently attacked Mahatma Phule for his filthy and sub-standard language. Chiplunkar found fault with Phule’s language. He mocked at his usage of grammar and lack of urbanity. According to Rao Phule was not ignorant of Marathi but the Peshwai in the eighteenth century had transformed the language from the earlier one, which was based on Prakrit and Kannada, into a completely Sanskritised one in words and script. Vishnu Shashtri opposed his father’s liberal views and up hold the Brahminical hegemony. See Rao 2011, p. 18-19.

²⁴See Limbale 2004, p. 34.

and service, but the ramification of such noble deeds did not find any place in the Marathi mainstream writings why? Kasabe asks why the mainstream Marathi writers did not look at the struggle of the Dalit Bahujans as the struggle for an individual development or the struggle of human upliftment.

1920 was a period of great social transformation of transition as far as Dalits are concerned. In this period the writers from the downtrodden community were trying to come up in life. At the same time the *Kalawadi's* or the supporters of the "Art for Art's sake" came forward. They strategically and systematically poisoned the mind-set of the people instigating the notion of Art for Art's sake, they propounded that "the literature from below or the literature produce out of the social consciousness cannot become a great literature as it lack the artistic demands."²⁵ The Dalit mind was bombarded with such thinking so much so that they even thought they did not have the capacity to write with artistic standards or decorum, this and suffering of their community. If there would have been such an attempt their literature would have been most superior one. Precisely, this is what the Marathi writers wanted to happen that the marginalized writings was time and again suppressed and rejected by the Marathi intelligentsia. (The mainstream Marathi in fact did it successfully) According to Dadasaheb Rupwate the conflict "Art for Art Sake" or "Art for life Sake" cannot have place in a Dalit life. It is because in order to reach their goals and aspirations the Dalits have to relentlessly and rigorously strain themselves. They cannot simply sit day dreaming or taking recourse in Art for Art Sake.²⁶ The Dalits have to acquire Art for the sake of life (to make both ends meet). Therefore, they reject this proposition out rightly.

But the fact remains that the Dalit writer and poet like Anna Bhau Sathe could

²⁵ Ibid. p.106.

²⁶ See Limbale 2007, p. 111.

make his mark by writing his famous novel *Fakira*. The point to be noted is Dalit writers emerged in Maharashtra depicting a real life through their writings. The eminent writers like Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul, Daya Pawar, and Waman Nimbalkar etc outrightly rejected to remain engulfed in the vicious circle of the *kalawadis* and have added a new dimension to the Marathi literature through their realistic life experiences. As has already been mentioned earlier in the discussion Raosaheb Kasabe says, “We are facing the same problems as the Buddha had faced even today.”²⁷ Kasabe concludes expressing deep concern over the fate of Dalits. In his opinion the Dalit struggle is not easy; rather it is an important historical and cultural struggle.

Similar views have been expressed by M.N. Wankhede in his article titled “New revolts in Marathi literature.” According to Wankhede it is impossible to think of a political democracy without social homogeneity. Our society had never been like that; it was under the fold of Hindu religion. Our society has not been improved because of our internal differences. We have religious, caste discrimination, Hindu Fanaticism, superstition and internal conflicts etc. ‘Religion’ is one of the biggest hurdles in our society.

In order to establish democracy in this country we have to demolish religion. Critiquing the Marathi authors, M.N. Wankhede comments that the Marathi writer is still engrossed in the fantasy of “romanticism.” The Marathi writer has not written anything about society, right from Haribhau Apte to the present not a single writer has mentioned anything related to the Bahujan society.

However, Marathi critics such as D.K. Bedekar, Lalji Pendse and later Sharatchandra Muktibodh entering the arena, gave the life in “Art for Life’s Sake” a

²⁷Asmitadarsha 1970, p. 145.

precise, hard meaning.²⁸ To them, art is a product of the socio-economic conditions under which it is produced, and the artist has a responsibility to the society. The word “progressive” acquire a positive meaning in the context of this view, however loosely it might have been used in those years.

Another, major drawback of the Marathi writing is that there is no mention of Ambedkar’s struggle for social upliftment anywhere in their literature. Expressing his views eminent Marathi writer P.Y. Deshpande says that when we think of Marathi literature and language we only think of the literary figures; but the person who wrote in such a simplistic, straightforward, and lucid manner like Ambedkar nobody in Marathi writing even bothered to take a note of his Marathi style/skill of writing.²⁹ It is very sad and ironical to have happened in Marathi literature. Gangadhar Pantawane an eminent Marathi Dalit writer and an editor of *Asmitadarsha* commenting on the writing style of Ambedkar remarks that Ambedkar was the person who loved Marathi language naturally and uprecedently; who did not let lose the “Marathiness” from the Marathi is the hallmark of his writing.³⁰

Marathi literature is an “Oasis” for Dalit literature³¹ Wankhede further explains why the Dalit writer does not feel comfortable in Marathi literature? He argues that, the Dalit writer feels the life and the values that are there in Marathi literature are not his own, and the other reason is he cannot identify himself with the world of Marathi writers. The Dalit writers have self-respect therefore; they no longer want any sympathy from the

²⁸See Deshpande and Rajadhyaksha 1988, p. 213.

²⁹See Dahake 2005, P. 192.

³⁰See Pantawane 2009, pp. 35-36.

³¹M.N.Wankhede comes down heavily upon the Marathi literary authors who unnecessarily talk and make ado about the idea of “Art for Art Sake.” They criticize Dalit literature as a literature lack of social consciousness. Wankhede alerts Dalit writers not to succumb to such kind of false propaganda and propositions. He strongly advocate that Dalits have “lived experiences” which is the biggest treasure, therefore, they don’t need to follow any standard or form set by the Mainstream Marathi writers. Gopal Guru and Sunder Sarukkai also use the term “lived experience” preferably in their text. See *Asmitadarsha* 1970, p. 140; Guru and Sarukkai 2012, p. 36.

upper caste Marathi writer. They feel seeking sympathy from the upper castes is like sprinkling salt on the wounds. Wankhede brings in another significant discussion regarding the significance of art in a Dalit's life.

The Dalit writer rejected the notion of "Art for arts sake" they accepted rather "Arts for life's sake" they argue that if art is not for life's sake then for whose sake it is? The Dalit writer also rejected the artistic standards and norms set by the upper caste Marathi writer. They emphasize that they should write their experience in their own rustic language i.e. the language of their day-to-day life. They strongly feel that they do not have to follow any artistic standards or norms set by the upper castes. Sharad Patil emphatically stated in his seminal text *Ahrahmani Sahityache Saudaryashashtra* that Dalit literature needs aesthetics of their own.³²

Wankhede further discuss in this article the notion of "rebel" in Dalit literature. He begins with the question what is a Dalit *Vidroh* (revolt)? Who is revolting? Against whom there is revolt? Wankhede further explains the meaning and the nature of Dalit *Vidroh*. According to Wankhede the Dalit Revolt is not hate or rejection. *Vidroh* means a revolt and it is against the established literary and moral values; it is against the notion Art's for Art's sake, it is against the conservative, traditional rights and rituals, and against the caste system. One of the major thrust of this literature is the social consciousness. Shri.K. Kshirsagar argues (taking about Dalit rebellion) that Jyotiba Phule's rebellion against the Brahminical society was least compare to his love and affection for the outcastes. Phule showed utmost generosity adopting an illegitimate child

³²The idea whether to have a separate "Aesthetics" for Dalits or not has been discussed at length in Dalit literature and in *Asmitadarsha* respectively. Gangadhar Pantawane bought out a special issue titled "Dalit Sahitya wa Saudaryashashtra" (Dalit literature and Aesthetics) in *Asmitadarsha* 1987 Diwali issue. There are differences among Dalit writers in terms of having/or not aesthetics of their own. Janardan Waghmare argues that Dalits need separate criticism but not a separate aesthetics. See his article "Dalitanche Wegale Saudaryashashtra Asu Shakat Nahi" in *Asmitadarsha* 20 (3) 1987, pp. 158 and 160. Yashwant Manohar strongly demands to have aesthetics for Dalits. Manohar 2012, p. 311-12.

of a widow (Brahmin) Ambedkar did not only talk of rebellion or revolt against the upper caste supremely his entire fight or struggle was against Brahminism not the Brahmins. Ambedkar's optimism and positivity was equally strong. But today, the Dalit panther rebellion does not have such a positive side against the upper castes. They are much more radical in their stand.³³ Kshirsagar propounds that all the upper castes are not same. They differ from each other so the Dalits should not be in confusion that all the upper castes are their rivals.

If we glance at the Dalit icons, we find all of them to be rebellious in their outlook right from Charwak, Phule to Ambedkar. Today, the Negro writers and their literature become their icons, because the Negro literature addresses the questions of the downtrodden black community. The Negro used the language of rebel especially after 1960 to address their issues. Eminent Black writers such as James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ted Joans, Margaret Walver, James Emanuel, Nikki Giovanni, June Jordan, Don-I. Lee, Gill Scott Heron, David Handerson etc have addressed issues of Black's emancipation frequently through their literature. They expressed themselves emphatically and questioned democracy in the white America.³⁴ Most of the Black intellectuals used "Ghettoised" English to break away from the white supremacy. It is the language broken and spoken in the Black Ghettoes. There is energy and strength and life in this language of the Blacks. The Black culture and the Black aesthetics came into being because of this language only. This language helped popularizing the Black culture and their unique way of life. Mocking at the white man and taking pride in being Black was the only objective they had.

Wankhade concludes, his thought-provoking article on the Negro writings

³³See Kshirsagar 1984, p. 274.

³⁴See Chase and Collier 1970.

advocating the Dalit writers to learn more and more from the Blacks. According to P. Vitthal “The black literature has given great writers to the world.”³⁵ There is a lot to learn from the Negro literature for the Dalits. He proposed, “If we want to have a society based on socialist democracy based on equality there is a lot to learn from the Dalits.” There is no doubt that the orbit of the Marathi literature has been expanded by the inclusion of the Dalit literature; infact the Marathi literature has been enriched due to the addition of Dalit literature into it. The Dalit literature (vice-versa) has borrowed a lot from the Black literature especially after 1960s and 1970, which drew its primary inspiration from Ambedkar, did not however, share Ambedkar’s vision of state control and industrial development. This movement was more avowedly Marxist in its early phase and called for nothing short of a radical proletariat revolution.³⁶

R.B. Joshi’s article’s titled Marathi literary tradition and writers in Dalit category categorically states, that the post-Ambedkarite Dalit leadership has failed in addressing the Dalit issues. The Dalits in the post-Ambedkarite period have deified Ambedkar. Joshi express deep concern over the fact that there is nobody who can carry forward Ambedkar’s mission of social upliftment after him. He also expresses his deep concern over the upper caste Marathi writers who did not show concern for the Dalit writing. He expressed his views as system and the caste system but they did not do it deliberately. Joshi inquisitively enquires why the upper castes did not do it. Joshi asked pertinent questions in the deliberations.

He speaks positively about the upper castes. He opines that the upper castes have also attempted to improve the society therefore, their contribution also must be taken into consideration it cannot just be neglected. He quotes Gandhi he states that because of

³⁵See Keshav Meshram’s article “Chintanacha Mahavruksha” in *Sakal* 28 March, 2018, p. 8.

³⁶See Ganguly 2005, p. 92.

Gandhi's task of social reform many of the upper caste took it up as a mission of their life. R.B. Joshi seems to be valorizing Gandhi and other upper caste intellectuals wholeheartedly in this article.

Joshi remarks that the Dalit writers do not consider the contribution of the upper castes towards Dalits. They show a complete disbelief towards the upper caste deeds how far this is true? Citing Ambedkar he states that in Ambedkar's scheme of social reform there were Brahmins worked with him. Even at the time of burning the *Manusmriti* the Brahmins accompanied him. The Brahmins worked with Ambedkar every time. Joshi seem to have forgotten a crucial point here that all the upper castes whoever worked with him were non-Brahminical in their outlook, and Ambedkar was against Brahminism and not the Brahmins as such. Hence, it is essential to cross-check the statement of R.B. Joshi that whether the upper castes worked with Ambedkar also were non-Brahminical in their outlook. This point is whoever worked with Ambedkar became Ambedkarite following his democratic egalitarianism principle of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice.

Joshi draws our attention to yet another important issue i.e. how far it is right to impose the responsibility of social reform on the shoulders of the literary writers? In his views all the literary writers are not necessarily the pioneers of social systems, but if the writer willingly wants to do so nobody can stop him. One cannot impose the responsibility of social reform on the shoulders of literary writers? Joshi's point is excellent and need admiration and due attention because democracy doesn't demand force of any kind. Responding to the question who can write on Dalits? This is a much debatable question even today. Joshi presents a dichotomy of an upper caste writer. The upper caste writer is always in the tight corners when questions are raised on his credentials; credibility and the authenticity of the upper castes towards Dalits. There is no doubt that the Dalits have anger on the upper castes for what they have done to them.

If at all the upper castes write on the Dalits they are up on their toes asking questions what they know about our lives. Do they really care about our lives? Do they really have concern for us? Do they have the Dalit consciousness? These are multiple apprehensions in the minds of the Dalits about the upper castes. If this is the case, and then the question is how to bridge the gap between these two streams of knowledge. In Joshi's opinion it is wrong on the part of the Dalits to go to such an extreme position. He expresses that if the attitude of the Dalits continued; it would be very difficult for these literatures to come together on common grounds. The Marathi language as such will flourish if the literature from all marginalized sections will be published.

Vasant Palsikar partially agrees with the issue in the questionnaire, he has certain reservations in the field of literature. He begins with what is the realm of literature? When a writer creates a work of art what exactly he does? There is always a sense of consciousness behind the literary creation so; it is necessary to have that consciousness with a specific nature? Palsikar states that in the family of literary writers there cannot be a division of Dalit and a non-Dalit as such. A writer who comes from a Dalit background is Dalit because of his social background. All the literary writers are same. For the literary battle using Dalit identity is wrong. The Dalits are using Ambedkar's ideology for their vested interests. Palsikar boldly asks them do they have the guts to fight. own. According to Palsikar a good writer treats every other writer with equal humanity. There should not be any reservation or concession for Dalit writer in the field of literary production. The real taste of a literary figure rests on three qualities they should be honest, there has to be authenticity and commitment in them. Palshikar's argument seems to be problematic in terms of equalizing or weighing Dalit and non Dalit writers in the same way. The reality is Dalit writer's life is totally different from a non Dalit writer in terms of their day today life experiences. Hence, they cannot be judged applying same parametres.

M.B. Chitnis comes down heavily upon the supporters of caste and the *chaturvarnya* system in his article titled “Self-deception or intellectual dishonesty.” He claims that the political democracy is a failure in this country because of the caste dominance. People in India have used caste as a weapon. The *Chaturvarna* and the caste system are the two great disease of the Indian society. The Marathi literary writers did not care for the Dalit awareness rather they are more inclined to the age-old mythical stories and rituals in their writings why did they do so? Even the saints in India have denied equal treatment to the downtrodden community/caste.

The upper caste Marathi literature also failed addressing the Dalit issues properly. They emphasized on the application of artistic standards as a literary norm. M.B. Chitnis considers the saintly or the stoic philosophy as unethical exercise or practise; hence he termed it as a futile exercise and hence, called it an intellectual dishonesty. The Dalit writers rejected the artistic standards set by the upper castes.

D.K. Bedekar’s article titled identity of Dalit writers and their literature stressed on the notion of morality. In explains primarily the meaning of morality. In his view morality depends on equality, love and ingenuity. He comments that such kind of society does not exist today. To create such society we must strive hard. We must inculcate within us Dalit consciousness efforts in this direction will certainly lead to the formation of an ideal and moral society. Pointing at the Buddhist conversion he adds, “The Buddhist tradition has played a key role galvanizing the Dalit community to a great extent. The Dalits have enlightened themselves with the conversion. It is because of the Buddhist conversion the Dalits got a new identity; an identity of their own. The search for identity deepened more and more as a result they discovered morality.”

The Dalits have truly emancipated themselves due to the adoption of humanity, scientific temper and sense of revolt. Finally, Bedekar states that the Marathi upper caste

writers have failed in addressing the Dalit issues as well as the issues related to the working class in their literature.

All the eminent writers in the present discussion have elaborately discussed all the issues and the questions rose in the debate. They have given their sincere and honest replies to all the queries in the deliberations. Of course there is a mix response, difference of opinion between them on different issues. They express themselves freely and frankly. As a response to the question raised in the seminar, “Can Dalit literature be a core/compulsory course in literature departments?” we can say that when issues relating to all the marginalized/downtrodden communities such as the Mang, Mahar, Paradhi, Mali, Sali, Koli, Dhor, Chambhar, Dakkalwar, Kaikadi, Waddar come in the prominence the Dalit literature has the chance to become the mainstream literature. The literatures belonging to these sub-castes have not yet received adequate attention hence there is a need to concentrate on their writings so as to have a diverse literary arena and an understanding of the lives of these backward castes.

Ambedkar always valued society and the issues related to the downtrodden therefore, he esteemed it highly. Drawing inspiration from him the Dalit writers also portrayed the issues related to the society preferably. We find the reflection of their life in Dalit literature. The literature is nothing but the harsh realities of life and therefore, it is authentic and real unlike the upper caste Marathi writings. The Marathi writers have always concentrated their energies and times talking about the unreal and imaginary things. All great writers and philosophers such as Bertrand Russel, John Stuwart Mill etc have given importance to the social issues. They wrote extensively on the issues concerning the society. Struggle is yet another crucial thing in Dalits life; rather it is an integral part of their life. Ambedkar advised the downtrodden community to “Educate, Agitate and Unite.” The Dalits took education and as a result produced such a powerful

literature like the Dalit literature.

The Dalit literature has the potential and the capacity to become the mainstream/core literature. Looking at the present scenario we can say confidently that the Dalit literature has grown and expanded so much that; it has outlasted the Marathi literature. Nobody bothered much about the Marathi literature now. There was a time when the mainstream Marathi writers such as N.S. Padke and V.S. Khandekar were largely popular. Interestingly, Khandekar's famous novel called *Yayati* received Dnyanpitha award despite the fact that it is based not on the social issue but on the issues related to Mahabharata. Today, the Dalit literature/studies has become a hot topic of the entire debate and discussion in and around various educational institutions and universities therefore, the question raised in the seminar "Can Dalit literature be a core/compulsory course at this juncture is an outdated, illogical and dead one and therefore, it does not make any sense."

'Swatantryottar Kalin Marathi Sahitya Mhanje Dishahen Sahitya' (1971) this symposium discusses the deteriorated values of literature. According to W.L. Kulkarni, "We cannot call post-independence literature a directionless literature", because literature does not decide direction first and later it is produced Kulkarni laments over the fact that many values regarding literature are getting deteriorated today.³⁷ (In the context of literature and life) Narhar Kurundkar presumes that pre-independence literature was full of promise and direction. According to him, the real protest subsists in the context of values. A rebel attains character in the social context hence for the establishment of a certain value or principle one is ready to do anything as if the values or principles to him become too dear to death. The rebel, revolt or the protest is for the establishment of

³⁷ See W.L.Kulkarni's article, "Swatantryottar Kalin Marathi Sahitya Mhanje Dishahen Sahitya" *Asmitadarsha* 4 (3) 1971, p. 2.

values in society.³⁸ Therefore, the views expressed by the middle-class society that the post-independence period is a period of complete disillusionment and the post independent period is a period of destruction and loneliness is not true. Through this symposium the writers debated over the literary and social movements in detail. Unfolding various dimensions of literature, they kept in mind the different period of time. The past independence Marathi literature is definitely literature with direction.

Another characteristic feature of *Asmitadarsha* symposium is that the views expressed by the author are independent of themselves. One can find a clear manifestation of their thoughts in *Asmitadarsha* symposium. Every individual author gave preference to their own thoughts. Some authors have tried to justify the pain, sorrow and agency of Dalits through their writings. Some authors talked about Dalit literary stalwarts such as Shankarrao Khart, Baburao Bagul etc. Through the writings of these authors the literary thought in Marathi literature has been explained explicitly. The participants in this symposium were W.L. Kulkarni, Narhar Kurundkar, Waman Ingle, M.Y. Dalvi, and Sudhakar Ahankari etc.

One can observe the fact that *Asmitadarsha* Symposiums deal with different streams of literature. They track different period of time in different contexts. Symposium of this kind joins different literary battles together. One of the most popular genres in Marathi literature is Dalit autobiography. Arranging symposia on Dalit autobiographies set the tone in *Asmitadarsha*. There are more than (150) Dalit autobiographies in Dalit literature (both male and female). The column entitled “Dalit Sahitikanche Atmakathan: Mi and Maze Lekhan Mate Ani Matantare” (autobiographies of Dalit authors) me and my writing views and counter views became very popular in *Asmitadarsha* symposium.

³⁸Ibid. p. 3.

Shankarrao Kharat in his autobiography says,

I have lived life of an outsider at the outskirts of the village. I have lived life in the *Maharwada* (Mahar locality) based on this I wrote stories on 12 *Balatedars* (12 types of village servants) and *Bulatedari* in my village. Keshav Meshram also wrote about the painful life of being an untouchable in society.³⁹

The world of Dalit autobiographer is of a different kind where mere survival is bigger question. N.R. Shande, Bandhumadhav, Keshav Meshram, Raja Dhale, Yogiraj Waghmare, J.V. Pawar all of them participated in the symposium. There has been a criticism in Dalit autobiographies that only a person's life is discussed in Dalit autobiography. This charge is false and baseless because while reading and analysing Dalit autobiographies the Dalit society and its movements are also studied thoroughly. Emphasizing his point in the symposium N.R. Shende says,

I am the representative of Dalit's for nearly (50 -60) years. I represent life of a Dalit around 50-60 years ago. I am a village Mahar living life in such terrible and harsh and adverse condition without education, money or support of any kind.⁴⁰

Bandhumadhav announce,

Taking inspiration from Ambedkar revolutionary philosophy through my short stories I ignite the mind of Dalits. I used to read Bhayyasaheb Ambedkar edited *Janata* (weekly) I always was in search of substantial literature to Ambedkar's movement.⁴¹

Raja Dhale also expressed his views categorically he says *Prabuddha Bharat* was a mouthpiece of political ideology. How can the elite people who stay far away from it understand literature in it? Today the Dalit authors (those who have hidden under the garb

³⁹See Kharat 2004.

⁴⁰See N.R.Shende's write up "Mi ani Maze Lekhan" *Asmitadarsha* 9 (4) 1976, p. 176.

⁴¹See Kamble 2003, p. 250.

of Ambedkarism) may not be reading *Prabuddha Bharat* then because their political ideology, differ from us.⁴²

Dalit autobiographers were motivated by various kinds of Dalit socio-political movements and activities. There is close connection between writing and society. The writing of these people came from social struggle. As an activist and writer their writing gained importance.

J.V. Pawar comments,

I am a poet, I do movements and I write on it. Whatever I gain from movement appeared in my poetry. I give preference to movements because that is the base of my poetry.⁴³

Speaking on the occasion of another, symposium ‘Dalit Sahitya, Ani Sahityatil Dalit’ Keshav Meshram propounds, “Dalit literature talks about internal tensions of a Dalit life where millions find tone to their internal and boycotted life.”⁴⁴ Dalit literature in a way is the representative for all; it serves all equally. It is a voice to the voiceless, in this regard D.T. Mane’s thought is important where he focuses on finding out the meaning of Dalit and oppressed in the context of Marathi literature.⁴⁵ In this connection the symposium conducted on Anna Bhau Sathe: Wyakti Ani Wangmay becomes relevant. Poets and thinkers like Amar Sheikh, G.V. Karandikar, Shrikushna Pawle, Bhalchandra Fadke, Shahir Atmaram Pati, V.V. Bhatt, Raja Dhale and Narayan Surve etc had participated. They focussed on Anna Bhau Sathe’s life and literature at length.

Through the symposium on Anna Bhau Sathe one can have a clear cut vision of

⁴² See Raja Dhale’s article “Mi ani Maze Lekhan” *Asmitadarsha*, 9 (4) 1976, p. 176.

⁴³ See J.V.Pawar’s article “Mi ani Maze lekhan” *Asmitadarsha* 9 (4) 1976, p. 7.

⁴⁴ See Meshram Keshav’s article “Dalit Sahitya he Antar Jivanatale Tanawe Gheun Ale Ahe” *Asmitadarsha* 7 (1) 1974, pp. 37-39.

⁴⁵ See D.T. Mane’s article “Dalit Sahitya wa Sahityatil Dalit” *Asmitadarsha* literary Conference 7 (1) 1974, p. 35.

Dalit *Shairi* (singing) which became more popular form in the post-independence Maharashtra.⁴⁶ The History of Dalit *Shairi* came alive in the form of this symposium. Anna Bhau Sathe's *Shairi* raised social awareness. It inspired millions Dalits working classes etc and prepared them for revolution. G.V. Karandikar propounds that one has to understand the essence of Anna Bhau's *Shairi* which is nothing but perseverance. Perseverance and focus were the focal points in Anna's thinking appreciating his efforts he says, "He was a millionaire who supported creativity."⁴⁷ Literary dissection of a literary personality happens in the symposium in *Asmitadarsha* wherein segments like "Wyakti and Wangmay" the person is literally analysed from every single aspect. Anna Bhau was communist in thinking and ideology in Karandikar's view he was a first class storyteller, a father of modern folk theatre, and an eminent *Shahir* (poet).

In Symposium titled "Marathi Wangmay Ani Krantisamukhta" A.N. Deshmukh gave the traditional definition of revolution opposing traditional rituals. According to V.D. Kulkarni, "revolution is nothing but a dramatic change." Elaborating further he says, "the literary writing does not need revolution; revolution comes via thought- provoking literary writings."⁴⁸ According to R.G. Jadhav literary art is the product of cultural manifestation. Therefore, instead of calling the changes in Marathi literature revolution, we should call them revolt which would be more appropriate term to be used. The cultural movements of Dalits and their future have also been discussed in this symposium.⁴⁹ G.T. Madkholkar expressed his view that Dalits should have accepted the intellectual tradition that Ambedkar had given to them. In this view, they should understand the cultural legacy

⁴⁶See G.V. Karandikar's article "Anna Bhau Sathe Yek Chintan" *Asmitadarsha* 2 (1) 1969, p. 11.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 12.

⁴⁸See V.D. Kulkarni's article, "Marathi Wangmay ani Krantisamukhta" *Asmitadarsha* 6 (4) 1973, p. 151.

⁴⁹See R.G.Jadhav's article, "Marathi Wangmay ani Krantisamukhta" *Asmitadarsha* 6 (4) 1973, p. 154.

that Ambedkar had given them. They should understand its intellectual vigour etc.⁵⁰

D.M. Khairkar, Shankar Kharat, Dutta Bhagat, Vasant Moon, Raosaheb Kasabe, Waman Ingle etc expressed their thoughts. Through different symposiums in *Asmitadarsha* focus was thrown on different aspects of life. Since those symposiums were research oriented they focussed on major issues in society. They have a standard of their own.

Now, I would like to discuss about the social and literary issues in the *Asmitadarsha* symposium. *Asmitadarsha* periodical is devoted to Phule-Ambedkarite ideology. Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar fought for the untouchable's social and cultural slavery. Their philosophy was for the betterment of humanity. *Asmitadarsha* propagated Ambedkarite philosophy therefore there is discussion on social issue in *Asmitadrsha*. It includes discussion on religion and conversion, future of Dalits, cultural movements, and social or economic issues etc.

“Dharmadasya, Lokshahivivek Ani Dalitmukti” (religious enslavement, democratic thought and Dalit liberation (1972) in this symposium taking account of religion, Hinduism was discussed at length. The discussion revolved round the inequality in Hinduism and its slavery. Due to excessive importance to religion and the sanctity of the Dharmashastras while preparing the religious text the same ideology was taken into consideration. To put it in Marx's term “religion is like Opium” from this religious slavery Dalits cannot get liberation. Religious institutions and religious texts are the biggest threat to freedom of thought. Because of religious blindness Dalits cannot exercise economic liberty. Even if the law permits democratic freedom because of strength of religion it is difficult to achieve economic stability. As long as the caste and

⁵⁰See G.T. Madkholkar, “Dalitanchya Sanskrutik Chalvaliche Bhavitvya” *Asmitadarsha* 7 (3) 1974, pp. 4 and 6.

casteism exist and the religious institutions or organization support the religious activities the hold on religion will become stronger and stronger. Unless there is existence a state with democratic thought the Indian state will remain politically and socially weak.

Raising question over Dalit liberation D.K. Bedekar remarks, “nobody can liberate Dalits; they themselves have to achieve it through struggle”⁵¹ citing the past Dalit struggle he asserts that the Dalits should think, and gain knowledge of the battle field, the ups and downs in the movement and struggle. In this regard the Dalits are very weak. He expresses the fact that Dalit liberation is possible if the political and religious improvement happen.

Bedekar further add that though the Dalits have converted themselves the roots of religious rights and rituals are so deep in his mind that he will not be able to free or liberate himself from religious enslavement, which is true because even after the Dalit conversion there are Dalits who still follow their age old Hindu religious practices so much so that they keep Buddha’s idol and Ambedkar portrait in the (Gods small house). Ambedkar is defined out rightly in some slates of Maharashtra. D.K. Bedekar comes up with a viable solution according to him “we should replace religious sentiment with human sentiment.”He further adds getting rid of religious slavery is very difficult.

As it was rightly pointed out by Anupama Rao that Dalit liberation or emancipation is an unfinished agenda despite having democracy, parliament, laws, Dalits are constantly struggling for their emancipation. They are still desperately searching for light in an age of enlightenment at the end of tunnel. Even in the post-independent period there is rise in Dalit atrocities and injustice village politics is largely responsible for this. S. Kshirsagar vehemently commented on the pseudo Gandhiwadi and Phule-

⁵¹See *Asmitadarsha* 5 (3) 1972, p. 131.

Shahuwadi's in this symposium.

The point most of the authors made in this symposium was the religious conversion could not achieve much and the Dalits are still following their old mindset. Conversion definitely was one step ahead for the untouchables but they need to go beyond it. Kshirsagar adds that liberation or change cannot happen through conversion alone there are other things that are to be taken into account as well.⁵²

W.Y. Wadaskar adds that Dalit means not *Shoshit* (oppressed) the Dalit suppression is not double but multiple. The Dalit is suppressed economically, politically and culturally. He undergoes multiple oppressions. This kind of wretched life comes to his share only because he is Dalit. The non-Dalit and the oppressed do not help the suppressed Dalits in this regard which is really striking. He concludes his article showing positive attitude towards Dalit movement and leadership.

Dinkarrao Sandanshiv's thought is much more democratic in creed. He seems to believe in democratic way. He is of the view that only a democratic way of life can truly liberate Dalit from the religious shackles and mental suppression.⁵³ While discussing religion and social life there was also discussion on Buddhist movement and struggles: contemplation D.K. Bedekar, Prabhakar Padhey etc participated in the deliberations. Question raised on Hindu society and its development. Converted Buddhist and the usefulness of their movements according to D.K. Bedekar what Hindu society need for its development is the scientific outlook or temper and nothing else.

The question of conversion would not have arrived if the Hindu society would have changed their attitude towards the untouchables. According to Prabhakar Padhey

⁵² See K.Kshirsagar's article, "Dharmadasya, Lokshahivivek ani Dalitmukti" *Asmitadarsha* 5 (3) 1972, p. 134.

⁵³ See Dinkarrao Sadanshiv, "Dharmadasya, Lokshahivivek ani Dalitmukti" *Asmitadarsha* 5 (3) 1972, p. 145.

religion is a matter related to one's life. Everybody has to think about it. The Buddhist has a social and cultural baggage and a great heritage in Thailand, Brahmadesh, Japan etc.⁵⁴

In this significant symposium Ambedkar's views on religion and his religious conversion was discussed. The participants in the symposium titled "Dharmantar Ghoshanechi Pannas Varsha" (fifty years of religious conversion) were H.L. Kosare, M.Y. Dalvi, M.D. Nalawade, N.G. Bhavre, Acharya Balarao Savarkar, and Hrushikesh Kamble etc. Another significant topic in the discussion was "Dr.Ambedkar's religious conversion and today's scenario."⁵⁵

Many issues were discussed regarding Dalit cultural movement. Fear and anxiety was also expressed that the educated class is moving away from the Dalit movement. Apprehension was made on the Mahar issue, and possibility was expressed that the Mahars (untouchables in Maharashtra) belong to the "Kshitriya" clan. In the symposium titled "Dalitanchya Sanskrutik Chavvaliche Bhavitavya" (1974).

According to D.M. Khairkar, "conversion has helped developing Dalits; no doubt but they should go beyond that for further development in their life." They should understand the challenges of Hindu culture. Khairkar asserts that the Dalits should learn from their own cultural movements. Economic assistance or financial grants make Dalit cultural movements weak, propounds Khairkar.⁵⁶

Datta Bhagat claims that the base of cultural movements is self-search or introspection. Vasant moon presented three facts discussing cultural movement of Dalits, 1) The Proponent of the movement 2) Cultural angle 3) Patronage.⁵⁷

Dalit culture movements in Maharashtra began in the real sense in the post-

⁵⁴See Prabhakar Padhey and D.K.Bedekar's article "Navdixit Bauddhanchi Andolane- Yek Chintan." *Asmitadarsha* 1 (2) 1962, p. 52.

⁵⁵Kamble 2003, p. 263.

⁵⁶See D.M.Khairkar, "Dalitanchya Sanskrutik Chalvaliche Bhavitvya" *Asmitadarsha* 1974, pp. 6 and 9.

⁵⁷ See Vasant Moon, "Dalitanchya Sanskrutik Chalvaliche Bhavitvya" *Asmitadarsha* 1974, p. 14 and 17.

independence period. This movement was carried forward by the periodicals and different philosophers. Pantawane had a lion's share in it. Dalit cultural movement began by them for themselves. Hence it was mandatory for Dalits to have organizations and activists working for them for their future benefits.

Cultural movement happens through newspapers, articles, stories, poems, *Jalsa's*, and dramas etc. Through all these means there is attempt to have dialogue with the public in general. Expressing his thoughts in this symposium Raosaheb Kasabe remarks that there are two Dalit groups that exist in society one is socially unprivileged class and the other is economically exploited Dalit. According to him the Indian society has strong caste consciousness, all farmers, farm labours are involved in it. Especially, in Dalit society this problem is primarily observed. The economic question of Dalits cannot be solved in any country neglecting them.⁵⁸

This symposium focussed on Dalit cultural movements. After the demise of Ambedkar the Dalit cultural movement came to a standstill. The symposium also discussed on Ambedkar who gave the cultural legacy to the movement in the last phase of his life in the form of conversion. Dalits began their cultural movement through Ambedkar thought and Buddhist philosophy. Through the symposium a detailed and a minute study of Dalit life has been done the participants have self-consciousness as well as contemplative thinking in them. This symposium definitely talks about Dalit cultural context. They discuss the cultural legacy of Dalits. The Dalits will have to understand their culture legacy for this they should learn Pali texts to read the Buddhist literature in detail.

The literature produced in Maharashtra especially after the 1960s was largely

⁵⁸See Raosaheb Kasabe "Dalitanchya Sankrutik Chalvaliche Bhavitvya" *Asmitadarsha* 7 (3) 1974, p. 19.

influenced by the socio-political and cultural happening in the state therefore, one find the reflection or impact of it in the literature itself. *Asmitadarsha* along with the literary issues gave enough exposure to the socio-political, cultural movements in it. Therefore, one finds *Asmitadarsha* issues laden with the social awareness. In fact, Gangadhar Pantawane, reiterated the fact that *Asmitadarsha* is nothing but a part of Dalit movement. The very purpose of the periodical was to carry forward the socio-political, cultural and literary legacy of Ambedkar.

Namantar issue has been discussed in the symposium as a part of cultural legacy of Dalits and a post-independence Dalit movement in Maharashtra. *Namantar* issue was discussed in the symposium from evaluative and historical point of view. The movement became a great challenge for participants in the symposium. They took it up whole heartedly discussed every aspect of it. Ambedkar's major struggles for equality were discussed in paralled with *Namantar* movement such as Mahad Chawdar Tank agitation, Kalarram Temple entry agitation, landless labourers struggle etc. the *Namantar* movement was not confined to a particular caste or class group. It was basically fought for the benefit of this country. Nirmalkumar Fadkule stated that, "Ambedkar's name is synonymous to equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice. Since, he laid the foundation of education in Aurangabad, Milind College the people in general and Dalit organizations in particular wanted his name to be given to Marathwada University."⁵⁹ After a prolonged struggle for 14 long years Ambedkar's name was given to the Marathwada University in 1994. The eminent writer and prolific thinker Janardan Waghmare commented that the question of *Namantar* is related to cultural change and it is committed to it.⁶⁰

Dalit literature has always tried to voice the pain, suffering and the agony of

⁵⁹See Gaikwad, Deshkar and Manohar Garud 1978, p. 2.

⁶⁰ See Nirmalkumar Fadkule's article, "Dr.Ambedkaranche Nava Samajik Nyaya, Samata wa Bandhutwashi Nigadit Ahe" *Asmitadarsha* 13 (4) 1980, pp. 188-190.

Dalits. Dalit writers, poets, dramatists, critics, story writers totally supported the social movements. They have been loyal, committed and honest to Dalit life struggles. *Asmitadarsha* organized symposium occasionally through its special issue to give wide exposure to the existing contemporary issues 1980s symposium was one of them. “Namantar Yek Sanskrutik Chalval”⁶¹ (Namantar name giving or name changing as it was called) became a vibrant movement during the 1980s in Aurangabad (Maharashtra) through a symposium on the *Namantar* issue the participants discussed the tales of destructive Dalit families. Raybhan Jadhav, B.H. Kalyankar, Kumud Pawde, Janardan Waghmare, Achutrao Khudwe participated in the discussion.

Women Question also featured extensively in *Asmitadarsha* symposium under the title “Dalit Stree: Kaal, Aaj Ani Udyā” (Dalit women: Yesterday, today and tomorrow) the upper caste and Dalit women stated their problems. Shantibai Kirloskar, Anuradha Gurav asserted that the future women is promising and committed one. According to Saudamini Rao, “Dalit liberation movement is the real struggle for social change.” Nalini Ladhke remarked that, “the future woman will break the cultural slavery.” Other feminists such as Jyoti Lanjewar, Aruna Lokhande, Nalini Somkuwar, Leela Shinde participated in the symposium discussed the challenging life of a Dalit woman⁶² *Asmitadarsha* (1981) special issue has been devoted and dedicated to “Dalit Stree” it is a special issue brought out by Pantawane to discuss the Woman Question is worth mentioning. M.Y. Dalvi, Ram Shewalkar also participated and contributed a lot to the Dalit woman discourse.

Speaking in the forum “Dalit Stree Kalachi wa Aajachi” (Dalit Woman Yesterday and Today) Kumud Pawade says, “The religion and culture in India is largely responsible for the downfall of women.” Thus, criticizing the social system in this country Pawade

⁶¹See Gaikwad 2015, p. 45.

⁶²See Kamble 2003, p. 267.

presents a graph of reality of women's life. Nalini Somkumar differentiates between the upper caste woman and Dalit woman mentioned the fact that upper caste woman does not consider the Dalit women. The attitude of society towards looking at women is also different. The Dalit women are looked down upon in society marketed and labelled as characterless. In this way, wide ranging issues are discussed in *Asmitadarsha* symposium. *Asmitadarsha* symposium also discussed issues related to literature. Different literary works are published in *Asmitadarsha* and discussion took place over them. It has given exposure to new Dalit writers giving them space, popularity and publicity to his work. Many unknown, amateur and novice author found place in *Asmitadarsha*. Therefore, Pantawane Sir is lovingly called *Adharwad* a supportive tree for all (writer, thinker and philosopher) community who is the founding father of *Asmitadarsha*.

Discussion and debates in *Asmitadarsha* range from Dalit literature to Afro-American literature and also to the literature in the west. Western scholars and their works have been published in *Asmitadarsha* periodical in this sense it is inclusive and unique in itself. Not only the Marathi or Dalit authors but the authors from other states in India also wrote and contributed to *Asmitadarsha*. Questions, debates, discussions, and dialogues were raised regularly on contemporary issue giving enough exposure in *Asmitadarsha* symposium.

Conclusion

Asmitadarsha provide ample opportunity for the researcher to explore more as he goes deeper into it. The scholarly, and intellectual writing produced in *Asmitadarsha* fascinates the reader. It rather, prompts them to contribute to it via writing thought provoking articles. *Asmitadarsha* family has been expanded due to its “inclusive and assimilative” nature, approach and policy. The journal encompasses every literary genre (poetry, prose, essays, short stories, dramas, novels, literary criticism, etc.) into it. Every segment in *Asmitadarsha* has been loaded with immense knowledge, intuition, wisdom and erudition.

For research purpose, I concentrated only on the “prose” writings (*Vaicharik Likhan*) produced in *Asmitadarsha* from 1968 to 2000. Through their intellectual prose writings, eminent writers such as Raja Dhale, Eleanor Zelliot, Janardan Waghmare, Urmila Pawar etc have galvanised *Asmitadarsha* movement and literature in Maharashtra. The major intention of the thesis is to look at the prose writing in *Asmitadarsha* from an Ambedkarite Perspective. Since, “Ambedkarism” is the crux of the thesis all four chapters have been analysed from an Ambedkarite egalitarian democratic thought of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice point of view. Since, the base of Dalit literature is Ambedkarism Gangadhar Pantawane claim that, Ambedkarism is the heart of *Asmitadarsha*. Probing deep into Pantawane’s claim and digging deeper into the bottom of the literary articles, I attempt, to explore “Ambedkarism” through a critical study of the articles in *Asmitadarsha*.

In order to explore Ambedkarite thought I analysed the Buddhist philosophy in the first chapter of the thesis. Attempt has been made in the first chapter to define Ambedkarism and establish it as a paradigm touching upon various dimensions attached to Ambedkar’s personality. It was indeed a daunting task to go through Ambedkar’s life

and philosophy, analyse it from critical point of view and comment on it. Locating Ambedkar in the contemporary socio-political, cultural, and literary debates and perspectives the chapter thoroughly studies the concept of Ambedkarism. Ambedkarism, in the recent time has become the buzz word. In each and every socio-political and cultural struggle in present time people seem to be taking recourse and refuge in Ambedkar's democratic egalitarian thought and philosophy. At this juncture, I feel delighted to be a part of the whole exercise on Ambedkarism to which I could contribute something giving my view and version on Ambedkarism through this thesis.

In second chapter I historically analysed the Marathi literary Periodicals in Maharashtra. I attempt to study both the Marathi and the Dalit periodicals to conduct a comparative assessment comparing and contrasting the Marathi and Dalit literary periodicals in post- Ambedkarite Maharashtra. This chapter focuses on the contribution, significance, aims and objectives of both the Marathi as well as the Dalit literary periodicals in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra. The chapter will exclusively and largely focus on *Asmitadarsha* Dalit literary Marathi periodical in post-Ambedkarite Maharashtra; it deals precisely with the Prose writings or *Vaicharik Likhan* and tries to locate it within the ambit of "Ambedkarite perspective." Since, Ambedkarite thought is the base and the crux of the thesis an attempt has been made to critically analyse Ambedkar's journalistic prose writings in this chapter.

The third chapter critically examine all socio-political issues in *Asmitadarsha* over the years. I have attempted to analyse the socio-political and the cultural issues in *Asmitadarsha* individually. I argue that these articles explicitly represent Ambedkarite thought and ideology. It is really a daunting task to categorize and conduct individual study of the issues in *Asmitadarsha* like the way I attempt to do because the issues merge with each other so often that it becomes all the more difficult to really compartmentalize

them into a specific category. The categorization or classification of these articles has been done simply for the sake of an in-depth analysis and focus on the individual issues in *Asmitadarsha*, and to have a compactness and rigour in the thesis. In fact; all the articles on different and diverse subjects, titles and genres are the representative or the carrier of Ambedkarite thought or message in their own ways. For research constraints, I focussed on few of them. The articles have been selected based on their potentiality and strength and their relevance to Ambedkarite thought or Ambedkarism in the contemporary times. In a way, the articles represent Ambedkarite thought and ideology. The point I want to drive attention to is to investigate and find out or trace Ambedkarite thought through them.

The fourth chapter mainly focuses on the discussions and debates over the contemporary issues in *Asmitadarsha* symposium. I focus on the major issues in the symposium in *Asmitadarsha* came up for discussion. *Asmitadarsha* has indirectly launched a literary movement and a social crusade in Maharashtra in the form of *Asmitadarsha*. Due to annual gathering and conduction of writer-reader conferences, discussions and debates, the entire atmosphere in *Asmitadarsha* symposia become vibrant and dynamic. *Asmitadarsha* Symposium includes reading of research articles, presidential speeches, inaugural speeches etc have a lot to say and share in the contemporary society. They give rise to the development and improvement of literary art and culture.

Critically analysing the debates and the discussions in the symposium I analyse the connectivity of the issues involved in *Asmitadarsha* and their present relevance in our times. The basic idea of the topic is to take up the burning and contentious issues in Maharashtra and initiate discussion over it. The discussion will help us understand many issues that came up for discussion in the post-Ambedkarite literature, culture, and society.

In addition to the introduction and four chapters I have also given a chronological

account of the articles published in *Asmitadarsha* from (1967-2000) and put it in appendix. Since, I concentrate only on the prose writings I have given a chronological account of the prose writings published in *Asmitadarsha*. The chronological account of the prose writings in *Asmitadarsha* would be of a great help for future research aspirants who wants to work on Marathi periodicals.

Periodicals have always been a great source of inspiration and knowledge for all times. They served society contributing knowledge and awareness to it. *Asmitadarsha*, in particular, immensely contributed to the growth, progress and development of literature, culture, and society in Maharashtra. *Asmitadarsha* is a versatile journal, different genre in it such as poetry, drama, novel, short stories, and criticism are of immense significance and hence they could be studied and analysed individually. *Asmitadarsha* provide a readymade platform for the researchers to delve and explore into it. It is truly a treasure hunt for the knowledge seeking readers. A lot could have been written and explored in *Asmitadarsha* but due to the research limitations I couldn't do much. The present thesis has given me a vision and an outlook to investigate and explore more into it. There is still a lot of scope to explore in *Asmitadarsha*.

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Appendix

List of selected thought-provoking articles in *Asmitadarsha*:

1967-68

Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	American Negro Sahitya American Negro Literature	M. N.Wankhade	I st , First, Dec-1967	53
2.	American Negro Rakta ani Ashru American Negro Blood and Tears	Janardan M. Waghmare	Ist, IIIrd, Oct/Nov/Dec-Diwali Issue, 1968	01

1969

Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	NiyatishiZunjanaraLekhak : James Baldwin (Purwardha) Negro writers in confrontation with destiny: James Baldwin (the first half)	Janardhan M. Waghmare	II nd , First, March-1969	21-30
2.	NiyatishiZunjanara Nigro Lekhak : James Baldwin(Uttarardha) Negro writer in confrontation with destiny James Baldwin (The Second half) :	Janardhan M. Waghmare	II nd , Second, June-1969	37-43
3.	RaktacheShabda Words of Blood	Raja Rajwade	Diwali Issue,1969	61
4.	Amar Shaikh :EkDhagdhagtaAangar Amar Shaikh : an inflammatory fire	Acharya Madhav Potdar	Diwali Issue, 1969	45
5.	AathwanichePakshi Birds of Reminiscence	P. E. Sonkamble	Diwali Issue, 1969	123
6.	Sartre ani Astitwawad Sartre and Existentialism	Sada Karhade	Diwali Issue, 1969	129
7.	StreeNiyatichi Den Woman : a gift of destiny	Aruna Lokhande	Diwali Issue, 1969	145
8.	Negro AsmitechaShodha : Black Power Quest for Negro identity : Black Power	Janardhan M. Waghmare	II nd Year, III rd issue, Oct/Nov/Dec, 1969 Diwali Issue	149-158
9.	AajchiKavita :Pravrutti and Prakruti Today'spoetry : Tendency and Nature	Daya Pawar	Diwali Issue, 1969	31

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	Satya ani SaundaryachiSantata Parametre of Truth and Beauty	Sudhir Bedekar	III rd , third, Oct/Nov/Dec Diwali-Issue, 1970	117

2.	Saundarya :KahiVichar Aesthetics : Some Thoughts	Sharadchandra Muktibodh	III rd , third, Oct/Nov/Dec Diwali- Issue, 1970	119
3.	American Negro JivanachaWangmayinAvishkar Literary manifestation of American Negro Life	Janardhan M. Waghmare	II nd , second, June-1970	08

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	Lok Kavi : Waman Kardak Folk Poet Waman Kardak	Gangadhar Pantawane	March, 1971	25-28
2.	NegronchyaAsmitechaShodh : Black Muslim Andolan Quest for Negro Identity : Black Muslim Struggle	Janardan M. Waghmare	IV th , II nd , June-1971	01-28
3.	Dalit Wangmaya :EkVichar Dalit Literature : A Thought	Sharadchandra Muktibodh		01-06
4.	Buddha Tatvadnyan, Nath SamrajyawadWa Marathi Sant Buddhist Philosophy, Nath Sect imperialism and Marathi Saints	Bhau Lokhande	IV th , III rd issue, Diwali	22-29

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	Dr.BabasahebAmbedkaranchyaSamajikvaRajkiyaSanghatna Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar's Social and Political Organization	Gangadhar Pantawane	5 th Yr, II nd issue, April/May/June, 1972	12- 19
2.	ChokamelancheJohar Plea of Chokhamela	Sudhakar Chandajkar	5 th Yr, II nd issue, April/May/June, 1972	20- 22
3.	Dalit Sahitya Ani Sahitya Shashtra Dali Literature and Sahitya Shashtra /literariness	Raja Dhale	5 th Yr, II nd issue, Diwali, 1972	61- 64
4.	American Negro KrantichaDoot :Dr.Martin Lather King (Jr.) American Negro Revolutionary Ambassador :Dr.Martin Luther King (Jr.)	Janardhan Waghmare	5 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1972	69- 80
5.	ItihaasSansodhanatilNikhallelaDua :Prof.DamodarDharmanandKosambi An exhilarated soul/ passage in Historical research : Prof. D.D. Kosambi	K.D.Wadajkar	5 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1972	81- 87
6.	Mahatma Phule :EkSamarthaDrastyetrutva Mahatma Phule : An able Forward Looking Leadership	Y.M.Pathan	5 th Yr, II nd issue, April/May/June, 1972	91- 95

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	Tarunya, Virodh ani Sahitya Youth, Rebel and Literature	T.V. Sardeshmukh	7 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1974	05-16
2.	Negro WangmayWa Dalit Wangmay Negro Literature and Dalit Literature	Janardhan Waghmare	7 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1974	41-46
3.	Dalit Sahityane Marathi SamikshetNirmanKeleleKahiPrashna Some Questions Raised by Dalit Literature in Marathi Criticism	Prabhakar Mande	7 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1974	47-51
4.	ItihaasatilKahi Dali Wyakti Some Dalit Personalities in History	Prabhakar Pohre	7 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1974	52-54
5.	Majzya 'Sanskrutchi Katha' Story of my 'Sanskrut'	Kumud Pawade	7 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1974	55-62
6.	Buddha Ani Shankaracharya Buddha And Shankaracharya	D.M. Khairkar	7 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue	146-155

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	Dr.Ambedkar ani PrachinShashanWyawastha Dr.Ambedkar and Ancient Administrative System	Ratnakar Ganvir	8 th Yr, II nd issue, Apr/May/June, 1975	03-10
2.	SwatantrrotarKalatilShikshanwaSanskritikStithtantare Education and Cultural Transition in the Post Independence Period	Waman Ingle	8 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1975	21-23
3.	DalitanchyaShikshanane Kay Sadhale? What have we Gained / Achieved Through Dalit Education	R.B.Joshi	8 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1975	25-30
4.	JaibaiChawdhari	V.B.Kolte	8 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1975	31-37
5.	Shahu- AmbedkarancheShaikshanikKarya Educational Contribution of Shahu-Ambedkar	M.D.Nalawade	8 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1975	43-52
6.	American Negro Stree American Negro Woman	Janardhan Waghmare	8 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali Spl. issue, 1975	91-107
7.	DalitanchyaShaikshanik a SanskritikUtthanasathiDaltettaranchePrayatna Efforts of non- dalits for the	Raosaheb Kasbe	8 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali, 1975	153-158

	educational and cultural emancipation of Dalits			
8.	Dalit Sahitya Dalit Literature	G.B. Sardar	8 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec, 1975	03-06
9.	Dalit SahityacheNiralepan Distinction/ unfathomability of Dalit Literature	Prabhakar Mande	8 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec, 1975	07-09
10.	Mooknayak waBahishkrut Bharat Mooknayak and Bahishkrut Bharat	Ratnakar Ganvir	8 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec, 1975	11-16
11.	Bhartiya ItihaasTatvacheJanak : Prof. DamodarDharmanandKosambi Father of Historical Philosophy :Prof.DamodarDharmanandKosambi	K.L.Mahale	8 th Yr, IV th issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1975	13
12.	Dalit SahityatilUpekshitDalane An ignored sights in Dalit Literature	Tarachand Khandekar	8 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1975	31

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	Nakar : Dalit SahityachaChirkalinPreranaGhatak Rejection: an age old component and an inspirational element in Dalit Literature	Umakant Randhir	9 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar, 1976	10-13
2.	Negro JivanachaSamarthaBhashyakar, Ralph Ellison An able spokesperson of Negro life : Ralph Ellison	Janardhan Waghmare	9 th Yr, II nd issue, Apr/May/Jun, 1976	17-24
3.	Dalit Sahitya Dalit Literature	Eleanor Zelliot	9 th Yr, II nd issue, Apr/May/Jun, 1976	28-33
4.	Pururava-Urvashi Pururava-Urvashi	K. L. Mahale	9 th Yr, II nd issue, Apr/May/Jun, 1976	39-45
5.	Bhartiya ItihaasTatvacheJanakProf.D.D. Kosambi Father of Principle of History prof. D.D. Kosambi	K.L. Mahale	9 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec, 1976	14-22
6.	Hindu Sanskruti, JatiWyavastha ani Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Hindu culture, caste system and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar	Ratnakar Ganvir	9 th Yr, II nd issue, May Prabodhan Sp. issue, 1976	15-17
7.	GelyaDashakatil Dalit Niyatkalike	B.V. Jondhale	9 th Yr, II nd issue, May Sp. issue, 1976	21-23

	Dalit Periodicals in the past decade			
8.	Dalit Kavita Dalit Poetry	Gangadhar Pantawane	9 th Yr, II nd issue, May Prabodhan Sp. issue, 1976	25-28
9.	Dalit KathakarancheKathalekhan :EkAdhava Dalit Storytellers story writing: an overview	Sukhram Hivrale	9 th Yr, II nd issue, May Prabodhan Sp. issue, 1976	29-35

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Article No.	Name of the Article	Name of the Author	Date of Publication (Year/Issue/Month)	Page No.
1.	BhartiyaItihaastatvacheJanakProf.DamodarDharmanand Kosambi :Lekh 4 Father of India's Principle History Prof. D.D.Kosambi: Article 4	K. L. Mahale	10 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb, 1977 Conference issue	47-55
2.	Dr.AmbedkaranchiWrattapatraShrushti Dr.Ambedkar's Journalistic Writings	Ratnakar Ganvir	10 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb, 1977 Conference issue	35
3.	C.B.KhairmodeYanchiLekhanSampada Writings of C.B.Khairmode	Appa Ranpise	10 th Yr, I st issue, Mar/Apr, 1977	45-54
4.	Rayanakachi Samadhi Tomb of Rayanaka	Zemberlal Kamble	10 th Yr, III rd issue, May/Jun, 1977	03-07
5.	Asmita ani Adarsha : 2 Identity and Ideals : 2	M.B.Chitnis	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Jul/Aug, 1977	03-09
6.	Sahitya, Chitra wa Shilpa Literature, Picture and Sculpture	Bhai Madhavrao Bagal	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Jul/Aug, 1977	10-11
7.	BandhanachyaPalikade Beyond the Boundries	Kumud Pawde	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Jul/Aug, 1977	12-22
8.	VedkalinSamajikJivan :KahiVichar Social life during VedicPeriod : Some Thoughts	R. Deshmukh	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Diwali Sp. issue, 1977	52-56
9.	Leni waTyanchiRupantare Caves and their Conversions	K. L. Mahale	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Diwali Sp. issue, 1977	57-62
10.	Richard Wright :EkPetalele Aakash : 1 Richard Wright : An ignited sky : 1	Janardhan Waghmare	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Diwali, 1977	144 - 150
11.	Mahad SamataSangar :SamajwaGairsamaj : 1 Mahad Equality Struggle : Understanding and Mis Understanding	Ratnakar Ganvir	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Nov/Dec, 1977	05-13
12.	Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar YancheVicharwa Marathi Sahitya Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar's thought and Marathi Literature	Akshay kumar Kale	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Nov/Dec, 1977	17-18

13.	Richard Wright :EkPetlele Aakash : 2 Richard Wright : An ignited sky : 2	Janardhan Waghmare	10 th Yr, IV th issue, Nov/Dec, 1977	41-44

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2.	Mahar Watan :EkDrustikshep Mahar Watan : At a Glance Panorama	S.S.Narwade	11 th Yr, IV th issue, Diwali issue, 1978	126-130
3.	Dr.AmbedkarwaRajarsheeShahuChatrapati Dr.Ambedkar and RajarsheeShahuChatrapati	R.N.Chavan	11 th Yr, IV th issue, Diwali issue, 1978	155-160
4.	Loknayak Shravan Yeshwante Ani Tyanche Jug Loknayak (Folk Leader) Shravan Yeshwante and his World	Raja Dhale	11 th Yr, II nd issue, Apr/May/Jun issue, 1978	22-30
5.	Maharshi Shinde Yanni KeleliDalitanchiSeva Maharshi Shinde's Service to Dalits	R.N.Chavan	11 th Yr, II nd issue, Apr/May/Jun issue, 1978	09-12
6.	Rayank :ThodaIthaasThodyaDantakatha Rayank : Brief History Beief Moral Tales	Zemberlal Kamble	11 th Yr, II nd issue, Oct/Nov/Dec issue, 1978	11
7.	Dalit Kavita :Jivanbhashya Dalit Poetry : Speech of Life	J.V. Pawar	11 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec issue, 1978	19-20
8.	Dalit Sahitya : Disha ani Marxwad Dalit Literature : Direction and Marxism	L.S. Rokade	11 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec issue, 1978	14-15
9.	Marathitil Teen Pravah Three Streams in Marathi	Indrasen Kale	11 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec issue, 1978	16-18

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1.	Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Pranit SamajikPunarghatan Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Centered Social Reconstruction	Vasant Moon	12 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar issue, 1979	03-10
2.	Marathi BhakharSahityatilSamajiktechyaMulstrotanchaV ichar Original psalm thought and its sociality in Marathi Bakhar Literature	Balaji Sapkal	12 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar issue, 1979	07-
3.	Sant, Santsahitya Ani Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Saint Literature and Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar	Ratnakar Ganvir	12 th Yr, I st issue, Diwali issue, 1979	23-27
4.	Buddha ani Shakaracharya	R.N. Chavan	12 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar issue,	09-27

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5.	Dalit Chalval :Wyapakta and Maryada Extension Dalit movement : Spread and Limitation	Yogendra Meshram	12 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1979	38-43
6.	Buddha Tatvadnyanachi Bhartiya Jivanala Den Gift of Buddhist Philosophy to Indian Life	P.R. Deshmukh	12 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1979	44-47
7.	Sant Wangmayawa Dalit Wangmaya :VirodhSambandh Saint Literature and Dalit Literature : Opposition and Connection	Sharadchandra Muktibodh	12 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1979	144-146
8.	Dalit Kavita Dalit Poetry	M.S. Patil	12 th Yr, Diwali issue, 1979	147-162
9.	Dalit Kavita : 2 Dalit Poetry : 2	M.S. Patil	12 th Yr, IV th issue, Oct/Nov/Dec issue, 1979	05-12

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2.	Gandhi-Ambedkar Mulakhat Gandhi-Ambedkar an Interview	D.V. Naik	13 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1980	05-10
3.	PrantikAssembalitAsprushyaSadasyan cheKarya Untouchable Members work in Provintial Assembly	Vasant Moon	13 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1980	11
4.	Dr.AmbedkaranchyaMahattechiMahar shee Shinde Pranit Prashansha Maharshee Shinde's admiration of Ambedkar's greatness	R.N. Chavan	13 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1980	34-46
5.	AmbedkariChalvaliche Swaroop Nature of Ambedkarite Movement	Raja Jadhav	13 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1980	47-50
6.	Gandhi-Ambedkar YanchiSatyagraha Gandhi-Ambedkar's Satyagraha	P.A.Gawli	13 th Yr, III rd issue, Diwali issue, 1980	51-56
7.	Dr.AmbedkarVicharPravah Dr.Ambedkar thought Process/ Stream	R.N. Chavan	13 th Yr, I st issue, Jan/Feb/Mar issue, 1980	28-37
8.	Ambedkar-Marxwad :SamanwayaekMulyamapan Ambedkar-Marxism Co-ordination an evaluation	Sudhakar S.Gaikwad	13 th Yr, Diwali issue, 1980	91-108
9.	Dalit Chalval ani Marxwad Dalit Movement and Marxism	Yogendra Meshram	13 th Yr, Diwali issue, 1980	122-129

10.	Shivshahi Ani PeshwaitilAsprushyateche Swaroop Nature of Untouchability in Shivshahi and Peshwai	N.G. Bhavre	13 th Yr, Diwali issue, 1980	57
11.	ManusmrutiVishamtecheTatvadnyan Philosophy of inequality in Manusmruti	Ratnakar Ganvir	13 th Yr, Diwali issue,III 1980	75-82
12.	ParivartanwadiPravah :EkMimansa Transformative Stream : an analysis	R.G. Jadhav	13 th Yr, Diwali issue, 1980	68

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2.	Maharshi Shinde YanchyaPustakasJodleliDoshpurnaPrastavana Faulty introduction to Maharshi Shinde's Book	Dinbandhu Shengonkar	14 th Yr, II nd issue, 1981	09-14
3.	Stree Purusha VishmatawaManusmruti Man woman inequality and Manusmruti	Pradeep Gokhale	14 th Yr, III rd issue, StreeVisheshank Diwali, 1981	69-76
4.	Buddha KalatilAwarniyaStriya Untouchable women in Buddhist Period	Sushila Mul	14 th Yr, III rd issue, StreeVisheshank Diwali, 1981	77-80
5.	PeshwekalinAsprushyaStree Untouchable woman during Peshwa regime	P.A.Gawli	14 th Yr, III rd issue, D/S/W, 1981	81-83
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INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ON INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

Voices from Regional Languages

Edited by
K. SUNEETHA RANI

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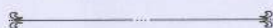
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Introduction



K. Suneetha Rani

KAMALA DAS, a well-known woman writer in English and Malayalam, proclaims in her poem 'An Introduction':

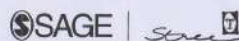
I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.
Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone. (2004: 62)

This proclamation of choice and condemnation of restrictions on writing in English marks an inheritance of a long history of debates around English in India, especially in the context of women's voices and issues. English was not just a language, a medium of instruction and a colonial heritage but it also signified manners, lifestyle, politics and modernity. Rajeswari Sundar Rajan, in her introduction to her book *The Lie of the Land* (1993: 8) says, 'the disciplinary formation of English in India therefore needs to be contextualized within at least three broad areas: its history, language politics, and the socio-cultural scene of education. By framing it within these larger issues—which,

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*To my beloved mother
who raised me on letters*

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6

Mukta Salve

THE EARLY EMERGENCE OF A PROTEST VOICE
IN MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY
BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, 1855



Omprakash Manikrao Kamble

ANY DEBATE about a language has to begin by discussing the context and the politics which make the language debates crucial at a given point of time. Be it the national movement demanding independence for the country or the movements demanding separate states, language/s becomes significant in constructing identities and bringing people together. There have been discussions and debates about the dynamics of English as a colonial language, culture and baggage especially in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. These debates, interestingly, were getting carved out by the identities and the ideologies of the people. One such context is the mid-nineteenth century when people from the disadvantaged sections of India started voicing their protest against social hegemonies and demanding education, to be specific, English education.

This essay chooses to discuss this context by focusing on Mukta Salve's pioneering essay on the plight of Mahars and Mangs of the

Bombay Presidency, also referred to as western India. It examines Salve's essay as the point of reference to understand the discourse of education and hegemony that became instrumental in colonial modernity. Mukta Salve's essay stands for a significant point in the Dalit movement as well as for modern education in India, which along with it, brought in the different identities into the arena of colonial modernity. Voices and assertions heard through different means occupy a very important place in colonial modernity precisely because the boundaries of hierarchies that became fluid, giving rise to social, economic and cultural mobility by opening up the fields of education, religion, occupation and employment.

It is the thought of change and emancipation that brings the work and writings of some of the personalities in nineteenth-century Bombay Presidency to our consideration. Caste, gender, language, education and religion form a combination of issues that are closely interwoven by such pioneers. Mahatma Jotirao Phule (1827-1890)¹ divides society into Brahmins and Shudratishudras,² thus including women under the category of the Shudratishudras as the ones oppressed by religion. His reform brings caste, religion, gender, education and language together to negotiate modernity especially for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Similar is the case with Savitribai Phule (1831-1897) whose writings and work emphasize her commitment towards the issues of caste, gender and education.³ Added to these is her call to lower-caste people to embrace English which, according to her, was the only means of emancipation and mobility for them. Mukta Salve, their student, is no different from her teachers in weaving these issues together. She laments over the plight of Dalit women, she questions God for making the lower castes religion-less and she interrogates the upper castes about their discriminatory attitudes. She calls out to her people to access education.

Such discussions provide very interesting clues to understand the formation of identities and associations in the times of history making: the nineteenth century, certainly, was making history with regard to the downtrodden people of India apart from the discourse of education and particularly English education. The mainstream nation-building was dealing with languages at one level, that is, English, as the colonial, masculine language of the world, and the

regional language as a nationalist, feminine language of the home. But for the marginalized sections of India any language was much more political than what it meant to the mainstream. They did not have the choice to choose a language. Rather, languages chose them in rare cases and abandoned them, prohibited them and punished them in most instances. Hence, language for them was not just a linguistic issue or a nationalist issue but a caste issue as well as an issue of untouchability that was thrust on them for generations.

If we look at all social movements that are led by the backward and the marginalized communities, we find that they have emphasized the necessity and need of education for the downtrodden. The socio-political movement led by Mahatma Jotirao Phule in the mid-nineteenth century Bombay Presidency, and various other movements in different parts of the country have fought for the right to education, whereas the post-independent Dalit struggle is for equal opportunity in terms of education and employment.

In order to understand the emancipatory Dalit struggle in mid-nineteenth century Bombay Presidency, we must refer to history and analyse the socio-political developments during Jotirao Phule's time. Jotirao and Savitribai Phule began their mission of social emancipation of the Shudratishudras amidst socio-political, cultural and religious tensions. The Dalit communities were undergoing severe crisis in terms of poverty, untouchability, lack of education, superstition, violation of human rights, and so on, underwritten by *varnashramdharma*.⁴ Bombay Presidency was grappling with severe crisis in terms of poverty, untouchability, lack of education, superstition, and severe oppression. Although the rule of the tyrannical Peshwas had ended with the British defeat of the Maratha Confederacy in 1818, the roots of caste prejudice implanted by the upper castes remained intact.

Mahatma Phule viewed education from the point of view of emancipation for the Shudratishudras and women. He emphasized the importance of primary education and asserted that education was the first step towards social revolution. He firmly believed that the lower castes had the motivation to educate themselves and that they would definitely join the struggle for their emancipation if they were educated. He states, 'Without education wisdom was lost; without

wisdom morals were lost; without morals development was lost; without development wealth was lost; without wealth the Shudras were ruined; so much has happened through lack of education.⁵⁵

The colonial government brought in social reforms in India that did not impact adversely on their political control of the empire. They were not concerned with the hierarchical Indian social system. Some of the missionaries⁶ did their best to promote social reforms, but their early attempts of improving the living conditions of the downtrodden were foiled by the dominant caste Hindus as they opposed and condemned the efforts of the British government. The Brahmins were particularly highly critical of the reform agenda of the British and therefore they held and spread the view that 'the colonial government wanted to defile and malign the religious sanctity of the Hindu religion by interfering in their religious matters' (Chole 2000: 24, trans. mine).

Many misconceptions were created by the so-called sanatani/orthodox Brahmins in order to prevent the Shudratishudras from seeking education. They outrightly declared that only Brahmins should seek education and not the people belonging to the Shudratishudra communities. They did not have the right to do so. Their rigid notions about purity and pollution did not allow others, those who were 'othered' by the varna system, to access education. Taking education in a Christian missionary school was a daunting task for the upper castes. They were very much afraid of the touch of the Shudratishudras.

It is a fact that the social reform movement in nineteenth-century India was led by the upper-caste reformers. There were many who transgressed the boundaries of caste, class and religion by leading movements, by marrying out of caste and by ignoring religion and by converting into other belief systems, be it Brahmo Samaj or Christianity.⁷ There were some Brahmins with a reformist agenda who supported educational and social cause of the Shudratishudras in western India; for instance, the early reforms in India were all made by the Brahmins, that is, anti-sati movement led by Raja Rammohan Roy, a Brahmin who later founded the Brahmo Samaj (1813); and the 1856 widow Remarriage Act by Vidyasagar who was also a Brahmin leading from the front. There

were also some Brahmins in the education programme thought up for girls from the mid-nineteenth century. For instance, Jagganath Sadashivji, and Vinayak Bapuji, both were clerks in the Public Works Department, helped Phule in his educational endeavour. Keshav Shivram Bhavalkar taught Savitribai Phule; references of these facts can be found in history. Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar inspected Mahatma and Savitribai Phule school and expressed satisfaction. He was the president of Paramhansa education institute. Bhavalkar, Govande, Walvekar, Karve, Bhandarkar, all established and ran the Paramhansa branch in Poona whose president was Jotiba Phule (Narke 2008: 406).

However, the savarnas who opposed the reform concerning caste and religion were also vociferous as such reforms could drastically affect the preservation of strict *chaturvarnya* system. Brahmanical ideologies linked each and every incident with the religious sanctions of the Hindus, thereby opposing every move of social reform in colonial India. Mahatma Jotirao Phule critically and keenly observed the colonial government and its activities and after a thorough analysis Phule came to the conclusion that the colonial government would do something good for the people.

Phule, who established the first school in all of India for Shudratishudras in 1848 and another school for girls of all castes in 1851, fearlessly expressed his views in his writings. His *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) compares the condition of Shudratishudras with that of 'Negros' in America and dedicates the book to 'the Good People of the United States as token of admiration for their Sublime Disinterest and Self sacrificing devotion to the cause of Negro Slavery' hoping that his country people will take this example in the emancipation of their Shudra brothers from the trammel of Brahmin thralldom. He includes women and the castes ranked lower in the caste system including peasant cultivators, labourers, serfs and artisans in the category of shudratishudras. On the cover page of his book *Gulamgiri* is written in capitals ('in this civilized British government under the cloak of Brahmanism exposed by Jotirao Govindrao Fule'). The words he has chosen to use reveal his stand. That he thought the British government was civilized when compared to Brahmanism. Also, he chose to use the word 'expose' rather than 'write' was also strategic.

✓The Preface of his book *Gulamgiri* is in English and the book is in Marathi. He uses both the languages and decides which language is to be used where. Choice of language becomes one of his tools to counter the caste hegemony. Language becomes an ideology, be it Marathi or English for Phule like it is for the identity movements that were witnessed later. Phule's observations and objections about education can be broadly divided into two, that is, about lack of education and the kind of education that was offered. He emphasized the critical and liberatory education which could dehegemonize knowledge and make it accessible to everyone.

Western India witnessed a severe blow when a certain orthodox section of Brahmins strictly opposed English education and the missionary schools in India as Brahmin boys and girls opposed sitting together with the lower castes in the missionary schools. Phule took a serious note of this fact and resolved himself to start schools for the downtrodden people. Phule wrote categorically to the Hunter Commission, 'The missionary schools, although some of them are very efficiently conducted, do not succeed so well in their results nor do they attract half the number of students' (ibid.: 407).

Although there were a few attempts by the colonial government to establish English-medium schools, they failed miserably in addressing and handling the question of the lower castes. Therefore Jotirao Phule advocated the need to have schools run by their own people, that is, by the downtrodden themselves. By taking initiative in this regard he started schools for the downtrodden for the first time in Pune. Phule comments, 'About 25 years ago, the missionaries had established a female school at Pune but no indigenous school for girls existed at that time. I, therefore, was induced about the year 1848 to establish such schools, and in which I and my wife worked together for many years' (ibid.).

Savitribai Phule faced severe antagonism from the traditional Hindus when she began teaching in the school. They prevented, protested and troubled her. Savitribai underwent severe criticism for her educational attempts for the Shudratishudras. Despite all odds, Savitribai resolved to educate the women and Shudratishudras, taking it as a challenge. A new way of life ushered in western India due to the spread of education and the lower castes got an

opportunity to access education to a great extent. In addition to basic Marathi education the lower castes took up basic English education as well.⁸ Savitribai appreciated the English language and the English education through her poems and songs. In one of her poems from the collection 'Shreshta Dhan'⁹ she valorized English as,

O Mother English!
You've offered water to the shudras
And thus quenched their thirst.
O Mother English!
You've broken the animality
And offered humanity to the Shudras.

(Ugle 2007: 6, trans. mine)

A fourteen-year-old girl Mukta Salve, who had studied only up to third standard, wrote an essay about the pain and suffering of the Mangs and Mahars, *Mang-Maharanchya Dukkha Wishayi Nibandha*¹⁰ in 1855. This essay was highly praised and appreciated for its intellectual quality and thoughtfulness by the British. This essay has paved the way for the Dalit writings in India today. In this highly philosophical and thought-provoking essay Mukta talks about the pain and the sufferings of the Dalit communities in general and of the Dalit women in particular. Mukta rightly criticizes the Peshwa regime in Poona, she raised her voice against the oppressive *Puneri* culture. Mukta is highly critical of the Hindu religion, the Vedas and the Hindu ways of life. Through her influential essay in Marathi, Mukta not only presents the problems and the hardships of downtrodden people but she also suggests solutions. Mukta Salve's essay is rich in terms of the issues she raises regarding Dalits. This essay could also be looked through different dimensions and perspectives.

I have looked at this particular essay from a social and political emancipatory point of view. This essay is Salve's revolt against the supremacy of orthodox Hindu society and its cultural practices. The socio-political background in which Mukta grew played a crucial role in her life. Mukta Salve was taught and trained by both Savitribai and Jotirao Phule, hence the cultivation of Mukta's mind happened in Phule's school at such a tender age. In the later phase of her life

Mukta turns out to be highly philosophical and thoughtful person because of the teachings she received at the school. Mukta learnt the lessons of self-respect, dignity, morality and self-confidence at the school level. The education and the knowledge Mukta got was not confined to the four walls of the school, but it was 'education for life', the education was social, political, cultural and historical in nature. Keeping in mind the socio-political context at that time, we can say for sure that Mukta Salve was not only the product of Jotirao and Savitribai Phule's school, but she is the real representative of the entire Shudratishudra communities in western India. In her essay Mukta comes down heavily on the Brahmins; she says, 'The Brahmins think that the Vedas¹¹ are their inherent property and nobody should read them except them. If at all some Shudra try reading them he would be killed or given harsh punishment' (Meshram 2010: 11).

Mukta Salve's statement recalls a thousand years of suppression of the downtrodden by the upper castes. It reminds us of the tyrannical, unjust, unequal social system of the mid-nineteenth century. Mukta criticizes the whole idea of believing in a religion. She affirms that 'since there is no place for the lower castes in Hindu religion what is the point to be there?' Moving on, Mukta questions God as she inquires, 'The Brahmins behave as per the Vedic religion, the Christians as per the Bible if so then as per what we should behave since we do not know our religion? What is our religion O God? Which religious text should we follow? If the Vedas have come from God, the almighty, then why do only the Brahmins hegemonize them? This is really ridiculous and therefore surprising; even talking about this is a matter of shame! (ibid.)

Mukta lost her faith in 'religion' hence she condemned it. She further mentions the fallacy of religion. From Mukta Salve's powerful and assertive statements we get clear evidence of the fact that Mukta was troubled and tortured by religious bigotry therefore she wanted to set religion aside. Talking about the question of education and employment, Mukta opines that, 'Taking education or pursuing studies was an uphill task for us during the Peshwa regime in Poona. We were treated worse than animals; we were helpless, nobody saved us. If any Mang or Mahar tried to stroll near a gymnasium

during the time, his head would be cut by the Peshwas. There was a complete ban on the lower castes to stroll around that area. These were the restrictions for us in Poona. Leave alone the question of education even listening to the Vedas was considered bad and therefore they declared it as a sin' (ibid.:12).

Mukta further argues that the question of employment was another major hurdle for the lower castes. The Peshwa strictly observed the purity-pollution rules.¹² The shadow of Mangs and Mahars was considered a bad omen; nobody wanted to give jobs. The ruthless behaviour of the upper castes psychologically troubled them. Nobody would be ready to give jobs and if there is no job from where and how shall the money come? Mukta admits that at every step on every move the Mangs-Mahars experienced torture and humiliation of various sorts; the low castes were living their lives in wretched conditions.

The tradition of Shudratishudra women's protest that began with Mukta Salve continued through Savitribai to Kumud Pawde.¹³ All of them engaged with the issues of social, cultural and political hierarchies and argued vociferously that education was the means to change the social picture of this country. Kumud Pawde's thought-provoking semi-autobiographical essay 'The Story of My Sanskrit' has a similar tone like Mukta in terms of her struggle for education and identity formation. Pawde categorically states in her essay the opposition of the upper castes when she learnt Sanskrit. The point is that Sanskrit and the social group she came from were not acceptable to Indian elites (Pawde 1980: 96).

Just as Mukta Salve questioned and deeply probed the hegemony of the Vedas and the rigidity of the Hindu *Dharmashastras*, Kumud Pawde also inquisitively asked her father regarding the sanctity of the Vedas and the purity of the *Shashtras*. She says, 'I used to ask my father, "what language are the Vedic mantras composed in?"' He would say, 'They are in Sanskrit, my girl.' 'Is Sanskrit very difficult? Can't we learn it?' My father always encouraged me saying, 'Why shouldn't we learn it?' In this way Kumud's father always encouraged, and motivated her to learn Sanskrit, but her neighbours discouraged her all the time. When Kumud wanted to do M.A., in Sanskrit, her neighbours, college lecturers and the lawyers laughed

at her and humiliated her. When they taunted her, Kumud Pawde recollected Savitribai Phule and her relentless struggle for education amidst a highly brahminical, orthodox society.

Passing her examination in Sanskrit and obtaining an M.A. in Sanskrit did not help her getting a job; in order to get a job she had to acquire an additional M.A. in English. Here we can clearly see the politics of hegemony strongly working in terms of languages where English language dominates over a classical language like Sanskrit though it was considered superior at that point of time.

The status, dignity, and the importance of English language as such cannot be sidelined especially when it comes to the translation of any work from its original language to English. Whether it is Mukta Salve or Kumud Pawde or any other regional writer for that matter, when the work gets translated into English, automatically the writer comes into the limelight and gets known to the world.

Mukta was thankful to the British government for ruling India and for the social reforms they had brought in for the lower castes. She says, 'with the implementation of British rule in India the exploitation of the lower castes has stopped to some extent. The social restrictions on the lower castes imposed by the Hindus were lifted. The inhuman tradition of burying the Mangs and Mahars alive at the foundation of buildings has been stopped due to the intervention of the colonial government. The colonial modernity hence truly helped curbing economic exploitation of the lower castes. The Shudratishudras now can move freely in the market place' (Wankhede 2009: 47). This juxtaposition of tradition and British rule reminds one of the way Phule analyses the past and the present in terms of change and looks towards the future.

Mukta Salve writes precisely about the social reforms done by the British in her essay she says, 'All the atrocious acts/deeds were imposed forcibly on Shudratishudras by the Brahmins in the name of God such as burying the Mangs and Mahars alive (and dumping them later into the wells, killing the unborn infants in their mothers' wombs, and so on). All this was curbed due to the intervention of the British. The British government made stringent laws against the social restrictions imposed on the Mangs and Mahars.'¹⁴

The British mitigated some of the evils the Mangs and the Mahars faced daily. For instance, earlier the Brahmins used to physically harm Mangs and Mahars for no reason; they wanted them to live as they always had, for instance, if some Mang or Mahar wore new clothes, he was alleged to have it stolen from somewhere else, and put in prison, relating this with religious dogma. These inhuman, illogical, barbarous, and irrational deeds were stopped by the British. Mukta Salve therefore rightly remarked that due to the initiation and intervention of the British the Mangs and Mahars could exercise some sort of liberty in almost all walks of life. Mukta asserts at the same time despite all this (changes/acts made by the British) there is no change of heart or mind by the Brahmins; it must happen, hence further in her essay she urges God to give them logic and wisdom so that they would do good to the others at the same time she expressed her gratitude towards the British for showing broad-mindedness and generosity of mind, calling them brothers.

The question of English education was different for non-Dalit women compared to Dalit women such as Mukta Salve because of their different status altogether. English education started after the establishment of the British rule in western India. Through English education the upper castes progressed extensively in society. They started thinking differently or positively regarding English language or education. They believed that if their wives do not seek education they would remain illiterate and thus will be confined to the traditional ways of life and household chores. The prime aim of educating upper caste women was to maintain harmonious relations between men and women. The bhadralok, an upper class, composed of English educated upper castes, in Bengal were liberal regarding women education. They thought that the women would not raise voices against male patriarchy challenging varnashamdharma. Caste rebellion was not really on the rise; but gaining status through 'educated wives' was supported (Omvedt 1990: 9-10).

Famous feminist economist Veena Mazumdar analysed the harmony between husband and wife she remarked that 'education would not necessarily divert women from maintaining their domestic responsibilities; rather their status of being women/aaya (care taker) of the house increased resulting in strengthening their hold of

traditional values because women are the best followers of norms'. Therefore Brahmin bhadralok emphasized educating their women because they knew that educating them would not make any difference; they would not raise voice against varnashamdharma or against patriarchy (ibid.: 10).

Many rumours and misconceptions in society regarding education and especially English education were propagated by the orthodox Brahmins. They blamed English people for defiling the Hindu religion with their interference. Rich and affluent people should not strive for education; rather they should enjoy their life luxuriously. They considered religious sanctions a standard, a norm or a parameter to measure everything, therefore, getting educated was considered lowly. They proclaimed that English education brought a bad name to their culture, region and religion. The upper castes deliberately spread this kind of thinking; their motive was to keep the Shudratishudras from knowledge, learning or education of any kind. To emphasize this more vividly Dhananjay Keer brilliantly quotes one of the poets and his beautiful poem in his biography on Mahatma Phule:

What to do now, how to control these boys?
Allowing them to go to their schools
Would pollute/defile them.
Their entire clan would get maligned
That is for sure.

(Dhananjay Keer 2008: 13)¹⁵

Mukta admits that colonial modernity has helped the lower castes in many ways. It was people friendly, progressive in its outlook and in its social bearing as well. *Dnyanodaya* published the following statement after Mukta Salve's open reading of her essay in the school,¹⁶ 'Jotiba Mali, the founder father of schools for low castes girls in Poona had this essay read out by Mukta that is an eye-opener to the orthodox Brahmins in Poona'. It further states 'Now we understood why the Peshwa immediately gave up after his defeat with the British. Now we also know how good the colonial

government is for the lower castes.' Colonial modernity propagated values of equality, democracy and liberty in India and this has ushered in a lot of hope in the mind of the Atishudras (ibid.: 48).

It was only after the publication of Mukta Salve's essay in *Dnyanodaya* that people started to discuss openly the attitude of the upper castes towards the lower castes and Atishudras in Poona. Mukta's captivating essay opened up a debate among the British quarters in colonial India. They appreciated the efforts of Jotirao and Savitribai Phule in producing such a confident, daring student like Mukta Salve. Mukta's essay gave voice to the voiceless at that point of time in Poona. Her essay grabbed the common man's attention. Through her enlightening essay Mukta liberated the lower castes in India. Though the common man was not educated at that point in time Mukta's essay became so popular that reached in the nook and corner of the western Indian Shudratishudra society; rather it became the talk of the day, hence, got word of mouth publicity.

Mukta is critical of her own community as well. She points out that it is not only the Brahmins who observe the purity-pollution tandem on the basis of caste but also that this is observed by the lower castes. She says that the Mahars consider themselves superior to the Mangs therefore they hate them. They do not give their daughters to each other in marriage. This is true even today. In a very prophetic manner Mukta guides her community; she urges the Mangs and Mahars to come together under a common umbrella of 'unity'.

Dnyanodaya printed and published this essay on 15 February 1855. Mukta Salve aged fourteen, educated up to standard 3, wrote this essay. In Mukta Salve's essay the question of education precedes the question of English. Though it is true it is implicit from one of Mukta's demands to Major Thomas Candy when he felicitated her and wanted to reward her for her outstanding essay on the pain and sufferings of the Mangs and Mahars. Major Candy was the principal of Poona Sanskrit College (later known as Deccan College) and he was associated with early educational reforms in Poona (ibid.).

Waman Meshram clearly stated Mukta's views on education in his thought-provoking book *Mukti: Amhala Dharma Aahaka?* He reveals that Mukta proclaims, 'Sir, don't give us chocolates, but give us a library' (Meshram 2010: 40). This reveals that Mukta Salve was

was a staunch supporter of the English language, education and modernity in western India.

Mukta Salve is truly a role model and a source of inspiration for Dalit writers and for the Dalit writing that has been produced today. There is a remarkable difference between the then education scenario and now. One can imagine the educational efforts taken by Savitribai and Jyotiba Phule for the upliftment of the Shudratishudra in western India and Mukta Salve is one those students who was taught and trained by them, that too in such a caste-ridden society of that time. That a third-standard educated girl like Mukta could write such a powerful essay itself is a great achievement, given the socio-political turmoil that existed at that point of time.

Today the caste system is operational in society, but not so blatantly. Credit goes to the teaching and the education system which has produced highly conscious and sensitive students like Mukta Salve. Mukta breaks the hegemonized prose format of writing used by the upper castes by writing in a prosaic form and thereby posing a counter attack on them. This is something unique about Salve's essay. Mukta Salve gives a clear-cut evidence of her enormous talent and philosophical bent of mind through her essay. Salve has truly galvanized the entire Dalit discourse by writing this fascinating prose piece, introducing a liberation discourse in Marathi.

It would be apt to conclude this discussion on the text and the context that Mukta Salve represents with a few words from her text: 'Some noble souls have started schools for Mahars and Mangs, and such schools are supported by the merciful British government. O Mahars and Mangs, you are poor and sick. Only the medicine of knowledge will cure and heal you. It will take you away from wild beliefs and superstitions. You will become righteous and moral. It will stop exploitation. People who treat you like animals, will not dare do that anymore. So please work hard and study. Get educated and become good human beings.' These words clearly reveal how the modern education was the only available treatment for the poor and the sick who were treated and exploited like animals. The key to the transformation of the status of the Shudratishudras from animals to human beings, according to her, was in their efforts to gain knowledge by accessing education. She was not referring to 'Indian'

education but to British education that was foreign to the Indian caste system in terms of its language, ideology and access.

NOTES

- ¹ Jotirao Phule (1827-1890), first modern thinker of the Bombay Presidency, father of social revolution; the champion of the Dalit cause; and the founder of Satyasodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers society) in Poona.
- ² Jotirao Phule used the term 'Shudratishudras' for the Shudra (today's OBCs) and the Atishudra (Dalit) communities who are the lowest castes in the caste hierarchy India. Broadly speaking, he included all the marginalized castes and classes, including women in this category.
- ³ Poet, teacher, a staunch and ardent supporter of women's education, and a champion of women's cause in mid-nineteenth-century western India, an iron lady. She is the first women who fought and taught for girls education in Pune. She was also the wife of the great social emancipator Mahatma Jotirao Phule.
- ⁴ Refers to the caste system that prescribed rules of the way of living through the different stages of life; also refers to the Vedic system of the goals of life. The social divisions and stages of life, one is encouraged to strive for a balance and harmony of all four goals and not to neglect one in favour of the other. Here used for the caste system that organized castes along a hierarchy with the 'most pure', the Brahmins, on the top, and the 'polluted', the Shudras at the bottom. The 'most polluted', the Atishudras, formed the fifth varna, apparently outside the caste system.
- ⁵ Jotirao Phule, *Shetkaryaca Asud* (The Whipcord of the Cultivators), critiques the exploitation of the peasantry, Shudra and Atishudras by the joint alliance of the British and the Brahmin bureaucracy; Introduction, translated by Gail Omvedt and Bharat Patanakar. https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2892:jotirao-phule-shetkaryaca-asud-introduction&catid=115:dalitbahujan-renaissance&Itemid=127 accessed on 30th April 2017.
- ⁶ See for details 'Intellectuals and Society in Nineteenth-Century India' by Shanti S. Tangi. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 3, 4 (July 1961): 368-94.

- ⁷ See for details *History and the Making of a Modern Hindu Self* by Aparna Devare (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).
- ⁸ See for related discussions, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in 19th Century Western India*, by Rosalind O'Hanlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- ⁹ A collection of one of Savitribai Phule's poems meaning 'A supreme gift'; see M.G. Mali, ed. 1988. *Savitribai Phule Samagra Vangmaya* (The Complete Works of Savitribai Phule) (Mumbai: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya ani Sanskrit Mandal).
- ¹⁰ Mang or Matang is a Dalit caste in western India. The Mangs originally belong to Nagavansha, an ancient race of North India. This race was a staunch follower of Shramanic religions like Jainism and Buddhism. We can trace the origin of the Mangs to the Indus Valley civilization; Mahars are an important social group within the same region. They are the warrior' caste. There is a military regiment called the Mahar Battalion.
- ¹¹ Vedas are a large body of texts originating in ancient India. They are composed in Vedic Sanskrit. According to Hindu tradition the Vedas are not of human agency; they are supposed to have been directly revealed and thus are called Shrutis, 'what is heard', distinguishing from the other religious text which are called Smritis, 'what is remembered'. Mukta Salve's essay *Mang-Maharanchya Dukkha Wishayi Nibandha*, published in 1855 is popularly known by the title 'Muktabai's essay'. According to some scholars her clan name was Salve; some other scholars remarked that in 1855 Mukta Salve was just eleven-years-old whereas some others stated she was fourteen-years-old when she wrote this essay; but the editor of *Dnyanodaya* mentioned her age fourteen in his editorial (Ugle 2009: 16).
- ¹² The concept of purity play a crucial role in maintaining the required distance between castes. In pollution the distance varies from caste to caste and from place to place. The superior caste tries to maintain their ceremonial purity. The notions of purity and pollution are critical to define and therefore difficult to understand as this term has different dimensions. This concept can be understood only in a particular context.
- ¹³ Kumud Pawde (18 November 1938) is a prolific thinker and Dalit writer. She has contributed enormously to Dalit society through her literary writings. *Antasphot* (1980) is her renowned prose piece through

which she has expressed her wider view of Dalit society. It has been translated into English and many other Indian languages.

- ¹⁴ See for a similar discussion see *Challenging The Rules(s) of Law: Colonialism, Criminology and Human Rights in India* edited by Kalpana Kannabiran and Ranbir Singh (New Delhi: SAGE).
- ¹⁵ *Dnyanodaya* published this poem in its issue 19 October 1848; Dhananjay Keer published it (2008): 13.
- ¹⁶ A Marathi periodical published in 1842 mainly for the purpose of the spread and dissemination of knowledge. Mukta Salve's essay *Mang-Maharanchya Dukkha Wishayi Nibandha, 1855* originally written by Mukta Salve in Marathi. The author has not found any translations of this essay in English; therefore he himself did the translations in English as required.

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7

Writing Self

WRITING FOR OTHERS



Paromita Bose

THE ACT for abolition of the *devadasi* system, by virtue of which, young girls could not be dedicated to Hindu temples anymore, was passed by the Government of India in 1947. One of the most instrumental people behind this act being passed was Dr S. Muthulakshmi Reddi. Reddi was a doctor, legislator and social worker (see also Chapter 2). She was born to a devadasi mother. In her autobiographies titled, *My Experiences as a Legislator* (1931) and *Autobiography* (1964), she talks at length on the ill effects that this system has on society, the gradual regression in terms of health for the practitioners and the absolute necessity for its abolition. I look at these two texts within the framework of 'modernity' and English education and also her attempts to negotiate her position as a doctor and social worker vis-à-vis her identity as the daughter of a devadasi.

I have been feeling all along and feeling most acutely too that it [the devadasi system] was a great piece of injustice, a great wrong, a violation of human rights, a practice highly revolting to our

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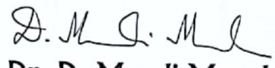
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Head, Department of English


Dr. D. Murali Manohar
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Seminar Coordinator

M. Sridhar
(Prof. M. Sridhar)
Coordinator
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Ambedkarite Thought in Asmitadarsha (1967-2000): Study of a Dalit Journal from Maharashtra

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