

Ideology and Identity: A Study of the Dalit Middle Class in Hyderabad

Thesis submitted for
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Gurram Srinivas



Department of Sociology
School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad- 500 046
India

December, 2004

Declaration

I hereby declare that the research embodied in this thesis entitled, “Ideology and Identity: A Study of the Dalit Middle Class in Hyderabad” is an original work carried out by me for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Hyderabad.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of research degree of any other University.

Signature of the Candidate


(Gurram Srinivas)

Certificate

Department of Sociology
School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad – 500 046

This is to certify that the research embodied in the present thesis entitled,
**“Ideology and Identity: A Study of the Dalit Middle Class in
Hyderabad”** was carried out by **Srinivas Gurram** under my guidance for the
full period prescribed under Ph.D. ordinances of the University.

Head

Department of Sociology


Supervisor

(Dr. K J Vijayatilakam)


Dean

School of Social Sciences

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. KJ Vijayatilakam for accepting me as a student and teaching me the nuances of research. Without her support, this work would not have been possible.

Thanks are also in order to:

Prof. Chandrashekhar Bhat, Head, Department of Sociology, who has encouraged me since my M.A days and has been a constant pillar of support and guidance.

Dr. V. Janardhan and Dr. Sasheej Hegde for their constant support, inputs and guidance.

Prof. E. Haribabu, Dr. K Lakshminarayan, Dr. Purendra Prasad, Dr Aparna Rayaprol, Dr V.K. Jairath and other faculty members of the department.

The non-teaching staff in the department: Mr. Madhusudan, Mr. Suryanarayana, Mr. Thirupathaiah and Mr. Gupta for their help and cooperation extended to me since my M.A days.

Dr. Yesuratnam, Department of Political Science, for evincing a keen interest in my work.

All my friends in the Department and the University for the timely help, academic debates, constant encouragement and their keen interest in my work.

The IGML (Library) staff for their cooperation.

ICSSR, for providing me with a Doctoral fellowship, which was of great assistance during my research work.

Centre for People's Forestry (CPF), for support and cooperation.

My family members for their love, constant encouragement and moral support.

And most importantly, the respondents of the present study, without whose cooperation this study would not have been possible.

Gurram Srinivas

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Chapter-1

Introduction

The present social awareness and assertion of identity among Dalits is a result of social change, historical developments and various attempts by the Dalits themselves to overcome their 'untouchable', 'marginalised' and deprived status into the contemporary Dalit identity.¹ The various factors that contributed towards this include the religious movements during the Bhakti period, the social reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, the anti-caste movements led by Jyotiba Phule and Periyar, the Dalit movement initiated by Ambedkar and, in the post independence period, a number of Dalit movements in various states asserting Dalit ideology and identity.²

In the last two hundred years, Dalits have availed every opportunity within their reach to rise from the subjugation, marginalization and various other exclusions imposed by the caste system. This modern awakening began with the utilization of the nominal representative provisions under British rule and the various constitutional safeguards available to them later in the post-independence period. Since then, resisting the increasing opposition to their social mobility and the growing number of atrocities being committed upon them by the 'upper castes', the Dalits have come together as a collective identity.³

The social consciousness engendered by various forces and factors like the Dalit movements, government welfare programmes, modern education, contact with wider society etc., have resulted in rising aspirations among the Dalits. Having realized their rights, the Dalits now participate in all the important spheres of national life. The last few generations of the Dalits have been consciously nurturing a fascination for a modern lifestyle, democratic values and a secular outlook, that have accorded

¹ See Tewari, (1998: 180-181) for an account on formation of Dalit consciousness and its driving force.

² See Shah, 1990: 108-116.

³ Zelliot, 1992: 267.

them a distinct identity - the Dalit identity.⁴ Since then, the Dalits have been incessantly taking to modern education, it being a source of increased economic and social status.

Dalits today are not mere 'passive participants'- they now have a systematic programme; their aspirations for social, economic and political equality lead them to strategies and the means for their realization. They have not restricted themselves merely to government jobs; they have entered various other occupations and professions as well and achieved a considerable level of improvement in their socio-economic status. However, they are now also nurturing aspirations equal to that of caste-Hindus in educational, occupational, political and cultural fields, though their entry has had a short and sometimes unsuccessful history compared to the caste-Hindus.

Dalit Identity

Evaluating the various facets of the Dalit identity, Kananaikil (1993: 401) observes that, Indian society has witnessed the 'emergence of a new consciousness and a new identity among the 'untouchables'' in the last two hundred years. "Today the Dalits- the new name they have coined for themselves- demand aggressively their share in the shaping of the destiny of the nation." Further, he observes, "The term Dalit is no more another name for 'untouchables'. It connotes dignity, pride and self-identity of a people."⁵ Similarly, KL Sharma, delineating on the implications of Dalit identity, observes that,

The notion of Dalit is not the same as those of 'Harijan' and 'Scheduled Castes'. The terms 'Harijan' and 'Scheduled Castes' connote 'socio-cultural' and 'legal' meanings, respectively. The word 'Dalit' symbolises 'knowledge' and 'power' of the oppressed people, particularly belonging to the untouchable caste/communities. It refers to the genesis and expression of their consciousness. 'Identity' of the 'oppressed people' is central to the term 'dalit'. Thus, the emergence of the identity of the dalit has created a new social language, a language of protest and struggle, of deconstruction and reconstruction of meanings of social situations, contexts and status parameters. It is an 'oppositional' side in creation of new cognitive structures (Sharma, 2001: 98).

⁴ See Tewari (1998: 170-171) for evolution of the Dalit identity from 'untouchable' identity.

⁵ Kananaikil, Jose, (1993: 410). Further, referring to the coming together of all Dalit Parliamentarians in 1992, and its significance to Dalits, he opines that, "in recent years, they have become a people in their own right. This is but the beginning of the emergence of a new identity.. (and it has) ..to find a new meaning in the identity of the Dalit as dignified."

Webster (1999: 68) traces the origin of the term Dalit historically and argues, “Dalit (‘oppressed’ or ‘broken’) is not a new word. Apparently, it was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of the ‘Depressed Classes’, the term used by the British for what are now called the Scheduled Castes.” The term ‘Dalit’ is a politically loaded term. Zelliott (1992: 267) explicates Dalits as “those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way. There is in the word itself an inherent denial of pollution, Karma and justified caste hierarchy.”

Providing an alternative perspective to the conscious, programmatic approach of the term Dalit as defined by others, KL Sharma (2001: 100) opines,

...the notion of ‘dalit’ is a new arrival; it is an ad hoc concept; it is a culture-bound construction; it is a reactive and not a generative ‘concept’. Squeezing between caste and class reduces its ‘atomistic’ existence as a concept. It has more emotional and effectual appeal than rational and logical message. Lastly, it is a concept in making.

There are many studies on Dalits, which dealt with their social mobility, economic development, socio-economic and political status; atrocities; ideology and identity, and so on. Among them, the process of social and economic mobility of the Scheduled Castes has been paid much attention to by various scholars. The focus of such studies range from their socio-economic status and mobility (Prakash, 1989; Selvanathan, 1989) to Dalit movements (Omvedt, 1994; Zelliott, 1993), to Dalit ideology (Gore, 1993) and identity (Shah, 1985; Oommen, 1968), both during the pre-independence and post-independence period.

Such studies focused on either socio-economic status or mobility. In a changing context of Dalit assertion and the caste-Hindu opposition to Dalit mobility, it is essential to understand the rapid changes occurring not only in their economic status, but also in their own perceptions of their socio-political status, along with their ideology and identity. This would help us not only in estimating the socio-economic and political changes and the mobility process the Dalits are undergoing but also enable us to understand the general process of social change in India.

Evolution of Dalit Identity and Ideology: A Historical Overview

In different phases of the Indian caste history, the Dalits were addressed differently in relation to the then Hindu religious and societal conservatism. However, at the pan-Indian level, the Dalits had not faced the same degree of untouchability or the other forms of oppression uniformly; they were called by different names in different parts of the country and were assigned different economic roles.⁶ To trace historically, the different phases of untouchability and the nomenclatures used to refer to them helps in the understanding their socio-economic position in those times. Quoting Bougle, Prasad (1970:121) observes "the untouchable is not hated primarily; he is feared for his power to defy any class of men with whom he may come into contact."

As a result of the continuous efforts to search for a self-identity and for the articulation of a collective political interest, the term '*Dalit*,' for the first time, was used in a cultural context in Marathi literature by the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar or the neo-Buddhist writers, the Dalit Panthers of Maharashtra in 1972, with the inspiration taken from the American Black Panthers. Since then the term has been gaining popularity and is being widely used.⁷ Zelliott observes that today,

"... 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. He does believe in Humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution" (Gangadhar Panthwane, as quoted in Zelliott, 1992: 172).

This definition gives an account of who is a Dalit and what is s/he. The emerging identity i.e., Dalit, negates the past impressions and positions given to them and denotes the aspirations to evolve as a new political force with a distinct identity. According to Shah (1994: 1133), Identity is concerned with the self esteem and self-image of a community.

⁶ Sachidananda (1977:4) observes that, "the Scheduled Castes in different parts of India do not form any solid mass. They are split up into hundreds of castes and sub-castes. There are about eleven hundred such groups spread all over India. In different regions of India some of them retain and share a common identity and some times a common name. Each group in this Scheduled Caste population has a name, a separate occupation, its own set of rules and, more often than not, its own mechanism of social control. These groups are not equal in social status. They are arranged in strictly hierarchical order as caste sub-units and they practice untouchability among themselves. Endogamy is widely practiced among them."

⁷ Zelliott, 1992:170.

Seeking political power is the crucial significance of Dalit identity, argues Oommen (1994). He further adds, this identity is the product of a long historical process rooted in a collective conscience specific to them. It is a consolidating identity.

Webster (1995: 77) states in definite terms that,

“Caste alone has determined who is a Dalit, not class or religion. Social stigma and a variety of disabilities were based on caste; these were and, to a significant degree, still are the defining characteristics of a Dalit, even if a Dalit moves up in social class or changes religion.”

Locating the origin of the category 'Dalit', Zelliott (1992: 170) points out that, in the 1970s, some writers from the "untouchable" castes compared Indian 'untouchables' with the Blacks of America, took inspiration from Black Panthers movement, and called themselves 'Dalit Panthers'. It soon became a dominant trend in Marathi literature and later inspired Dalit politics. According to her, the term 'Dalit' seems to be more secular and self-respect oriented than other categories such as the Scheduled Castes or Harijans. However, Zelliott feels that the term Dalit overemphasizes aspects of culture and fails to explain the changing trends among them, i.e., social status, political identities and economic aspirations.

Dalit identity arose as a result of exposure to modern education, social reform movements, Bhakti movements and finally Ambedkar's Mahar movement for social equality. The followers of Ambedkar spread his ideology not only in Maharashtra, but also in states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Those who are politically conscious of the 'untouchables' position in society searched for a solution in a political identity such as 'Dalit identity,' which is more secular and self-respecting than the other names used for the Scheduled Castes, which do not explain the changing trend among them i.e., social status, political identity and economic aspirations under the cultural identity of Dalit.

Nagaraj (1993: 4) observes, "...the Dalit movement was a product of the mental state that believed in the firm rejection of the Gandhian model of tackling the problems of untouchables, and that has shaped the contours of its themes and patterns.”

Dr. Siddalingaiah⁸ in his play “Panchama” (The Fifth-one) portrayed Dalit identity at two different levels, (1) The upwardly mobile Dalits who present different faces of the making of modern Dalit identity in all its unauthentic forms, who lie and are caught in the act and show an attitude of willful amnesia towards their past. (2) The new Dalit, who not only refuses to forget his past, but also remembers it deliberately. The first category, according to him, needs “a radical atmosphere which will accept and respect their Dalit identity, which only a strong movement could provide. The entire Dalit movement at one level starts from the assumption that the first four will be eventually transformed as Panchama.”⁹

There are different Dalit movements and not a single movement, says Shah (1990: 108). He further argues that different movements highlight different aspects of caste oppression and use different ideological frameworks for articulating their politics. However, “all of them overtly or covertly assert a Dalit identity, though its meaning is not identical and precise for everyone.” “Identity”, he says, “is concerned with the self-esteem and self image of a community.” He identifies the weakness of the Dalit movements as: internal social hierarchy, economic differentiations and dispersed populations. He argues that the ideology of Hinduism, i.e., hierarchy, plays a major role against a unified Dalit identity.

KL Sharma argues that Dalit movements have a class character. He further elaborates,

Dalit Movements may be seen in terms of (1) the sociology of knowledge and communication paradigms, and (2) neo-Marxist view emphasising the class-caste approach. In the first case, the social context of Ambedkarian is highlighted, where as in the second approach emphasis is on the understanding of the broad situation of the underdog mainly in class terms without losing the sight of the specific caste situation in India. As such, dalit movement is an anti-systemic movement. Both manifest and latent consequences of the dalit movement are observable in the socio-economic spheres of life (Sharma, 2001: 99).

For the first time, the Bhakti movement facilitated the Dalits to raise their voice against religious restrictions on worship. During the British rule, the grip of Karma ideology loosened with the changes in economic and political structures and during

⁸ Dr. Siddalingaiah is a famous Dalit writer from Karnataka. Quoted in Nagaraj, (1993: 8).

⁹ Ibid.

the freedom movement, a struggle for social equality was launched. Shah (2002: 36) suggests that, gradually a middle class has developed among the Dalits. For these middle class Dalits, the question of a new social and religious identity and reservations are more important than the problems of poverty and exploitation. For the poor Dalits, poverty and exploitation are more important problems than the search for a new identity.

Oommen (1994) deals with questions of Dalit identity and its contexts and content. He identifies five phases in which the collective identity was made up through the ages, with different contexts and contents and through the dichotomy of the self and the other.

In the first phase, the pre-Aryan categories were caught up in the process of assimilation in and exclusion from Aryan/Hindu identity. The non-assimilation and loss of identity led to their entry into Hinduism with a stigmatized status as 'untouchables' or *Panchamas*. In the second phase, Bhakti tradition tried to enhance Dalits by professing human equality and rejecting the authority of the Vedas, Brahmin priesthood and ritual practices. In the third phase, the 19th century British rule began recognizing Dalit problems, and the terms 'depressed classes' and 'exterior caste' were coined during this period. This was the time of social reforms in India. Status mobility was initiated in this period. Sanskritization and conversion to Christianity and Buddhism were the distinct features of this phase. The term Scheduled caste was also coined in this period to group them together for legal purpose and give them some specific benefits. The fourth phase involved Gandhi and Ambedkar. Gandhi called them Harijans. He wanted to absorb Harijans into the Hindu fold to fuse their identity with Hinduism. Ambedkar opted for alternatives other than Hinduism to renounce caste status. Gandhi aimed at a change *in* caste system whereas Ambedkar aimed at a change *of* caste system. In this context, Gandhi was a reformer and Ambedkar, a revolutionary. The final phase starts with a new self-definition as 'Dalits' from within, with the formation of Dalit panthers in Maharashtra in the 1970s.' The content of contemporary Dalit identity is primarily political and its orientation is militant and rebellious. Seeking political power is the crucial significance of Dalit identity.

Ambedkar and Dalit Ideology

Ambedkar is the most prominent articulator of Dalit rights. He caused a paradigm shift in the Dalits' social vision, ideology, identity and political action. He propagated 'social revolution' as the solution to Dalit development; the annihilation of caste system, and the creation of a new society based on social, economic and political equality. He was multifaceted; he was a professor, lawyer, journalist, educationalist, social reformist, great economist and visionary, the architect of the Indian Constitution and leader of downtrodden classes in India. He, being one of the few highly educated among the depressed classes, led the movement among them for social reform and political education (Desai, 1989:198). For the first time, Ambedkar planned a systematic approach for the economic as well as the social development of Dalits. Combining these two, Ambedkar visualized that only the socially and politically developed Dalits could destroy the caste system. "Ambedkar," in his new ideology of integration, "provided a totally different perspective on an autonomous social and cultural space for the Dalits, markedly different from the one they had in Brahminical Hindu society" (Singh, 1995: 114). Ambedkar is also seen as a 'dynamic and charismatic (but fettered) leader in life, who posthumously became a cultural hero, a demigod for 'untouchables' having led them through the processes of counter-caste demarcation, competition, confrontation, and routinization of politics' (Khare, 1984: 143).

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar transformed the Dalit vision. He prepared the 'untouchables' to fight the caste system and its discrimination. He led the Dalits with a vision, envisioning an ideology to educate Dalits politically. He not only fought for the economic development of Dalits, but also argued for the thinking of an alternate identity as against the Hindu identity, which kept them low and degraded. Ambedkar's vision and initiatives continue to inspire and guide the contemporary Dalit movement.

For the first time, Dalits fought the caste system in a systematic manner, with a supreme ideology under the leadership of Ambedkar. He organized the 'untouchables', the Mahars of Maharashtra, to fight the caste system. The programmes he took up in his anti-caste movement include:

- (1) Mahad water tank movement in 1927, (2) Burning Manusmriti on December 25, 1927, (3) Formation of Samaj Samata Sangh in 1928 for caste Hindu and untouchable unity, (4) Formation of Samata Sainik Dal in 1929 to fight the caste oppression, (5) Temple entry movement in Nasik in 1930, (6) Decision to quit Hinduism in 1936 and, (7) Mass conversion into Buddhism in 1956.

Ambedkar believed that as long as the Dalits remained within the fold of the Hindu religion they could not escape the caste system and, therefore, doing away with Hindu religion was the solution to limit caste discrimination. During the nationalist movement, he fought for Dalit rights, he made a number of representations to the British Government to take steps to develop Dalits and to award separate electorates for Dalits (which resulted in the Communal Award, 1932). The Congressmen refused to accept that the problem of 'untouchables' was a political matter; they always dubbed it as social. Nevertheless, in changing India, the 'untouchables' were also assuming a political force (Vakil, 1985:7).

Ambedkar realized the importance of education for Dalits, and he opened schools and hostels for them. While he was a practicing barrister, he helped poor Dalits with legal aid. As early as 1919 itself, he made a representation to the South Borough Election Reforms Committee on Dalit political rights. He started weeklies, fortnightlies, journals etc. to voice Dalit issues. He started '*Mook Nayak*' a fortnightly in 1920, '*Bahishkrut Bharat*' in 1927, and the weekly '*Janata*' in 1930.

Ambedkar worked in state and central ministries before and after independence. Though Dalit politics remained his main concern, he utilized all the positions he reached to benefit Dalits. He demanded separate electorates, gave a call for a separate state for Dalits', *Dalitstan*, and finally, as the chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he took care to provide concessions and development programmes for the Dalits' economic development, along with reservations in education and employment.

He also took measures regarding the abolition of untouchability, action against caste discriminations and political reservations for Dalits.

Ambedkar largely influenced all the clauses in the Constitution of India relating to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In many of his speeches and writings, he made it clear that education, employment and economically stable life are the preconditions of social reform.

The other major contributions of Ambedkar to Indian society include: (1) The Economics of Flexible Socialism in the early 1920s and his 'problem of the rupee', (2) The cultural revolutionary theory of Indian History, (3) Crucial questions posed related to the identity of Dalits, Shudras, and other high castes, (4) Examining the relevance of 'Hinduism', (5) The attempts to understand 'Hindu India' and 'Buddhist India',¹⁰ (6) The reinvented Buddhism – a Rational and Social Religion, and (7) The Strategy of Fighting Brahminism and Capitalism.

The importance of Ambedkar in framing the Dalit movement and ideology is well captured by Omvedt (1994). She compares the models of class revolution (Marxism) and social revolution (caste annihilation of Ambedkar) in addition to assessing how both of these influenced and was utilized by Ambedkar. The caste system, Brahminical superiority and the significance of 'Hinduism', particularly the way it had developed and was made sacred was questioned by Ambedkar. Alternatives were offered, to benefit not only the Dalits but also others, mainly those who were inside the caste system. Towards realizing this goal, Ambedkar adopted a few specific measures like the Dalit movement, mass conversion of the Dalits to Buddhism and the theory of 'indigenosity' (in Ambedkar's words Indian nation or Indian people). The rejection of the idea of the nationalist school of thought, the 'Hindu India' and, in its stead, the identification of three Indias in Indian history, (i) Brahminism (the Aryans), (ii) Buddhism (rise of civilization and human equality) and (iii) Hinduism (reactionary / counter-revolution to Buddhist discourse and subordination of women and Shudras), formed Ambedkar's understanding of the relevance of 'Hinduism'. In his struggle to

¹⁰ Ambedkar's writings on Indian history begin with the construction of an 'Indian nation' or 'Indian people' contrary to 'Hindu identity'.

gain equality for the Dalits, Ambedkar had to face many obstacles such as Gandhi's integration policy, the Nehruvian approach to development along the mode of Socialist heavy industry, which could neither address Dalits problems directly nor contribute to their development. For Gandhi, 'Hinduism' is the religious-cultural identity and for Nehru, 'secularism' is 'exalted modernity', both appear to be promoting a 'nation' contrary to Ambedkar's demand of 'Dalitstan', a separate nation for Dalits. In this context, Dalit movement under Ambedkar's leadership could be only a passive observer, with limited influence to achieve a few gains and concessions. The Dalit democratic liberation movement was led by Ambedkar in colonial India in the face of the secularist and nationalist discourses which claimed to be broad based in including all Hindus, Muslims and backward classes, and Dalits even though it is against the very basic idea of segmentary interests and promotes nationalism, secularism without facing the interests of the weaker sections into consideration. Omvedt (1994: 223) observes, 'Ambedkarism' is a living force today as much as Marxism. It defines the ideology of the Dalit movement, and to a large extent, an even broader anti-caste movement. The main significance of "Ambedkarism" is equality, fraternity and social justice, in a way Ambedkarism is general movement ideology.

Dalit movement has had a political thrust. A share in power is a precondition for Dalit liberation and reservations should not be limited to economic gains but should lead to access to power and a rejection of the politics of patronage. Thus, Ambedkar insisted, "we (Dalits) must become a ruling community." He further reiterated that 'Brahminism'/Hinduism and 'Capitalism' are enemies; Dalits as the 'super oppressed' must maintain their autonomy with the alliance of the other oppressed (sometimes Shudras and minorities, and sometimes the working class).

In forging political alliances, during the 1930s Ambedkar allied with the *Samyuktha Maharashtra Samithi*. As for forming a separate political forum for Dalits, he formed the Independent Labour Party, his first political party, (a worker and peasant party with a red flag with Dalit leadership). However, it was limited to only Marathi speaking districts. He wound up the ILP into Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942, which sought the alliance of Shudras and Muslims. Finally, the Scheduled Castes Federation wound up into the Republican Party of India, which aimed to be a party of

all the oppressed and all the exploited. He converted to Buddhism in 1956, along with hundreds of thousands of untouchable masses, to gain a new identity other than Hinduism (which he opposed in each aspect). He thus took the ultimate political step in giving Dalits a new social and political identity.

Thus Omvedt's (1994) comparison of class revolution (Marxism) and social revolution (caste annihilation) clearly shows how B.R. Ambedkar effectively utilized both and how Ambedkar's ideas on issues such as social equality and national integration or development were different from Gandhian and Nehruvian approaches.

Zelliot (1993) charted out the contributions of various Dalit movements, in a social space provided by one movement to another. Religious protest (*Bhakti* mode) to social revolution (Mahar movement) were constructed in a form of social history. The religious reformers from Scheduled Castes who created a liberal social space, the non-Brahmin movement against Brahmin ideology by Jyotiba Phule, the Mahar movement led by Ambedkar, and finally the Dalit Panther movement of Maharashtra are the issues she deals with.

Zelliot argues that Dalit identity arose as a result of Bhakti movements, exposure to modern education, social reform movement, and finally Ambedkar's Mahar movement. The followers of Ambedkar spread his ideology not only in Maharashtra but also in states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and other parts of the country. In Maharashtra, as a result of *Bhakti* modes of consciousness, non-Brahman movement and Ambedkar Mahar movement, Dalit consciousness emerged in the 1960s to derive inspiration from the Black Panthers which laid the path to Dalit identity, initiated a trend in Marathi literature and inspired Dalit politics.

Social Stratification and Mobility in India

According to Aiyappan (1965:37) the term 'untouchability' denotes 'the socio-religious practice by which the Hindus keep a large number of lower castes from touching or coming near persons, houses, temples, tanks and sometimes even public roads.' About the theories regarding the origin of 'untouchables', Mukherjee (1988:12-13) states 'there are number of hypothesis explaining how it had come into

existence'. The first one and most popular one is that of the Tribal origin, which is supported by Oppert, Fick, Bose, and Sharma and by Ambedkar who called them 'broken men'. The second one says 'untouchables' originated from the family and village slaves.¹¹ The third hypothesis is, of *Varna sankara* theory based on *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages.

Throughout the Indian caste history, those social groups who controlled economic resources and wielded political power became the privileged upper castes while others were treated as social outcasts. Without access to the ritual and economic resources and bargaining power, the Dalits became the most exploited peripheral group in the Indian society.¹² According to Ghurye (1969:180), the idea of untouchability and 'unapproachability' arose out of the ideas of ceremonial purity, first applied to the aboriginal Shudras in connection with the sacrificial ritual, and then expanded to other groups because of the theoretical impurity of certain occupations. As Ambedkar observes:

The outcaste is a by-product of the caste-system. There will be outcastes as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste-system. Nothing can help to save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of this odious and vicious dogma (Cited in Nagaraj 1993:12).

The earlier nomenclatures of Dalits, viz., 'Untouchables', 'Outcastes', 'Panchamas', 'Atisudras', 'Avarnas', 'Antyajas', 'Namasudras', 'Pariahs' - basically as 'un-seeables' and 'un-approachables' were in use during different phases of Indian history and in different parts of the country.¹³ As an effect of being made 'untouchable', Dalits suffered socio-cultural, economic and political sanctions imposed upon them by the caste system. It was during the British period, the first concerted efforts by state to end their apathy had begun. The British used the terms '*Depressed Classes*' and '*Exterior Class*' to notify Dalits, meaning they were kept away from Hindu Society (Singh SS, 1987:2). Gandhi preferred to call them '*Harijan*', which he borrowed from

¹¹ Ruben, 1957: 99.

¹² Kananaikil, 1983: 79.

¹³ Dalits in Indian society suffered socio-cultural, economic and political disabilities and were not allowed to take part in any religious, social or political activities at par with the caste Hindus. Dalits were treated as 'Untouchables', 'Dalits (Broken men)', 'Out castes', 'Panchamas', 'Atisudras', 'Avarnas', 'Antyajas', 'Namasudras', 'Pariahs'- basically as 'unseeables' and 'unapproachables' (Shah, 1990:107).

a Gujarati Brahmin, Narasinha Mehta.¹⁴ Many leaders from these caste groups including Ambedkar had objections against calling them *Harijans* because they found it derogatory and insulting to be called fatherless. Ambedkar demanded a change of nomenclature at the first Round Table Conference in London. He proposed referring to them as 'protestant Hindus' or 'nonconformist Hindus'. However it was the term 'Scheduled Castes' (coined by the Simon Commission in the year of 1935) that was officially recognized by both pre and post-Independence states. Until recently, the term 'Harijan' was also widely employed in common usage.

Traditionally, the caste system was non-competitive in its character,¹⁵ which meant that each caste had its own occupation and distinct lifestyle and none of them were allowed to trespass into the other's arena. Though, some degree of social mobility was allowed for the non-Dalit castes, it was virtually impossible for the ex-untouchables to move up in the caste hierarchy.¹⁶ Values of caste hierarchy, purity, pollution and untouchability segregated the Dalits in all spheres of life, with respect to physical touch or social contact with others for centuries together.¹⁷ However, as observed by many scholars,¹⁸ in the recent past, there has been a shift from ritual status to secular status in patterns of social stratification at most levels in Indian society. At present, different castes aim at the same goals such as education, employment, and various kinds of mobility, including occupational and socio-economic status. Consequently, individuals belonging to different castes compete for similar kinds of positions.¹⁹ Many studies dealing with mobility among the Scheduled Castes suggest that the Dalits today are a changed lot.²⁰ Their ritual status in caste hierarchy does not bind them any more to their traditional occupations.

¹⁴ Mehta used it to denote the 'fatherless children, see Zelliot, 1992.

¹⁵ Bose as cited in Sinha 1974:237. See, Damle and Nair (1982: 6) for a discussion on the same.

¹⁶ Kulke, 1976: 254.

¹⁷ Tripathy (1994) describes, "Dalits are discriminated against with references to living wage, share cropping, money-lending, drawing water from public wells, entry into the temples, service of tea and snacks in the hotels, service in the grocery shops, services of the barber men, washer men, cow herdsman, priest community, feasts and marriages with caste Hindus."

¹⁸ Damle and Nair (1982: 6-7) for example discuss this process taking a manifest shape forcefully after framing of the constitution.

¹⁹ Damle and Nair, (1982: 6) observe this as a result of the replacement of the non-competitive caste society with a partially competitive caste society (See, p.7 also).

²⁰ Charsley and Karanth (1998) provide a depiction of changing social environment of Dalits in Karnataka with reference to their growing ability to 'challenging untouchability' and other forms discriminations.

Social Mobility : Theories and perspectives

Pimpley (1990), opines that the movements (c.19th century) aimed at the 'improvement of the 'untouchables' did not succeed, and would not have succeeded' because they were directed towards changing the 'superstructure' of the caste system (the bundle of attitudes and beliefs) instead of correcting the system, with appropriate cognitive restructuring of caste. He observes,

The practice of untouchability and the various disabilities imposed upon many castes has an economic function (1990:161).

Further, he states that,

No reform movement till date has attempted to link cognitive restructuring with economic restructuring. The inadequate success of reformist movements can be traced to the above-maintained promises (1990:161).

The struggle against the caste system goes back to Buddha. Muslim culture gave rise to Bhakti movement, which preached egalitarianism and rejected the caste system and the practice of untouchability. British rule gave rise to social reform movements (Pimpley, 1990:162). The doing away with untouchability and the social disabilities of the 'untouchables' in the recent past sprang up because of the contact with British liberalism. The hold of ritualism lessened with these movements to some extent and the latter were successful to create some level of sensitization in the case of untouchability. However, Hinduism again lapsed into ritualism and exclusiveness after some time. With the entry of British in the 18th century, Hinduism once again woke up to resist the British stronghold and Christian expansionism. For their supremacy and cultural hegemony, the British started the conversion of the lower castes and 'untouchables' into Christianity. He feels,

This was a threat to the Hindu elite as the latter's status position could only be maintained vis-à-vis the lower castes. And if the lower castes and untouchables get out of Hindu social system, elite can no longer be elite; their position would further slide down the ladder of the social system (Pimpley, 1990:162).

Again, because of the new technology, the artisan castes among the 'untouchables' like carpenters (Barahi) and Blacksmith (loharis) raised their material position vis-à-vis the same upper castes. The untouchable individuals rose from the lower caste status creating dissonance and inconsistency in social relations. He notes,

As a result of these changes, the Hindu elite to retain its position at the apex was forced to widen its base and recreate a myth on equal footing. The socio-religious reform movements of the 18th and 19th century were probably a consequence of this struggle for power between the British and the Hindu elite (Pimpley, 1990:162).

The programmes of the *Brahmo Samaj* like the congregational form of worship, the *Prithi Bhojans*, and inter-caste marriages, though not successful, were far ahead of the times. The general criticism against *Brahmo Samaj* was the acceptance of European culture. The caste-Hindus did not accept social reforms as they were too daring an act for those times. Similarly, *Arya Samaj* took up 'shuddhi' - reconverting those who converted to Christianity back into Hinduism and purifying the lower castes by offering them 'dvija' status within the Hindu social system – as the main programme. The *Arya Samaj* opened schools and colleges for the education of outcastes, mainly providing technical know-how to complement their traditional occupations, like weaving, tailoring and carpentry according to their traditional occupations. However, the *Arya Samaj* mainly concentrated on artisan castes than 'untouchables', so it could provide neither a better social status nor educational facilities and thereby better occupational status to the 'untouchables'.

Since most of these movements were initiated by educated high caste Hindus, they were not expected to disrupt their own power positions within the caste system. Therefore, none seemed to really attack the legitimized ascriptive hierarchy of the Indian caste system. Among the many precepts, untouchability was one, which remained in the background as liberal education and addressing of the social evils within the upper castes were driven to the foreground and manifested as a problem. Most reforms failed to reach the core of the problem of untouchability and the social oppression of the outcastes, under the guise of the religious sanctions of untouchability, continued in the Hindu society.

The concern for the outcastes was more nominal than real (Pimpley, 1990:165-166). He further observes,

The main contribution of the missionaries lies in their indirect contribution in spurring up socio-religious reform, and reforms in the field of education. For them both conversions and spread of education were means to political power and the continuance of untouchability helped them to broaden their base for such a claim. It seems to me that there was a struggle for power between the higher Hindu castes and the British. Socio-religious reform movements and the Christian missionary conversions were means through which they tried to establish their supremacy (Pimpley, 1990:166).

While advocating the importance of education to the scheduled castes in achieving social mobility, Vishwanathan and Reddy (1985) state that “historically speaking, they (scheduled castes) have not monopolized any economically profitable and socially valued skills” and suggests them to utilize education as the means to economic independence, through entry into modern profit-making occupations.

Dalits and Social Stratification in India

The various disadvantages faced by the Dalits in the caste system and the various social mobility options that were available to them have led to the generation of many ideologies against inequality in the caste system and identity processes of Dalits. The process of social mobility has been an opportunity for the Dalits in reinterpreting their past as well as visualizing a future with self-respect and dignity as the main components. The various attempts at understanding the past had democratic and egalitarian goals as the axis. Nagaraj opines, “The caste system in India is not only a structure of cultural values, but also a certain pattern of inequitable distribution of power and wealth of different kinds along the lines of caste hierarchy” (Nagaraj, 1993:6). Similarly, Pimpley argues, the inequalities within the caste system are not merely religiously ordained but are a consequence of the unequal distribution of power and privileges in the society. Accordingly, high castes have a monopoly over scarce goods or have relatively greater access to power and privileges (Pimpley, 1990:167).

Raj (1998: xv) argues that the opposition to globalization is manifold, asserting peoples' right over economic and political systems, safeguarding of local cultural identity, self assertion of indigenous and marginalized people and various environmental, Dalit, Women and Peasant movements, etc. He observes that, the Dalit community, despite having 'subjugated' for 3000 years continues to be distinct and vibrant to pose challenges to the forces of globalization and 'objugation' (objectivity and subjugation).²¹

In the context of Dalit identity formation, Raj (1998) also lists out the following identities to be found in an individual in multiple degrees at different points of time:

- 1) Personal/emotional identity, 2) Gender identity, 3) Religio-cultural-spiritual identity, 4) Primary group identity, 5) Community identity, 6) Institutional identity, 7) Social identity, 8) Knowledge identity, 9) Skills identity, 10) Professional or occupational identity and 11) Physical identity.

Khare (1984: x) proposes that the 'Untouchable' possesses a distinct ideology, identity and pragmatism from the 'Hindu'. He states the 'Untouchable' discovers a ground from which to consolidate his positive self-definition. A positive cultural ideology and identity are always very precious gains for the socially deprived. The more pronounced the deprivation, the more socially sensitive, coveted, and contested are these gains generally. Above all, for identifying the Untouchable's ideological categories, it is crucial that a distinction be maintained between 'the Hindu' and the earlier 'pre-Hindu' roots of civilization. In a situation in which, widening social gaps and rising conflict between the caste-Hindus and the 'Untouchables' are making the 'Untouchable's' present initiatives difficult to understand. Throughout the history of the caste system, the various attempts made by the 'untouchables' to regain a respectable social position for themselves in the society, through submission and opposition, have made them more rebellious and the caste Hindus more aggressive towards the 'untouchables'.

The urban Chamar reformers, leaders and ordinary persons as studied by Khare (1984) articulate their distinctive cultural perspective, as well as a serious awareness of their changing role in Indian society. The received knowledge from ancestors and

²¹ Ibid, p. xi.

their own day-to-day experiences guide them to formulate their opinions about the society. The Untouchable is expressing himself through a distinctive culture, which negates the Hindu order in order to claim spiritual as well as material equality.

Khare (1984: 143-144) sums up the following four strands taking place in Dalit asceticism:

1. *Ideologically explicate*, rests on a transcendent, ultimate order of Indic equality and justice, aiming at absolute spiritual equality and gathers support from spiritual ascetics and heroes to reform the social. This is to demonstrate the superiority of spiritual over worldly morality.
2. The prospect of social reform, often slow and sporadically inspired. It is marked by the *ascetic's and the hero's efforts to reform*.
3. Shaped by the changing politico-economic character of Indian society during this century, *organized political protests and their culmination in a pragmatic pursuit of legal and economic claims* (and its contests). Ambedkar is obviously the fountainhead.
4. In the context of a decline in cultural innovation and a rise in the free play of pragmatic evaluations and accountabilities. *The claims for moral, legal, and economic equality start a pervasive politics for equal social rights*. The fourth strand represents a step toward the routinization of politics for social equality.

Khare, visualizing these four strands as woven together, 'in different patterns and under different regional lights', asserts that there emerges 'a thumbnail sketch of what engages the Untouchable's mind'. For Khare, the 'untouchable ascetic' is 'partly resigned, partly protesting, partly rhetorical, but largely politicized'. Further, 'the Untouchable, as a true civilizational member, continuously totalizes the ideal and the practical to conform to a non-dichotomous view of knowledge and reality' (1984:143).

KN Sharma (1986:172) observes that the system of 'protective discrimination' has granted free education facilities and reservation of a certain percentage of jobs in various government organizations and public undertakings to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. It appears that the assumption behind this policy is that,

through free education and job-reservation, their social mobility in the class system may be enhanced. Thus, either caste status would become irrelevant for their life chances and social intercourse, or through an improvement in their class status, a change in caste status would also be achieved. By and large, the members of the Scheduled Castes are rejecting birth as the criterion of social status in general and caste status in particular. A process of destructurement has begun. Referring to Ram's study he observes that, 82.9% of respondents acquired middle class status, while 7.5% of respondents reached upper class status on the basis of objective criteria.²² In addition, their perception is more or less on same lines, i.e., 77% and 5.5% respectively. Sharma further observes,

In terms of the evaluation of their caste status, he accepted the interactional approach, because "the status of a person based on his birth is possible only at the 'theoretical' level. But in reality (empirical situation) change in the status of a person is possible in the caste system though such a change may not completely alter his status based on his birth in a particular caste. And "... Although a vast majority of Indians and probably many Scheduled Castes insist on birth as the sole criterion of caste status, and the attributional theory also asserts it, the growing number of educated castes do not seem to accept this theory. They have acquired education and better jobs, as a result of which they have improved their class status as well as interaction with higher castes. They, therefore, perceive a change in the caste status at the individual level without bothering about the corporate rank of their caste. As has been stated earlier, this is a process which is the reverse of the process which led to a replacement of the varna system based dharma, karma and guna by the jati system based on birth."²³

For, it is through an improvement in class status that the Scheduled Castes are succeeding in acquiring the desired social status. Moreover, the reverse is occurring in three stages: (1) Birth as the sole criterion, (2) A section of SCs reject birth as criterion for social status and insists on education, employment, interaction as criteria for caste status. In this stage there is a divergence between the theory and practice, and (3) Rejection of birth totally, where divergence is removed (Sharma KN, 1986: 108).

²² Sharma KN, 1986:179.

²³ Sharma KN, 1986:182.

Social mobility is mainly intergenerational occupational mobility, which involves movement of individuals or groups in the society in a particular direction. In any given society, persons and groups are never stable in the same position forever but engage in some or the other sort of movement or undergo mobility in their economic and social status.²⁴

Roy and Singh (1987) observe that, in a society like ours where inequitable distribution of resources follows more or less the hierarchical order of the caste system, even acquired attributes (elite position) are monopolized by a section of society which is already placed high on ascribed statuses. "Social mobility", Prasad (1970: i) describes:

... is usually taken for flow of people, events, and ideas. It, therefore, refers to two important social phenomena: movement and change. 'Movement' is the transition between lower and higher positions ('vertical mobility') and one group to another group at same level ('horizontal mobility'). Change is the extent of invention and innovation, which takes place in the institutions, ideas and cultural forms of a society. Mobility in the caste system was possible through individual movement (mostly downward mobility) and mobility through entire caste changing its status (into equal plane due to essential/necessary circumstances).

The mobility of individuals and castes in Indian society is not a new phenomenon. The mobility of intermediary castes, per se, from one occupation to another occupation and taking on the name of another caste was permitted in the past. M.N. Srinivas named this process as 'Sanskritization'.²⁵ Upward mobility of the lowest castes or 'outcastes' was tabooed in the traditional caste order, with several restrictions imposed to curtail changes in their occupations and lifestyles. There were no changes in the positions of the two polars - the top most and the bottom one in the caste hierarchy. The Dalits located at the bottom of the hierarchy could not raise their social status until the caste system was attacked from outside by the British and modern social reformers. Under the British rule, Dalits were employed in secular jobs, and for the first time, were brought into continuous contact with caste-Hindus.

²⁴ Sorokin defines social mobility as "... any transmission of an individual or social object or value, anything that has been created or modified by human activity from one social position to another" (Joseph, 1986:5).

²⁵ MN Srinivas (1966: 1-45) provides an elaboration on the concept of Sanskritization, as tool for status mobility among the 'lower castes'.

The social reformers mainly tried to educate the Dalits and instill 'awareness' among them, in addition to attacking the caste hierarchy.

The process and fruits of modernization was initially not accessible to all castes. Even among caste-Hindus, the degree of mobility, to a great extent, depended on their location in the caste hierarchy. Those who enjoyed a better social and economic status traditionally, by virtue of their caste, moved up more easily than those who were placed 'below' them in the caste hierarchy. In all, the process of modernization largely reflected the traditional status system rather than any other criteria. In a way, the modern social order is super imposed on the traditional social order. Caste plays a significant role in one's access to education particularly with regard to one's attitudes, consciousness and participation in social relations.

Roy and Singh (1987: 125) observe that the impact of modernization created spaces for the Scheduled Castes to become elites. The world-view acquired from the British period transformed their 'status from passive subjects to active citizens', and it set up a new goal to be achieved i.e., 'equality democratically'. Raj (1998: xiv) suggests that the awareness and assertion among the Dalits and their consequent transformative struggle continues to make a fundamental difference to the caste based, hierarchically divided society of India. He further adds that the awareness 'converts itself' into the act of community and then on to rebellion to shake the very foundations of the system.

Dalit Identity and Social Mobility

The conscious, collective attempts of the Dalits to acquire social mobility started in the 19th century, during the British rule. In pre-British period, the social mobility attempts made by Dalits were not significant, for they were often lacking in 'consciousness' and often not fruitful, though in the medieval period, the *Bhakti* movement created some saints (*Bhaktas*) even from among the 'untouchables' like Ravidas, Chokkamela, etc. This kind of mobility had several limitations. It was

largely confined to upward mobility of very few individuals,²⁶ who were not accepted by caste-Hindus, and thereby their influence on the society was limited only to spiritualism. Though these individuals broke caste restrictions imposed upon the Dalit communities to become *Bhaktas*, they could only preach human equality and criticize caste practices. However, their impact on caste-Hindu society is very limited with regard to the confidence they nurtured among the Dalits. Given their limitations, these saints from the Dalit communities referred to *Moksha* as the salvation for the Dalits' socio-economic and political subordination. However, the Bhakti mode was not sufficient for the emancipation of the Dalits' socio-economic problems as it searched for emancipation more on a spiritual plane. Its important contribution was in recognizing these problems and thereby instilling hope among the Dalits. The concerns raised by the Bhakti movement were addressed by the socio-religious movements in the Colonial period to some extent. Thus, social change and transformation in the 19th century brought about an overall change in the social structure and created new social groups.

Dalits have used various means of mobility to enhance their social and economic status since the 19th century. Reddy, (1984: 68-71) identified these as - (1) Social reformation, (2) Religious conversions, (3) Sanskritization, (4) Protective discrimination and Constitutional guarantees, and (5) Political action.

The ideology of *social reformation*, for which the leadership was external- (the reformists)-mainly addressed the ritual degradation and cultural repression. A thrust on education and economic betterment motivated this mobility. Cleanliness and purification were preached among the 'untouchables' to bring them into the Hindu fold. However, this model could only make a partial progress in gaining caste Hindus' acceptance of Dalits. To some extent, a new identification as a clean caste with new status was made possible within this mobility, but overall this mobility was not successful because of the prejudices of the upper castes.

The *religious conversions*, 'another mode of mobility for Dalits', had change of religion as its ideology. In this model, external as well as internal reformists, priests

²⁶ Dube, (1988, viii) observes these as 'rare exceptions' which had not facilitated 'entire untouchable groups' to achieve 'upward mobility' mainly due to 'ritual hierarchy of Hinduism'

and holy men offered leadership. The ritual degradation and access to resources like education and economic betterment in the society motivated conversions among the Dalits. Conversions into religions like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were attempted and encouraged. With conversions, often, a new religion and a new culture were achieved but discrimination based on caste continued. This model was mainly followed by only the lowest among the Dalits and was partly successful.

The third model *Sanskritization* has Sanskritic and Brahmanization ideology. Internal (caste) reformists, attempting cultural change, and high and new social positions mainly led to this mobility. It involved imitation of the higher castes and/or the Brahmin life style. Mostly individuals or groups belonging to the elite sections among Dalits adopted this model and were separated from the Dalit masses in the process. However, this mode was also not successful due to the upper castes' attitudes; they closed all channels for Dalits in this mobility process.

Social security, equality and justice as ideology orient protective discrimination and constitutional guarantees. Political leadership, administrative and judiciary carried out this task. The thrust for social equality, numerical strength and politicization motivated this mobility. The Anti-Untouchability Act, seats in legislatures, employment and education along with other welfare measures are the issues involved in this mobility. The beneficiaries of such programmes, who became elite, came to be alienated from Dalit masses. This mobility was also partly successful, because it was not a collective mobility but a person centered one, while the lackadaisical attitudes of administrative and judicial systems are the limits in this kind of mobility.

Finally, *political action* - militant and mass political participation and action was the ideology behind this mobility. The politicians and social activists, both external as well as internal to the caste, led this mobility. The motivations for this mobility are destruction of the traditional order, perception of relative deprivation and quest for power. This mobility proceeded through organizing protests, *dharnas*, mobilizing people on sectarian lines. It involved radicalization of caste, it responded to new ideologies and political actions, while ignoring caste solidarity. This mobility was relatively successful. Conflicts, however, increased due to a high degree of resentment by the upper castes.

These five modes of mobility explained by Reddy (1984: 68-71) can be classified into three different phases, and these are different approaches to social mobility in so far as the Dalits are concerned. They are: (1) Social reformations and religious conversions as reformatory which aimed at improvement in the Dalits' social status, (2) Sanskritization, protective discrimination and constitutional guarantees as improvement and development, oriented at Dalits' economic as well as social status, and (3) Political action as alternative identity, aimed at Dalits' political identity as a solution to their subordination. Thus, it can be stated that the attempts of Dalits towards social, economical and political mobility employed diverse means and strategies.

All castes follow the caste system irrespective of their ritual rank; 'untouchables' also practice caste system as practiced by caste-Hindus. This does not mean that caste ranks are, as a whole, accepted and practiced without questioning. There have been individual attempts to change one's social status ascribed by birth, as well as some attempts questioning the validity of the caste system (like Buddhism which propagated equality from the beginning).²⁷

Whenever Hindu culture came into contact with a foreign/distinct culture, it underwent some changes. Each time it encountered a different culture and, faced with a situation of needing to account for its unequal structure, Hinduism made some cosmetic changes within itself without altering the larger normative framework. In the medieval period, the contact with Muslim culture had given rise to the Bhakti movement and in the 18th century, the contact with British culture gave rise to the socio-religious reform movement by high caste Hindus. These movements implemented some reforms, which were not wholehearted, yet prevented threat to Hindu religion. The Bhakti movement did not question the existing *varna* order adequately; instead, it tried to resolve the lower castes' (socio-economic and political) problems offering *Bhakti* or salvation. The Bhakti movement at first gave signs of a burgeoning new social order based on brotherhood. The adherents of Bhakti did not abandon the Varna model of society. Within that model, they were prepared to grant some semblance of equality to the lower classes (Augustine, 1991: 198). Similarly,

²⁷ Pimpley (1990:162) proclaims that 'the struggle against inequality within the caste system goes back to Buddha'.

socio-religious movements in the 19th and 20th centuries mainly aimed at the prevention of conversions of the lower castes to Christianity; they did not try to resolve untouchability in its entirety, except through the preaching of equality.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, under the British rule, Indian society, especially the Hindu caste system, experienced attacks from outside in the form of state-initiated social reforms (abolition of *sati*, child marriages and encouragement of widow remarriage etc.) though these were not aiming for a change in it. The British, in order to legitimize their rule in India and further strengthen it, introduced a new land revenue system, which gave rise to tax collectors, who in turn, exploited the peasants, grabbed their lands and formed a new landed class. In addition, the group of middlemen, the mediators between the British and the people, the interpreters, small businessmen etc., formed a middle class.²⁸

Singh (1979:89) observes that "the result of educational changes was two fold; first, the interjection of the western values and ideologies among the members of the new educated class, and secondly, the rise of social and cultural reformation movements." Pimpley (1990:166) opines that the Christian missionaries' conversions of the lower and 'untouchable' castes also indirectly contributed to the 'socio-religious reform and reforms in the field of education'. According to him, the missionaries' main aim was to spread the western culture and spread of Christianity. Thus, the 'conversions and the spread of education helped the missionaries in their attempts'.

The attempts of the Christian missionaries to convert the lower castes and 'untouchables' were facilitated by two factors, namely: 1) continuance of untouchability, and, 2) essence of liberal education. There were some significant changes, which took place in traditional occupations under the British rule. They were:

- 1) The introduction of liberal education, which attracted mostly upper caste Hindus to government jobs, leaving their traditional occupations,

²⁸ The features of this class can be noted as:

(a) Its social composition differed from region to region, (b) The members of this class served as middlemen for the European traders, (c) They generally had a lower class origin and (d) They varied from petty clerks, interpreters, cashiers, to petty contractors (Singh, 1979: 88).

- 2) New technology, which caused alterations in caste occupations and which enabled the artisan castes to enter industries and migrate to urban areas,
- 3) The expansion of western culture and Christianity, the conversions to Christianity mostly from the lower castes and 'untouchables' whose low ritual status made them turn to Christianity, while materially benefiting from education and modern occupations.

These primary changes resulted in many social movements, which can be broadly classified into, (1) Socio-religious reform movements, (2) Anti-Brahmin or Non-Brahmin movements and, (3) Untouchables' movements.

Regarding socio-religious movements, Pimply (1990:162) suggests that as a result of the changes that took place in British period,

The Hindu elite to retain its position at the apex was forced to widen its base and recreate a myth on equal footing. The socio-religious reform movements of the 18th and 19th century were probably a consequence of this struggle for power between the British and the Hindu elite.

Most of the social reformers received liberal education and were high caste Hindus. Desai (1989:253-4) feels that the social reformers who attacked the caste system stood for equality and national progress. However, Pimply (1990:165-166) observes that they could not attack the caste system wholeheartedly since they were enjoying positions of power in the caste system. They only addressed the issue of 'liberal education and social evils within the upper castes' and did not heed the problem of untouchability, he complains.

The socio-religious reformers and movements that took up issues of social reform (reform in caste system) and reform in Hindu religion (the mode of worship, the belief systems, etc.,) strived for equality in the social as well as in the religious system. Samajs like, the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj carried out this movement. Matto (1991:31) classifies these Samajs based on their programs and priorities- Brahmo Samaj stands for middle path (secular education with Hindu religion); Prarthana Samaj for eradicating social evils; Arya Samaj for upsurge of Nationalism; and Ramakrishna mission for Neo-Hinduism.

To some extent, these liberal ideologues from upper castes did facilitate a ground for the lower castes and 'untouchables' to raise their voice against the caste system in the future. The material help provided by these socio-religious reformers and movements created some space for educational and occupational development of the 'untouchables'. Their various activities and spread of new values of equality and humanitarianism in long run helped the 'untouchables'. Pimpley (1990) observes,

... the efforts of these movements were merely adjustive to the changes being introduced in the society in keeping with the new values of equality and egalitarianism. They were humanitarian in nature, which was in keeping with the Hindu philosophy of Karma, as well as in maintaining the *status quo* as far as the power structure of the society was concerned. Such an approach leads to conceptions like Brahminization and Sanskritization. But this does lead to upgrading of the entire stratification scale. It does not lead to structural changes in terms of power relations of the different elements of the social structure. As promised, the low status of the Scheduled Castes is a result of deprivation of power and privilege and not in their low ritual status, so the efforts of the socio-religious reform movements which maintained the *status quo* of the society were bound to fail (Pimpley, 1990:167).

He concludes,

Yet one cannot totally negate the efforts of the socio-religious reform movements. In all fairness, they did manage to stir the traditional social system. Although the inhuman caste injustices were substantially mellowed down but when it came to larger issues like removal of untouchability, they inadvertently helped to preserve the existing structure of the society (Pimpley, 1990:165).

Heimsath (1964:5) compares social reform in India and in the West as:

In India, social reform did not ordinarily mean a reorganization of the structure of society, as it did in the West, for the benefit of underprivileged social, economic classes. Instead it meant the infusion into the existing social structure of new ways of life and thought: the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed.

When it is necessary, the members of different castes mingled with other castes but broadly, they remained loyal to their own castes.

The emergence of the non-Brahmin movement is understood best in the context of the attempts of the British government to create a clerical class to serve their needs, the liberal education and modern outlook provided by this attempt and the social equality

brought forth by the socio-religious reform movement, urbanization, etc., which facilitated the middle castes to become economically dominant. Their urge for better economic positions and for a social status equal to that of Brahmins and the twice born castes resulted in the non-Brahmin movement. Though it is considered a South Indian phenomenon, in reality it occurred in other parts of the country as well, even when not taking the proportions of a movement, as it did in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The Yadav upsurge in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are examples to prove its pan-Indian nature.

Some of the factors that contributed to the emergence of such movements were: (1) The politics of colonial intervention (2) The British policy of elite recruitment (3) The desire for upward mobility among the lower castes and (4) The urge to fight the hegemony of Brahmins in government jobs and to secure proportionate jobs for every caste (Nagaraj, 1993: 5).

The non-Brahmin movement is described by Nagaraj (1993:5) as:

... a deliberate, organized and conscious effort on the part of the lower castes and social groups. They chose to fight the hegemony of superior castes through gradualist and constitutionalist methods that they had learnt from their white masters.

While it primarily involved the middle castes and lower castes fighting the Brahmin hegemony in education and jobs, it also took anti-Brahmin, anti-Hindi and anti-Sanskrit issues in Tamil Nadu.

On the other hand, the 'untouchables' movements' before Ambedkar, in which the 'untouchables' fought the caste system since its inception, were not organized at a striking level, nor were they ideologically driven. The medieval period's individual untouchable saints like Ravidas, Chokkamela, etc., broke their traditional occupations and sought '*Moksha*' as a solution to end the troubles of 'untouchables'. Though breaking up of the traditional occupational structure and the pace to become an ascetic might have been radical developments in so far as that period is concerned, but their urge/call for equality was mostly spiritual than material. However, it is largely understood in a context that, the advent of Muslim rule, the threat of Muslim culture and religious conversions facilitated the *Bhakti* movement in the medieval period and

similarly, the British rule and expansion of Christianity gave rise to socio-religious reform movements of the 18th and 19th century.

With the weakening of caste rigidities in the 19th and 20th centuries and social change in favour of modernization of the society, a few 'untouchable' castes tried to elevate their caste status wherever they improved their economic condition, for example, the Nadars and Ezhavas of Kerala, the Shanars of Tamil Nadu, the Jatavs of (Agra) Uttar Pradesh, and the Mahars of Maharashtra.²⁹ While identifying themselves as being on an equal footing with high caste Hindus, these castes spread *Sanskritic* norms among their castes to raise their caste status in the social hierarchy. Another model that was followed was through identification with alternative religions and culture ("*Ad dharm*" - the indigenous or native religion) through which, the Dalits tried to improve their social status through distancing themselves from the dominant Hindu order. In addition, conversions to other religions also played a crucial role (conversions to Islam and Christianity) in their attempts at social mobility. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule's *Satyashodak Samaj* too brought some 'untouchables' within its fold even though, it primarily attracted the land owning non-Brahmin castes to fight the Brahmin ideology. *Satyashodak Samaj* falls under the anti-untouchability or anti-caste movements.

The movements in which the Dalits took part in colonial India, prior to the leadership of Ambedkar, adopted methods and ideologies that by and large failed to better their socio-economic status in the caste hierarchy. Until the Dalits came under the leadership of Ambedkar, all the attempts they made lacked a particular ideology of their own that could be called 'Dalit ideology', which rejected the model of 'self-purification' and adhered to a model of 'self-respect'.

Social Mobility : Dynamics and Processes

Under the British rule, though the Dalits were to some extent encouraged in the fields of education and employment, their socio-economic development was systematized only after Independence. Reservations were provided to Dalits according to their proportion in population (15%) in education and employment under Articles 15 and

²⁹ All these instances are extensively studied under Sanskritization model that facilitated mobility process.

16 of the Indian constitution. They were also provided with reservation of seats in state and central legislatures under Articles 332 and 334 of the Constitution of India. Further, Article 17 abolished untouchability in any form and declared its practice an offence. The policy of 'protective discrimination' thus chosen by the Indian government provides developmental measures for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. They can be broadly classified as: (1) Protective measures such as prohibition of discrimination, of forced labour, and of untouchability, (2) Welfare measures, guaranteeing representation in various categories of public services, in state assemblies and in parliament, and (3) Developmental measures providing grants in-aid and other facilities for social and economic development.³⁰

Various development and social justice policies initiated by the British, and continued by the independent Indian government, helped Dalits to become upwardly mobile/move up in economic and political status but, at the same time, led to increased instances of atrocities upon them. Consequent to their economic development and social mobility, Dalits had to face many threats, atrocities, and massacres. Wherever Dalits asserted their rights and fought for equality, they faced social boycott, forestalling of social interaction, denial of work, etc. These kinds of repressive activities, singling out the Dalits, are in response to the increasing socio-political organization of Dalits in cities as well as in rural areas. Caste Hindu response to Dalit socio-economic development and mobility is very aggressive and violent most of the time. Often, it demonstrates weakness and fear of caste Hindus at losing their privileges, especially when along with economic development; Dalits try to gain social respect and equality on an equal footing with others. Consequently, the 'upper' castes not only lose free labourers but also feel hurt and 'reduced' vis-à-vis Dalits. Often caste-Hindus who grew anxious that these hitherto inarticulate and politically subordinated sections were posing a threat to them economically and politically; resorted to atrocities and massacres on Dalits (Chundurur, Karamchedu, Vempanta, etc., are examples from Andhra Pradesh). Incidents like these have been occurring all over the country, though the oppressors change from middle castes (land owning) to upper castes. This variation rather depends on geographical area and the castes affected by the Dalits' economic and social mobility.

³⁰ Ram, 1988:8.

However, though the rising aspirations of Dalits sometimes result in social conflict and atrocities committed upon them, without such aspirations, Dalits cannot climb the socio- economic ladder. They have always remained backward in all walks of life for no fault of theirs. In spite of the many protective and development measures in their favour, all the spheres of modern life are under caste-Hindu control; nevertheless, the Dalits have to take part in all these spheres for the smooth functioning of the nation.

Now Dalits have entered new occupations to which they did not have access earlier, occupations and new arenas like entrepreneurship, sales, business, contracts, medicine, law, engineering, government jobs etc. However, such mobility has not been without its problems. They have had to face obstacles in the form of social conflict, resistance from the upper castes, non-implementation of reservation in employment, in promotions, continued caste discrimination at their work place, residential area and so on. In the face of these socio-economic disabilities, their numerical strength, better economic opportunities, urban contact, better communication, better exposure to mass media, assistance from external leadership, stronger participation in political process have helped them in the process of development by way of greater resources to engage in political action.³¹

Accordingly, the trajectory of Dalit consciousness suggests that Dalits have come a long way in inventing, rediscovering, defining, redefining, shaping and sustaining an ideology that is emancipatory in nature. The process that has shaped this ideology would now be examined.

³¹ Tripathy, 1994.

As we have noted earlier, the questioning of caste and its hierarchical system from the very bottom and fighting against its various inequalities and injustices existed in the pre-Independence period too but these attempts were within religious contexts and the value framework of the Great tradition of Hinduism. None of them had any meaningful impact on the political system. Hence, those attempts did not bring about any structural changes (Singh, 1973:193). Yogendra Singh observes,

The rapidity in the emergence of new social aspirations of people is such that it could not wait for development of appropriate institutional-mechanisms as it did in the West. In India, traditional institutions like caste, ethnic and linguistic groups, therefore, offer natural arenas for articulations of new values and aspirations and spheres of activities (Singh, 1986:169).

In contemporary times, the situation of caste has undergone few external changes. Caste as a socio-religious system, concerning mainly with caste endogamy and clan exogamy, combining hypergamy and hierarchy has become visibly weak. Caste has now *turned into a politico-economic formation*. Caste thus acquired those dimensions that were traditionally considered outside its scope. Ritual power is substituted with economic and political power, organic and segmentary relations, the closed and open nature of the caste system and its cultural and structural aspects not only imply one-sidedness of these devices, but they also undervalue caste as a dynamic and resilient formation (Singh, 1986: 171-173). This transition or development has been due to the various forces and factors discussed below.

The Constitutional provisions of equal rights and concessions and reservations to the unprivileged sections of society give them heightened confidence in articulating, estimating and questioning the injustices meted out to them. While, at the same time, a reverse trend began to manifest itself. Rao (1967:132) observes that there is a keen competition among castes for backward status in order to gain protective discrimination. The articulations opposing the notion of *Sanskritization*³² are *Backwardisation* and *Dalitisation*.³³ The process of *Backwardisation* can be seen among traditional middle castes or present 'dominant' castes, which are economically

³² Sheth (1999) observes, 'Both rituality and sanskritisation have virtually lost their relevance in the formation of the 'new' middle class.'

³³ Shyam Lal 1995: 87-88, reports of a process of downward mobility of 'upper castes' to acquire Dalit identity, precisely Bhangi identity, calling it 'Bhangiisation' and 'asprashyeekaran' in Rajasthan. He opines it is not confined only to Rajasthan and an all India phenomenon.

well off, land owning and politically dominant. Their political domination helps them in getting into the backward classes, ex:- Okkaliga and Lingayat of Karnataka, Kamma and Kapu of Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, the process of '*Dalitisation*' as opined by Raj (1998: xv) challenges the status attached to caste. Being at the bottom of caste system, Dalits negate both hierarchy and the process of '*sanskritisation*' by not being Sanskritised and thus not being assimilated into the Hindu society, opting instead for alternative cultures, along with the exhibition of an interest in their cultural past. *Dalitisation* thus involves taking pride in and upholding their own traditional cultural past and highlighting it as an alternative to the dominant Hindu lifestyle and culture. Sachidananda (1974:282) observes that, "nowadays the Scheduled Castes are turning more and more to the alternative symbols of prestige and values which the modern secular order provides rather than to Sanskritization".³⁴ To this extent, Dalit ideology and identity differs from Sanskritization, in that they are anti-Sanskritized and secular in nature. Both the processes of *Dalitisation* and *Backwardisation* are political in origin and aim at economic benefits.

Social change in India facilitated social and economic mobility among large sections of society including the Dalits. The emergence of and access to new 'secular' occupations and policies of protective discrimination helped some Dalits gain in social and economic status. This development also reflects a general shift from the caste based social stratification to the one based on class in Indian society. The emerging social structure, in a sense, is independent of the caste system. The new occupational structure stresses more on values of achievement and much less on those of ascription.

The Dalit Middle Class

Existence of the Dalit middle class is mainly attributed to the 'reservation policy', which aimed at uplifting individual Dalits to raise from the disadvantaged positions of their earlier generations to be a part of an egalitarian society, built on principles of equality. In post-independent India, the Dalit individuals who witnessed mobility as

³⁴ See Kulke, 1976: 249 for a similar conclusion.

compared to their parents' social and economic class are forming 'a new Dalit middle class'.³⁵ This Dalit middle class is markedly distinct from the general middle class. Middle class Dalits largely remain a closely-knit community with a certain political temperament, in the absence of a full-fledged assimilation and integration process. They arrange their lives around each other, heavily confining their social relations especially at family level to other fellow Dalits.³⁶

The social change and transformation processes being experienced by the Indian society have led to the emergence of new social categories, with new aspirations and sense of identity. In India, the very emergence of middle class has its foundations in 'a new modern India'. Prior to reservation policy, equality of opportunity was available to all but Dalits, for they were considered outcastes or 'untouchables'. It is only during the last 100 years that, the Dalits have gained entry into the sphere of 'modernization' principally due to 'protective discrimination' or reservation policy. In this context, Ram (1988: 7-11) identifies the areas where the Scheduled Castes have progressed due to constitutional measures, namely, access to religious and other public places and lessening of ritual and social distances; growing integration of different caste groups including Scheduled Castes, in schools, colleges, and universities; growing share in political power and occupational mobility.

Regarding upwardly mobile Dalits, Kulke (1976: 253) argues that, the middle class Dalits' social environment is different from their community of origin and they have not as yet been fully integrated into the "mainstream" middle class culture that is largely dominated by upper castes. Also, the specific problems faced by the middle class Dalits are due to their newly acquired economic status.

In the case of Dalits, social mobility is not parallel to mobility in economic status. Ram (1995: 207-8) observes, "Those who are socially and economically mobilized are not fully accepted and assimilated into the social and cultural realms of others, especially caste Hindus." Richardson (1977), analyzing mobility in England, holds that many of those upwardly mobile had been unable to shake off an attachment to the working class and that "rather than becoming 'core' members of the middle class,

³⁵ Ram, 1988.

³⁶ See Kulke, 1976: 248.

their upward mobility is mediated by a peripheral status group.” He further observes that ‘translating economic mobility into social mobility’ is more difficult. In analyzing social mobility, he feels, the following questions need to be addressed: Whether social mobility leads to change in the nature of social relationships? Are the socially mobile able to adopt the standards and outlook typical to their ‘new’ social class?

Dalits traditionally do not belong to the middle class category; they are newly recruited into the middle class and considered a ‘new middle class’ (Ram, 1995:190). Occupationally, bulk of the Indian middle classes are mainly from “the educated professions, such as government servants, lawyers, college teachers and doctors” (Misra, 1961:12). The Dalits have also mainly opted for the above middle class occupations. In the case of Dalits, reservations helped them enter new spheres of national life and occupations hitherto controlled by caste-Hindus. A small fraction of the Dalit population is represented in almost all modern occupations. Adhering to the trend in the Indian middle class, Dalit entrants into the middle class have also shown more inclination towards white-collar jobs or ‘middle class occupations’. At the same time, there is also a growing aspiration among them to become entrepreneurs, businessmen and independent professionals.

Further, upwardly mobile Dalits are faced with the question of identity at both self and collective levels. Their reference points regarding mobility (individual as well as family aspirations) intersect with their perceptions of Dalit ideology and identity (the agenda of Dalit empowerment) and hence make them identify with both. Historically, Dalits’ identity pattern was influenced by the social reality in relation to their level of resistance to withstand the restrictions imposed on them in the caste system over generations.

Ilaiah opines that in spite of exclusion and marginalization, the *Dalitwadas* (Dalit localities) possess 'creativity, productivity and humanness' called "Dalitism" (Raj, 1998: xvi). Further, Raj³⁷ observes,

If a Dalit as an individual comes to know about his/her rights, the act of knowing does not remain confined to an individual. It slowly converts itself into an act of community because the relationship between the individual and the community is very strongly tied up through the twofold structure of caste and ethnicity. Secondly, such an act of knowing- becoming conscious-unlike many other acts of Dalits is a 'revolutionary transformative act'.

KL Sharma explains, Dalitism implies an 'ideology of protest', but of varying degrees and intensities (Sharma, 2001: 99).

Dalitism is a historical phenomenon. Dalits as a class can be seen only in terms of human relationships, and not as a category, a thing or as a fixed 'structure' at a given point of time. Dalitism implies ideological and political militancy of the Dalits. They could be referred as 'consciousness community'. Acquisition and control of knowledge and power is treated as the most potent resource by the Dalits. Thus, Ambedkarian discourse on Dalits and untouchability is said to be an alternative perspective to the Gandhian view about Harijans Dalitism sets a new agenda for an equalitarian social order, new distributive just processes. 'Equality of outcome/result' is the most concrete and measurable yardstick of the envisaged new social order Finally, 'caste' is the central phenomenon in the discourse on 'dalitism', but 'class' is also inherently presenting it. Caste is used as an idiom for waging a 'class war' against the established and entrenched hierarchies of power and domination. However, Dalits are not just a constellation of untouchable castes, they are seen also as actual exploited workers, peasants and agricultural labourers in all parts of India. Emphasis is laid on their emancipation from economic bondage by bringing about 'economic radicalism' (socialism).

In other words, Dalit middle class is both a vehicle and stabilizer of Dalit ideology and identity. Middle class Dalits play a major role in modernization among Dalits, as catalysts they inspire and assist Dalits in emerging as self-asserting individuals with community consciousness.³⁸

The formation of attitudes, process of identity and perceptions of empowerment among the educationally and economically upwardly mobile Dalits, who joined the ranks of middle class in life-style and outlook, are central to Dalit ideology and identity. The articulation of Dalit consciousness and the process of Dalit

³⁷ Ibid, xv.

³⁸ Sachidananda (1974) feels that Dalit elites are 'torch bearers' of social change, for they are most active and powerful agents of social transformation among Dalits. According to him, they are catalysts of change.

empowerment are centered on the Dalit middle class, which plays a crucial, catalyst role in development of Dalits. The Dalit middle class produces ideas and sets the agenda for the social and political activities of the Dalit movement. Their access to power and resources accords them due importance both with respect to the state as well as the Dalit masses in issues pertaining to Dalit development. They, as socially and politically conscious Dalits, represent Dalit interests. The members of the Dalit middle class mediate between the state policies and the Dalit masses' economic needs when they assume the role of a catalyst.

Omvedt (2004)³⁹ summarizes this development, as follows:

Dalits are fighting back. In the villages, increasing efforts to claim simple human rights – to walk the same roads and drink from the same teacups that upper-caste Hindus use – have often led to violent rioting. The efforts of young people to break away from caste-defined marriages have resulted in brutal murders. Dalits have formed political parties, fighting elections with notable success in some cases but also coming up against refusals to allow them to vote. They have fought for land, tried small income-generating projects, joined – and where possible, set up – their own NGOs. And finally, the new, small and still insecure dalit middle class that the system of 'reservation' – or positive discrimination – in education and public sector employment has helped to foster, is attempting to move beyond its limitations.

Thus, Dalits need no longer be viewed as a marginalized category of 'underprivileged' people. Owing to various social movements against untouchability and the state policy of positive discrimination, at least a section of Dalits has come to experience the privileges of modern life. Thus, a uniform '*developmentalist*' or a '*welfarist*' perspective cannot provide a comprehensive sociological picture of the social and cultural status of all Dalits. It is in this context, the study of social and economic mobility and formation of new social classes among the Dalits assumes importance.

Unlike in the past, today, the formulation and implementation of socio-economic and political strategies for development of Dalits require the consent of Dalits. In order to understand the status of Dalits today, we need to understand the very authors of Dalit ideology and identity who influence, inspire and motivate the Dalit masses today.

³⁹ Gail Omvedt, 2004, *Untouchables in the world of IT*, Panos Features, February, <http://www.indiasocial.org/cgi/news.asp?id=3048&sel=1>

Thus, the study of Dalits, especially the educated and economically upwardly mobile Dalits or “middle class Dalits”, calls for an enquiry into the processes of adaptation, assimilation and acculturation in reference to their newly acquired middle class status, where improving their social status is a major concern. Their mobility in economic status ‘reinstalled’ their struggle for social and political rights in a new plane. Dalits have come a long way to reclaim their lost status, of social, economic and political equality.

Significance of the Present Study

Historically, the upper castes dominated all spheres of social, economic and political fields due to the ‘higher’ status accorded to them by their ‘ritual purity’ in the traditional social structure. In modern India too, they rendered their positions secure by monopolizing education, and thereby extended their hold in the upper and middle classes. In both the cases, the majority of the society remained dispossessed as ‘lower castes’ in the caste structure and as wage labouring ‘lower classes’ in the class structure.

In the post-independence period, the Dalits have gradually made an entry into the modern occupations and professions, with the help of socio-political changes enabling social and economic mobility in general and the state-provided reservations in education and employment in particular. Reservations have supported the Dalits, like other disadvantaged sections of the society, to enhance their social and economic status to reach middle class positions, which were hitherto the monopoly of the upper castes.

The long periods of ‘social reform’ (pre-independence period) and ‘social justice’ (post-independence period) enabled at least few Dalits to take to education and thereby enter a class structure that is amenable to their social and economic aspirations. In the post-independence period, the last 57 years, Dalits have been able to enter into the middle class. Now they are represented in all modern occupations, but such presence over a period is not proportionate to their population and they are unequally distributed across various occupations and the positions that exist within

them. According to estimates, only 5 percent of Dalits became middle and upper classes in the process.⁴⁰

Amidst many contradictory claims and analyses surrounding their representation in modern occupations, social and economic mobility, and as having made it into the middle class strata by ‘forfeiting’ their roots etc., the Dalit middle class requires to be put through a thorough enquiry to assess their presence in these fields, vis-à-vis their priorities and politics. The very nature and extent of their shifting of grounds and whether their entry itself is an achievement or trouncing of social and economic mobility needs to be examined.

Many Dalits who are represented in these modern occupations are the first generation in their respective families and their level of achievement is significant in terms of ‘grandeur’ and ‘noteworthiness’. In such a context, the Dalit middle class is largely constituted of persons who achieved social and economic mobility.

The Dalit middle class is also caught between non-recognition of their achievement by the society on the one hand, and the ‘jealousy’ and ‘expectations’ from the other Dalits on the other hand. The middle class Dalits are in a sense ‘untouchable’ to the society and ‘outcastes’ for other Dalits.⁴¹

It is in this context that the Dalits who are engaged in such occupations and professions are classified as middle class. *Middle Class Dalits*, as an object of the present study, engages with their life experiences and priorities, and the prime focus is on the ideology and identity of the Dalit members employed in these modern occupations. With engagement in such occupations, Dalit professionals are latently initiated, socialized and stabilized in the course of arriving at and staying in the middle class way of life, within that broader spectrum of social and economic mobility. In the process of becoming middle class, the Dalits have carved out a distinctive identity for themselves. Notwithstanding the fact that technically all the modern occupations and professions are open to Dalits, in practical terms, few occupations and professions are easily accessible to Dalits compared to other caste

⁴⁰ Guru, 2002: 141.

⁴¹ Ram, 1988:120.

groups. Thus, the majority of the mobile Dalits are congregated in few occupations and professions.

The formation of attitudes, process of identity and perceptions of Dalit empowerment among the educationally and economically mobile Dalits, who joined the ranks of middle class in life-style and outlook, are central to Dalit ideology and identity. For they lead Dalit movement and only they formulate and implement strategies to empower Dalits economically, socially and politically. Studying the ideologues of Dalit ideology is essential to understand the status of Dalits today. The study of Dalits, especially of the educated and economically mobile Dalits or “middle class Dalits”, calls for an enquiry into the processes of adaptation, assimilation and acculturation with reference to their newly acquired middle class, where improving their social status is a major concern. Their mobility in economic status ‘reinstalled’ their struggle for social and political rights. Dalits have come a long way to reclaim their lost status of equality, socially, economically and politically.

Objectives of the Present Study

The central objective of the present study is to map the emerging Dalit middle class in Hyderabad and examine its special identity patterns as well as its ideological position and articulations. The study attempts to understand to what extent this emerging Dalit middle class in Hyderabad as a group, and individually, manifest in practice, the Dalit identity and ideology that could be considered as an example for emulation by the larger Dalit milieu elsewhere.

The above question assumes importance also because many previous studies⁴² on this matter have established clear correlations between Dalit upward social mobility and its identity-ideology orientation that has been considered as successful instances in promoting Dalit emancipation. Here, reference is solicited to studies conducted by Kulke and Ram, which established the following:

1. Middle class Dalits' social environment was different from the community of their origin and they were not fully integrated into 'main stream' middle class culture that is largely dominated by upper castes.
2. Middle class Dalits generally lived in Dalit neighborhoods. Caste continued to be an important factor in assessing their social status.
3. However, with upward economic mobility, they could avail services from others and neither did they feel the need of *sanskritizing* their ritual life.
4. In contrast to the most of the illiterate Dalits who identified themselves with Gandhian ideology, the middle class Dalits identified more with Ambedkar.
5. The identification of mobile Scheduled Castes varies with their education level and social status.
6. Their employment in white-collar jobs meant upward mobility in the class structure.
7. While they were forging new patterns of social relationships with people in their work place and elsewhere, irrespective of caste and community considerations, the degree and direction of their mobility was not clear.
8. The middle class among scheduled castes is different from the old middle class.
9. Since the economic mobility of Scheduled Castes does not necessitate an equal social mobility, there is an incongruity between their social and economic mobility.

At the same time, the previous studies also note certain existential dilemmas among the Dalit middle class with which the members of this class live.⁴³ So, how do members of this class understand these dilemmas and attempt to resolve them in practice?

⁴² Kulke, 1976; Ram, 1988.

⁴³ All these aspects have been dealt within detail in appropriate chapters of the present text.

The present study essentially is in the tracks of the previous endeavours, attempting to study similar concerns of the previous studies in a specific urban context – Hyderabad. The present study would attempt to find out how far its conclusions correspond to earlier studies, its divergence and reasons for the same. Here in lies, the essential *significance* of the present study. The latter ought to be considered as yet empirical contribution to the studies on Dalit upward social mobility, identity and ideology.

As such, the present study is exploratory in nature and character. Consequently the need for a hypothesis does not arise. The present study is an attempt to empirically *understand* the issue at hand by adopting sociological methods and techniques of enquiry.

Research methodology

In earlier studies, dealing with socially and economically mobile Dalits, such as Sachidananda (1974:12) used ‘web technique’ in which the respondents were selected largely by informal contacts of respondents interviewed to further locate and interview new respondents. Such studies, ranging from 29 to 300 respondents, largely comprised of interviews of educated persons, terming them elite (for example, Issacs interviewed 50 persons, Saberval 58, Sachidanand 200, Deshpande 29, Roy and Singh 55 elites),⁴⁴ and middle class (Ram 240 SCs and Kulke 300 SCs and non SCs).⁴⁵

On the lines of earlier studies,⁴⁶ focusing on the various middle class occupations the Dalits have entered into, the present study studies the Dalit middle class’ ideology and identity in Hyderabad, with the aid of a structured interview schedule. It tries to profile the Dalit middle class in Hyderabad, focusing on 105 middle class Dalits and through construction of 8 detailed case histories from among them. In furtherance to the purview and objectives of the earlier studies, the present study attempts to traverse beyond and tries to capture their ideology and identity juxtaposed against their socio-economic status.

⁴⁴ Sharma 1986:56 and Roy and Singh, 1987: 29.

⁴⁵ Ram, 1988, and Kulke, 1976.

⁴⁶ These studies include the present researcher’s M.Phil study earlier (1994-96) which dealt with “Intersecting Identities : A Study of the Dalit Middle Class.

The research tools used for the study are:

- Administering interview schedule to a stratified sample
- Representative case studies of individuals from the sample
- Recourse to secondary sources to bring out a historical profile of Dalit middle class

The study undertakes to explore the below mentioned questions in the context of absence of any latest empirical evidences to show the current status of Dalit middle class and varied contradictory assumptions about the middle class Dalits. The broad questions dealt within the study are related to:

- The phenomenon of Dalit middle class, its origin and context
- Characteristics of Dalit middle class, differences between Dalit Middle Class and non-Dalit middle class
- Economic and social status of Dalit middle class
- Religious trends among the Dalit middle class
- Experiences of untouchability and other forms of caste discrimination
- Membership in Dalit, political and voluntary organizations
- Dalit middle class members' views on women's liberation
- Their perceptions on various issues like caste politics, communalism, casteism, etc.
- World view (understanding of larger society) of the Dalit Middle Class
- Dalit middle class' perceptions of social change
- Dalit middle class' perceptions on the question of Dalit liberation, and
- Identity patterns among the members of the Dalit middle class

Focus of the Study and Research Question

The study is an attempt to identify the changes brought about by the social and economic mobility among the Scheduled Castes individuals with specific focus on those who have joined 'white collar' jobs and other independent professions such as law, medicine, journalism, etc. The research questions dealt with in the present study are related to the process of the changing social identities of these individuals. The study uses the category 'Dalit middle class' for them and attempts to look at how caste and class contexts intersect in articulations of their self-definition and politics.

The specific questions addressed in the study are with regarding to the following issues:

- Social background of the middle class Dalits, educational level, occupation, economic status and rural/urban background of the family of their origin.
- Their understanding of the problem of their community; their opinion on the ways and means to solve them.
- Their preferences for self-identification as Dalits and/or middle class.
- Their new attitudes towards education and occupation.
- Their life style, consumption patterns, assets, and debts etc.
- Their interaction patterns with the members of their own community and other caste groups. Their perceptions on reservations as a means of Dalit upliftment.

The Universe

The study divides the middle class Dalits into two categories 'government employees' and 'independent professionals'. The fieldwork was carried out in Hyderabad, the state capital of Andhra Pradesh, where it is possible to find a good number of middle class Dalits employed in government offices and independent professions.

Tools and Techniques of Research

The nature of questions raised being qualitative in nature, a structured interview schedule was used for collection of data, which was filled in by the researcher in person. Web technique was used to identify the respondents. While most of the interviews were conducted at their work places during working hours, a few interviews were conducted in their residence. However, the family involvement in the interview process was limited only to introductions. Except a handful of respondents from among those identified for the purpose of interviews, the rest readily assented to be interviewed. Those who refused to be interviewed ranged from officer cadre in government service to a government pleader, as they felt that only those among the Dalits who put in hard work had come up in life, their individual mobility had nothing to do with being a Dalit, and they saw no reason for Dalit consciousness either.

The sample

The spectrum of middle class occupations and professions are ever proliferating, whereas information regarding this ever-expanding universe and occupations are unavailable. Given this limitation, the question one had to confront was- 'How to locate the Middle Class Dalits in a city like Hyderabad? At the same time, there were problems like non-availability of official and reliable records regarding the population of the middle class, occupations and professions they inhabit, the number of Dalits employed in these occupations and professions and how to locate the middle class Dalits particularly in Hyderabad city. In this context, it became difficult to ascertain the total universe to employ any regular sampling methods and thus, *web technique* was employed to locate the respondents.

Therefore, an attempt was made to include equal number of respondents into the sample from all the major occupations and professions that the Dalits have entered. However, it was realized during the pilot study that the greater numbers of middle class Dalits who are employed in modern occupations are largely in government service.

In order to have intra-occupational comparability and to diverge from the bias of according more importance to any particular occupation, care was taken to include equal number of respondents from each category in the sample, except in the case of two occupations, namely doctors and journalists, as it was difficult to find more numbers of Dalits in these professions. It was realized in due course that in the case of the remaining categories, they were largely employed in Government service and less number of Dalits have entered into the categories of doctors and journalists. These two factors made it impossible to find respondents in these categories. It is in this context that more numbers of employed persons had to be included in the sample compared to independent professionals. Accordingly, 105 respondents were interviewed for the study with the help of a structured interview schedule and eight representative case studies from among the sample were carried out.

The next chapter is devoted to a detailed discussion on the questions of Dalit identity, the Middle Class, Ideology and Identity and allied concerns drawing on the available literature on these issues. Chapter 3 profiles the respondents as belonging to Dalit middle class. Chapter 4, in Section-I, analyses their ideology and identity patterns, based on their perceptions regarding their personal life trajectory, their community and the society in general, and Section-II provides few representative case studies. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the questions dealt with and outlines the findings of the study.

Chapter-2

Sociology of the Dalit Middle Class: A Review

The Dalits are traditionally not part of the middle class. For centuries together, they remained in subjugation, serving the caste-Hindus. Various streams of socio-religious and political mobilizations in the 20th century paved the way for Dalits to take to education and employment in non-traditional occupations. In the post-independence period, the Indian State has adopted 'social justice' as its goal. As part of which, it has been supporting the Dalits' socio-economic mobility through the policy of 'protective discrimination' or the policy of reservations. Thus, the emergence of the Dalit middle class is largely attributed to the reservations system.

There is an upward mobility in occupational structure among the middle class Dalits in comparison to their previous generations. This 'mobility' is primarily facilitated by the reservations system that aimed at 'development of the community through individual mobility'. However, it burdens such 'mobile' individuals, on the one hand, with the economic responsibility of members of their ancestral family, and hence reduces the extent of their economic mobility. On the other hand, they are still struggling to achieve social mobility. By now, studies have proved that their economic mobility is not leading them towards social mobility as well. In terms of mobility, whatever Dalits achieved so far was not without resistance from the "upper" castes. Dalits have had to struggle a lot to make a little improvement in their socio-economic position wherever their mobility was directly involved with upper castes' interests. They faced insults and humiliation all through their history due to untouchability. In a changing state of affairs, they continue to face the same situation, because they are looked down upon as a reserved category.

However, Oommen (1977: 189), striking a critical note on positive discrimination observes that - "although the developmental benefits are extended to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as social categories, the beneficiaries are specific persons and families. This means, the unit of mobility is an individual and not a group in the context of developmental benefits." Now, after 50 years of independence

and reservation policy, the number of Dalits who benefited from this policy are growing in numbers, however, the number of Dalits who have climbed the social and economic status ladder is small, in comparison to the overall Dalit population. Over the years, the reservation policy encouraged education among Dalits; likewise reservations in employment allowed the possibility of their reaching highest positions in various occupations, resulting nominally in Dalit representation in various kinds of occupations that can be described as middle class. However, at the same time, it is evident that this policy alone cannot elevate the status of all Dalits. It elevated only a small section that is considered as middle class or elites among the Dalits. However, for the overall development of Dalits, the crucial assertion and commitment should come from Dalits themselves. More decisively, their political realization alone decides their future.

Though the reservations were made available to Dalits, in various categories of government sector, on proportional basis to their population, they were not implemented properly. Only in low cadre jobs are reservations implemented adequately. Posts in the Group-I and II categories are not filled even though eligible candidates are available. In technical fields, engineering, science etc. there are very limited number of aspirants. This has been principally due to their economic backwardness in the past but now there is increased aspiration for entry into these fields too.

The enormous volume of literature on Dalits largely engaged with the socio-economic development of the Dalits. However, studies that deviated from such a traditional trend have focused on Dalit movement, ideology and the identity of the upwardly mobile Dalits i.e., those availing the benefits of the government policies of protective discrimination. These studies tend to show how the process of upward mobility among the ex-untouchables is giving rise to new questions of identity and ideology. However, the literature on the Dalit middle class is still very meagre. In this chapter, an attempt is made to provide a theoretical framework for the study covering the following concepts: *middle class*, *Dalit middle class* and *Dalit elite*. Literature on the above themes is reviewed thematically under each of the concepts.

The 'Middle class' : The global experience

When we examine middle class in general, the relevant issues here are: who are the middle class, what do they consist of and how are they different from others in the Indian situation where caste is the primary stratification criteria. It is very difficult to trace the origins of the concept 'middle class', which is differently perceived by different scholars. It is generally believed that Lederer and Marschak (1926) are the first to analyze the middle class.⁴⁷ And later on, many others developed the concept by offering different interpretations of 'middle class'.

The middle class is referred to differently by various scholars, Whyte (1956) called a middle class individual as a 'man of the organizations', Mills (1946) as 'man of corporation', Lockwood (1969) as 'black-coated worker', and Dahrendorf (1967) preferred to call the middle class, the 'service class'; later on they also came to be known as 'salaried class', 'white-collared worker' etc.

While Marxism uses the terms strata, fractions and categories to designate particular ensembles, it remains true that these strata, fractions and categories always belong to a class (Singh, 1985: 6). Mayer (1972: 62-69) views middle class as Marx's classless society of the modern industrial economy. Marx himself predicted the possibility of 'middle class' and its expansion in his theories of surplus value, in which, referring to Ricardo, he emphasizes, "...the constant increase of the middle classes, who stand in the middle between workers on one side and the capitalist and landed proprietors on the other side, who are for the most part supported directly by Revenue, who rest as a burden on the labouring foundation and who increased the social security and the power of the upper 10,000 (Bottomore, 1963:198).

Holger Stub (1972: 104) hypothesizes that "the variation in life-style characterized by various groups in consumption patterns, social values, and political ideologies, will increasingly promote the retention and formation of a wide variety of status communities in the middle levels of modern societies." As Knowles (1966:15) observes "Another reason behind the origin of the middle class professions is that it took place with and when only more number of workers had freed themselves from

⁴⁷ Singh G, 1885: 2.

land work and became class free labourers, at liberty to barter their services to the best bidder.”

Locating the Middle Class

Daniel Bell (1974) argues that, “Now within the enterprise, in the position between employers and workers was a new stratum”. Lederer (1926) called it a ‘new-middle class’, less for its function than for its social evolution, which was based on their own self-esteem and the esteem of others”. “The middle class is placed between labour and capital... this class consists of the petty bourgeoisie and the white-collar workers. The former are either self employed or involved in the distribution of commodities and the latter are non-manual office workers, supervisors and professionals. Thus, in terms of occupations shopkeepers, salesmen, brokers, government and non-government office workers, writers, teachers and self-employed professionals such as engineers, pleaders, doctors etc. constitute the middle class.” Shah (1990:161) observes, “most of these occupations required at least some degree of formal education.” According to Dahrendorf (1967:106-107), “middle class is located somewhere between at least two other classes, one above it and one below it.”

Cole’s classification of the middle class as summed up by Prasad (1968: 9-10) is, “salaried persons, including administrators, managers, social workers, shop assistants, clerks, etc. persons engaged in independent vocations as medical practitioners, lawyers, consultants, persons engaged in entrepreneurial or business activity; and retired persons.”

As the complexity in various fields grew, the need for a ‘middle class’ increased as supervisors, managers and administrators, both scientific and technical. Negating the theories of class, both Marxist and Warner’s scheme of six classes- middle classes grew in number and have stabilized themselves as a category. Both the conceptualization of economic class and social class could not predict the emergence and growth of the middle classes. Whyte (1956) gave the ‘organization man’ thesis and argued that the replacement of the small enterprise by large-scale organizations has led to the rise of the ‘salaried’ employee leaving back the ‘self-employed’ man. This growth of large-scale organizations increased white-collar workers and laid

down a distinct life style and attitudes for that group. Even, it is believed that the origin of the middle class has a context, i.e. the Industrial Revolution. Earlier, it was mostly the working class who constituted the 'middle' class. In Europe, 'historically, the bourgeoisie has been called the 'middle class' because it stood between the land-owning class and the working class' (Singh, 1985: 18). After the decline of the gentry, the grand bourgeoisie became the ruling class, then 'petty bourgeoisie' became the 'middle class' - i.e., the small traders, independent small business men, the self employed professional and the independent artisan. "The white-collar people have clean-bowled Warner's scheme (Warner, 1957) of six classes. Leaving the upper-upper and the lower-lower class, they penetrated inhibitantly and walked in freely in the other four" (Singh, 1985: 3).

As many scholars expected, the middle class has not disappeared, but in fact, has expanded and, with increasing modernization, has multiplied numerically along with industrial growth. The 'middle mass', which is not a ruling class, at the same time, neither a pure working class, played its role in the growth and development of the industrial economy.

Joseph (1986:71) quoting Goldthorpe observes that, even when manual workers earned very high wages, they did not take up middle class attitudes. They saw their work as a means of getting money rather than as a career. They did not mix with middle class people. "Occupation...has been accepted as the most important single criterion and most useful index of social status" (Krausz, 1969:167).

"Vertical mobility is often inferred from occupational mobility and the inference is generally justified because the position of the individual in the total pattern of inequality largely depends on the occupation" (Broom and Selznick, 1970:178). "In Great Britain occupation is probably the most important single criterion of status" (Glass, 1967:178).

"In the process of growing, middle class has become a different type of social formation. More and more the bulk of white-collar positions open upto competition through achievement and ability. New stratum of the white-collar employee, clerical, technical, administrative and professional emerged" (Singh, 1985: 1-2).

The next interesting argument about the 'middle class' is, as the nature of the class and the members of the class varied from time to time, the feature of the 'middle class' consequently changed, and hence one can distinguish between the old middle class and the new middle class. The old-middle class is the one that includes peasants, petty bourgeoisie, traders, artisans, etc., which is located externally to capitalist relationship of production, in a sense that, capitalist production relations dominated them without being integrated into the capitalist class structure. "However the so called New-middle class are structurally ambiguous class situations- draw their ambiguous class character directly from the structure of capitalist relations of production" (Rosemary and Jon, 1977) that is to point towards the white-collar employees, clerical, technical, administrative and professionals.

The emergence of the new middle class is a striking development of this century. The new middle class now stands for no particular criteria compared to earlier definitions. Now, the new middle class has lost its middle class character "as painted by Lewis and Mande i.e., to practice a particular type of occupation white-collar; to enjoy a particular level of income-above average; to have received a particular level of education-at school or university; and to live in a good comfortable house in a good responsible area, has faded" (Singh, 1985: 1).

When everybody else is being drawn under the (rather broad) category of middle class, the imminent question that arises is, 'and then who is not a middle class'? For which, Bendix and Lipset, (1966:22) offer that "those men whose fate is not determined by the chance of using goods or services for themselves on the market, ex:- slaves, are not, however, a 'class' in the technical sense of the term. They are, rather, a 'status group'."

'Old' and 'New' middle classes

Braverman (1979: 402) writes, 'The old-middle class' occupied that position by virtue of its place outside the polar class structure, it possessed the attributes of neither capitalist nor worker, it played no part in the capital accumulation process whether on one side or the other. This 'new-middle class' by contrast occupies its intermediate

position not because it is outside the process of increasing capital, but because as a part of this process it takes its characteristics from both sides.⁴⁸

There are two theories arguing about the nature of the 'new-middle class' - (1) an extension of the old, capitalist or ruling class (Croner, Bendix and Renner are with this opinion), and (2) an extension of the proletariat or the one closer to working class. Moreover, Dahrendorf (1959)⁴⁹ opines differently "the ruling class theory applies without exception to the social position of Bureaucrats, and the working class theory equally generally to the social position of white-collar workers." Further, in England, Cole (1955) points out that, two characteristic developments brought out New Middle Class emergence. The public schools increased in numbers and over the same period the spread of the joint stock system, which greatly fostered large-scale enterprise, brought into existence a new large class of salaried managers and administrators, not only in mining and manufacture but also in banking, insurance and commerce.⁵⁰

Prasad (1968:6) quoting Lewis and Maude regarding the criteria to determine the characteristics of middle class, 'to which class an individual belongs to', avers that it depends upon a series of factors, "including income, occupation, accent, spending habits, residence, culture, leisure pursuits, clothes, education, moral attitudes and relationships with other individuals."

The new middle class in India is generally defined as:

... group of white collar-workers as we call it new middle class is constituted by various types of clerks, assistants, civil servants, executives, managers, professionals (such as doctors and engineers, and lawyers), working as salaried employees in organizations, supervisors, teachers and other educationists, employees working in various departments of Government, Banks and commercial firms, and salaried employees other than manual workers, in tertiary industries, viz. hotels, cinema, restaurants, advertising firms, traveling agencies, and insurance companies etc. They all constitute the new middle class. All enjoy a salaried status, job security, old age benefits, medical facilities, and other perks. The underlying assumption of vital significance is that they work in organizations, big or small, doing non-manual work (Singh, 1985:72).

Providing a similar picture of Black middle class in the United States of America, Pinkney (1984) opines that, though racism in the United States is less pronounced and

⁴⁸ Singh, G, 1985: 27.

⁴⁹ Dahrendorf, 1959:53.

⁵⁰ Singh, G, 1985: 26

racists are less vocal, race continues to be an ever-present part of the American way of life. He argues that the progress of Blacks in America remains a myth. Further, there is a trend by social scientists of either exaggerating the progress of the Afro-Americans or blaming them for their lack of progress, instead of blaming the forces in the society that serve to maintain their oppression.

Generally, education, income and occupation are considered as the three variables by which one's social class may be measured. The three variables are interrelated although it is possible to use any one as an indicator of social class. Pinkney (1984: 100) maintains that, in the case of middle class Blacks, style of life is as important as income. Whenever middle class needs to be defined, the policy makers consider only the economic class but not the social class. This has resulted in many Blacks being counted as middle class in America by policy makers though they do not possess the required characteristics of a middle class. It is often alleged that, if the Blacks did not rise up to the middle class, the middle class was lowered to include more Blacks in order to show them as middle class.

However, of late many Blacks are taking to education, thereby entering occupations that placed them in a more comfortable social and economic position in comparison with the other Black masses. Here, they face the identity dilemma of either emulating middle class Whites' behaviour or associating with other middle class Blacks as a fallout of rejection by the middle class Whites. Another significant aspect is that, the middle class Blacks provide assistance to those remaining in the slums, if not to a large number, then at least to their immediate and extended families. Middle class Blacks sponsor fund raising events for Black education, civil rights, and community organizations.

Middle class in India : Sociological perspectives

The origin and expansion of middle classes in India has been widely studied. Such studies attempted to locate, analyze and interpret those classes in various social, economic and political contexts. The first and foremost important study till date being, BB Misra's *Indian Middle Classes*, that is a singular attempt in terms of its

magnitude and nature. Later, studies by Bhagwan Prasad,⁵¹ Y.P. Chibbar,⁵² and Gurchain Singh⁵³ also focused on analyzing the characteristics of the Indian middle classes.

During the British period, the British introduced a new land revenue system, which gave rise to tax collectors who in turn exploited the peasants and grabbed the lands, forming a new landed class. The mediators between the British and the people, the interpreters, small businessmen, etc., formed a middle class (Matto, 1991).

Given the circumstances, the middle class has accurate opportunities to address and to lead us to a better understanding of the Dalits, their disabilities, sufferings and their day-to-day struggles through the ages to overcome poverty, untouchability and participate in the rapidly changing Indian socio-economic and political scenario. Their ambition and their plans for the future are effectively communicated through the middle class. The rich class mainly identifies with the community's past, dream for a better future for the entire community, unless it is trapped by, and confined to its self-interest.

The self-perception of belonging to the middle class is another crucial aspect that needs to be looked into in a study of the middle class. "Some sociologists are inclined to say that an individual must feel that he belongs to a certain group. It is doubtful whether this criterion will help us. Persons having an air of superiority may very well claim to belong to an upper class whereas persons having a humbler outlook may derive pleasure in associating themselves with a lower group. It is, therefore, not enough that a man has a feeling of belonging to a certain class. This concept will have the problem of over-estimation as it is a class in which many prefer to remain even when they do not belong to this group." And, "many persons earning four digit salaries and enjoying most of the conveniences of life prefer to call themselves as middle class people", observes Prasad (1968: 7).

⁵¹ Bhagwan Prasad (1968), *Socio-Economic study of Urban Middle Classes*. The study was carried out during (1958-60) covering 500 middle class families of five big towns of Uttar Pradesh (namely, Kanpur, Agra, Varanasi, Allahabad and Lucknow with 100 families from each town).

⁵² YP Chibbar (1968), *From Caste to Class: A Study of Indian Middle Class*.

⁵³ Gurchain Singh (1985), *The New Middle Class in India: A Sociological Analysis*.

Quoting a national level survey conducted in 1994-96 by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Sheth (1999: 2510) observes the new criteria evolved for identifying the middle class is as follows:

The survey conceived the category middle class in terms of subjective and objective variables. The subjective variable pertained to respondent's own identification as 'middle class' and an explicit rejection of 'working class' identity for himself/herself. Using self-identity as a precondition, certain objective criteria were applied for inclusion of a respondent in the 'middle class' category. Thus, from among those with middle class self-identification, respondents possessing two of the following four characteristics were included in the middle class category: (i) 10 years or more of schooling, (ii) ownership of at least three assets out of four, i.e., motor vehicle, TV, electric pumping-set and non-agricultural land, (iii) residence in a pucca house – built of brick and cement, (iv) white-collar job. Accordingly, 20 per cent of the sample population was identified as belonging to the middle class.

Further studies carried out in India have revealed that the middle class has certain 'White-collar' attitudes, namely, (1) a 'Babu' mentality, (2) preference for non-manual and non-agricultural work, and (3) a largely urban concentration. And,

“there is considerable truth in the belief that the middle class is engaged in non-manual, non-agricultural operations. Prior to independence, it included people belonging mostly to the clerical cadre. After independence there are decidedly more avenues open to this group and we can include people engaged in more varied occupations. A middle earning member includes persons of medium income like teachers, medical practitioners, traders, junior executives, public servants, small entrepreneurs, lawyers, planners, architects, engineers and so on” (Prasad, 1968:8).

The life style, (basically expenditure), of the middle class differs from the strata above them, (rich or aristocratic class), who spend on luxurious items like parties, entertainments, maintaining a car, going to clubs and, at the same time, the strata below them (the working class). Middle class families too have to go 'upward' or 'downward' according to the individuals' profession and income (Prasad, 1968: 8-9).

Class and social mobility among the three classes shows that, the higher the class, the greater the probability of upward mobility. “...there is a considerable drop in the proportion of upward mobility immediately after the middle classes. The differential between proportions of the middle and lower classes is 33.9% as against a differential of 27.1% in the case of upper and middle classes. The upper class is almost three times more upwardly mobile than the lower class. This rather clearly stresses the deterministic role of class. The circulation of positions is confined to upper and middle classes and the lower classes have only limited access” (Philips, 1990:68).

Indicating a change in such a situation in the context of formation of a new middle class in India, Sheth (1999: 2510), provides a broad profile of the 'new middle class in India' based on the findings of a latest empirical study on the middle class in India by Centre for Developing Societies (CSDS),

The survey analysis revealed that even today, the upper and the rich farmer castes together dominate the Indian 'middle class'. While members of the two upper categories, the dwija upper castes and the non-dwija dominant castes, account for about a quarter of the sample population, they constitute nearly half of the new middle class. But this also means the representation of upper castes has reduced in today's middle class, for the old middle class was almost entirely constituted by them.

Further, Sheth notes a change in the situation as far as inclusion of 'lower castes' in the middle class, at least in the recent past, that

About half of the middle class population came from different lower-caste social formations, i.e., the dalits (SCs), the tribals (STs) the backward communities of peasants and artisans (OBCs) and the religious minorities. Considering that members of all these social formations constituted 75 per cent of the sample population, their 50 per cent representation in the middle class is much lower than that of the upper and intermediate castes. But seen in the context of their inherited lower ritual status in the traditional hierarchy, this is a significant development. Even more significant is the fact that when members of the lower-castes, including those belonging to castes of 'ex-untouchables', acquire modern means of social mobility, such as education, wealth, political power, etc, their low ritual status does not come in the way of their entering the middle class and, more importantly, acquiring the consciousness of being members of the middle class.

Further, there is marked change in the 'new middle class' in terms of its nature. The new 'recruits' are bringing in their social group values into the middle class.

The Indian middle class today has a significant rural component, thanks to the earlier inclusion in it of the rural based dominant castes and now of the members of the lower castes participating in modern economy and administration. In brief, the middle class in India today is not a simple demographic category comprising of certain ritual-status groups. It is a social-cultural formation in which as individuals from different castes and communities enter, they acquire new economic and political interests, and life styles, in common with the other members of that 'class'. Within this new middle class, caste identities of its members survive, but operating in conjunction with the new, overarching identity of middle class, they acquire a different political and cultural meaning.

The 'Dalit middle class'

There are few studies dealing with Dalits who have benefited from the government policies of protective discrimination and other development programmes leading to the emergence of a new social category among them, viz., Dalit elites (Abbasayulu, 1978; Sachidananda, 1974; Roy and Singh, 1987) or a segment of the "middle classes" (Kulke, 1976; Ram, 1988).

The earlier studies on the theme of Dalit middle class and 'Harijan' elites looked into the incongruity between the social and economic mobility of Dalits in a context of the general process of social mobility in Indian society. Kulke's (1976) study of 'Integration, Alienation and Rejection: The Status of Untouchables' dealt with 300 SCs and non-SCs from Dhanbad in Bihar. Ram's study (1988) on 'Rise of a New Middle Class' among the scheduled castes has two hundred and forty respondents from various occupational backgrounds varying between sweepers and Class I services. Roy and Singh's (1987) study, dealing with 'Harijan' elites caught up 'between two worlds', has fifty five respondents in occupations such as political leaders, caste leaders, bureaucrats, doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers and businessmen. Both the studies were located in cities in Uttar Pradesh and were carried out during mid-1980s. They deal with social and economic mobility and the identity question of the Dalits in an urban setting with inter-generational educational and occupational upward mobility, their level of assimilation into the middle class lifestyle and problems involved therein.

Such studies suggest the rise of a new section among the Dalits, viz., Dalit middle class or elites who are perceived to be in an extraordinary situation of identity crisis and increased aspirations, who are on the move but have not reached their destination as yet.⁵⁴

Kulke (1976) studied the 'Status of Untouchables' or the beneficiaries of the reservation policies introduced by the post-independence Indian state to look at the processes of *Integration, Alienation and Rejection* with reference to 'Accommodation, Confrontation and Rejection of Scheduled Castes vis-à-vis the Hindu society'. He

⁵⁴ Kulke, 1976; Ram, 1988; Roy and Singh, 1987; Aggrawal, 1983.

found that the social background of middle class 'untouchables' was predominantly from a few scheduled castes. Middle class Dalits' social environment was different from the community of their origin and they were not fully integrated into 'main stream' middle class culture that is largely dominated by upper castes. Middle class Dalits generally lived in Dalit neighborhoods. Caste continued to be an important factor in assessing their social status. However, with upward economic mobility, they could avail services from others and neither did they feel the need of *sanskritizing* their ritual life. He also observed that in contrast to the most of the illiterate Dalits who identified themselves with Gandhian ideology, the middle class Dalits identified more with Ambedkar.

He predicts, "India will have to face a social conflict of unpredictable proportions if its 75 million untouchables cannot be integrated socially, economically, and politically" (1976: 244). There have been two different approaches to solve the problem of 'untouchables'. They are Ambedkar's concept of segregation and confrontation, and Gandhi's concept of integration. The Indian Government took the latter approach as the official policy and provided concessions and reservations in the name of 'protective discrimination' to 'untouchables' to achieve the same.

Kulke's study shows that the state policy had a positive effect on a considerable number of individuals among the Scheduled Castes in terms of moving into higher social positions. However, (1) Most of the Dalit middle class are predominantly from a few Scheduled Castes. (2) Occupation of the Father has a lot to do with the children's higher positions; it shows that there is no sudden/direct development in switching over from caste occupation to higher social position in one's life, but father's occupation (other than caste occupation; preferably a small job) is the first step to achieve a higher social economic position/status in one's life. (3) The social environment of 'successful untouchables' is different from that of their community of origin. As they move on to a higher social and economic status, they have become distanced from their community of origin. Yet, inspite of this process, most of these 'untouchables' were not evolving social contacts with the upper strata. (4) They dwelt largely in the neighborhood of untouchables, preferably with their own community, as upper castes were not prepared to mingle with them. Even so, the middle class untouchables tended to prefer their own community people on the one

condition that they were also educated and belonged to their class. (5) Friendship with upper castes in offices or outside is not possible for all 'untouchables' but only for untouchables with higher social and economic status. (6) Family friendships are higher between higher social and economic status (SES) 'untouchables' and higher SES upper caste people than in the case of lower SES 'untouchables' and upper caste. (7) Higher economic status gives more chances of getting served by barbers, washer man, etc, on par with caste Hindus. (8) Higher social status draws middle class 'untouchables' away from their community of origin, (9) Higher SES/Middle Class 'untouchables' do not give great importance to getting 'Sanskritised'. (10) Untouchability as a concept works as a psychological barrier. It depends not only on one's own experiences in the case of middle class 'untouchables', but also on other's experiences of keeping them away from Hindu society. (11) Attachment towards Gandhi or Ambedkar among 'Untouchables' shows the middle class attachment to Ambedkar, the minimum educated have an attachment to both and illiterates mostly prefer only Gandhi. Among the youngest generation (the then Graduates) attachment towards Ambedkar is diminishing. (12) Another obstacle to the integration of 'untouchables' into the larger society is that they have to identify themselves as 'untouchables' in order to get jobs, promotions, etc. (13) Middle class 'untouchables' status now lies between partial acceptance and rejection, between integration, frustration and aggression. (14) This dilemma leads middle class 'untouchables' to 'we consciousness' and they form associations to discuss common interested matters and to celebrate occasions like Ambedkar's birthday. (15) Caste still is a relevant social dimension of status consciousness among middle class 'untouchables' who otherwise attempt to overcome caste barriers (i.e., due to psychological barriers or the failure of the Gandhi approach of integration). (16) The degree of perception of Untouchability increases with a rising educational standard. This does not necessarily depend on any personal experience of untouchability; it is rather a consciousness of the discrimination suffered by their group of origin. 'Untouchability' thus remains a psychological barrier against integration also on the part of the 'untouchables' themselves (Kulke, 1976:249).

The desire to rise socially and to be accepted in the new middle class milieu leads to certain limitations. In the case of untouchables, the mobility process clearly has a secular character i.e., the possibilities for and the efforts to obtain religious and ritual

recognition are minimal. In general, all untouchables demonstrate a low religious activity, which decreases even further with professional or educational status mobility. This incipient process of change in the case of untouchables thus does not fit into Srinivas's Sanskritization scheme (Kulke, 1976: 249).

The consciousness of having repeatedly to suffer discrimination and of belonging to a group that is branded 'untouchable' manifests itself in the form of latent psychological barriers, which hinders the efforts of socially mobile 'Scheduled Castes' members towards social integration. Frequently, this consciousness is not even based on direct personal experience but rather on unconscious group solidarity or the conscious efforts to detach and efface oneself from the group of origin. In any case, the adoption of a detached and neutral attitude towards their caste of origin is very difficult for the socially mobile (Scheduled Castes) members (Kulke, 1976: 247-8).

The identification of mobile Scheduled Castes varies with their education level and social status. Thus, those who favour Gandhi as the leader of SCs also prefer the usage of the term 'harijans', while the majority of the moderately mobile 'untouchables' preferred the neutral official characterization 'Scheduled Castes' and the most educated and most successful social climbers chose self-characterizations such as 'Indian', 'Hindu' or simply 'human being' (Kulke, 1976: 251-2).

Measurement of political radicalization tested with given options yielded figures such as /political system- democratic (46.7%), dictatorial-totalitarian (14.6%) or revolutionary (38.7%) – in terms of which option suits the best to solve the problems of untouchables. With the educational level, the option for revolution increases (Kulke, 1976: 252).

Ram (1988) prefers the category 'middle class' for the beneficiaries of reservation policies and observes that there are a small number of scheduled caste individuals who have benefited from the policy of protective discrimination and consequently acquired a better socioeconomic status. Their employment in white-collar jobs meant upward mobility in the class structure. While they were forging new patterns of social relationships with people in their work place and elsewhere, irrespective of

caste and community considerations, the degree and direction of their mobility was not clear.

Quoting Saberwal (1972:114) Ram regards mobile people as those who ".... have either been upwardly mobile earlier or are upwardly mobile now, or are getting equipped for upward mobility in the foreseeable future." Ram argues that the middle class among scheduled castes is different from the old middle class. Since the economic mobility of Scheduled Castes does not necessitate an equal social mobility, there is an incongruity between their social and economic mobility.

Further, Ram (1988) has attempted to measure upward social mobility among the Scheduled Castes. He employs measures such as, Socio-Economic Status (SES) Scale, Caste Status Ranking (CSR) Scale and Social Distance Scale (SDS). In correlation of social status and economic status, Ram argues, however, that the dominant pattern of social stratification in India has been that of caste. The hierarchies of caste and class have not functioned, so far, in parallel direction. It seems the class structure is inclusive of caste structure and vice versa. Consequently, mobility of a person in the class structure has not always led to his mobility in the caste structure. This has happened more in the case of the lower and particularly the lowest castes because the latter had suffered a lot from numerous social and religious disabilities in the past. Complete social mobility neither has occurred in the past, nor is occurring in the present- it is possible only through a rigorous political action involving, 'a civic value oriented social system instead of a family, caste, religion and language oriented one'.⁵⁵

Compared to the early stages of its formation, the Dalit middle class today is more assertive of its identity and more firm on its ideological foundation. In spite of witnessing mobility in economic status, mobility in social status eluded the middle class Dalits. Since then, the course of social mobility remained a contested ground between the Dalits and others. Amidst resentment and rejection on the one hand and intermittent allurements to suppress their caste identity in exchange of admission into the inner circles of the middle class on the other hand, most of the Dalit middle class

⁵⁵ See Ahmed and Ahmed, 1964: 244.

individuals had clung to their Dalit identity. This was mainly due to the very initiation process that embedded Dalit consciousness and Dalit ideology in them.

However, the characteristics of the Dalit middle class are not uniform. They have different backgrounds and different locations now. Such diversity in backgrounds and locations necessitates a variation in their identity patterns. In this regard, Omvedt observes that,

Not all of the new Dalit middle class are radicals. Many are simply enjoying the benefits of the new life. They call themselves Hindus and are trying to live as others do. Some are living far from home and are unwilling to reveal their humble backgrounds. Some are living calm lives with relatives, not connected with any causes. Nor are they all second generation; some are first-generation educated while some are living and working so far away from their rural homes that they are able to hide their identity. It is only now that they are beginning to come out (Omvedt, 2001: 27).

Further, Omvedt (2001) differentiates between 'old' and 'new' Dalit middle class, she observes,

The earlier Dalit middle class fought against casteism, but were often concerned with personal survival to do much. During the 1970s and 1980s Dalit protests were expressed by fighting riots and resisting atrocities physically. The new generation is now coming into their own and discovering a new pride in being Dalit (Omvedt, 2001: 27).

Referring to the 'new Dalit middle class' she observes,

This generation is, in part, a product of the policy of reservations. Even if there were no state policies to promote the education and employment of ex-untouchables, a middle class would have evolved because of the new opportunities for mobility in a more open and equalitarian society. But it is certain that it would have happened much more slowly, with deprivation and bitterness involved in the process.... This generation is, in part, a product of the policy of reservations. Even if there were no state policies to promote the education and employment of ex-untouchables, a middle class would have evolved because of the new opportunities for mobility in a more open and equalitarian society. But it is certain that it would have happened much more slowly, with deprivation and bitterness involved in the process (Omvedt, 2001: 27).

The middle class Dalits are in the similar status of discriminated in relation to caste-Hindus, as they too experience discrimination along with other Dalits. Omvedt elaborates:

But these differences, apart from the apparent alienation between the middle-class leaders and the Dalit proletariat, pale before the fact that all sections of Dalits, whether professors, professionals, clerks or agricultural labourers, have experienced the humiliations and exploitations of casteism at crucial points in their life (Omvedt, 2001: 27-28).

The qualitative difference here being in terms of their endurance and the means and capacity to fight caste based exploitation. The middle class Dalits possess the leadership qualities mainly provided by their social and economic mobility from which the Dalit masses could benefit. She further notes that,

Exploitation takes different forms, but people at every level, from labourer to highly educated, have experienced discrimination because they don't have the same degree of influence, money and family linkages of the upper castes. It is this unpalatable experience of Brahminism which holds together the various Dalit middle class communities and factions. Holding them together is also a simple economic fact: the 'middle class' is not a solidary group. Instead, there is a ladder and a sliding scale of privilege and attainment. At all levels, Dalits aspire to a better life, and this may mean a higher pay or a little land for agricultural labourers, a higher position in the bureaucracy and more prestige for the educated. One does not necessarily see the other's success as cutting off his opportunities. But Dalits clearly distrust their political leadership (Omvedt, 2001: 28).

However, the emergence of the Dalit middle class is not the panacea for all the problems the Dalits face today. She opines,

The rise of Dalit middle class does not mean the end of casteism and oppression; a growing middle class of an oppressed group simply strengthens the overall fight against oppression. The new Dalit millennium will be an interesting one! (Omvedt, 2001: 30)

Indeed, the Dalit middle class is a product of social justice or protective discrimination policy of the Indian state and the enabling environment coupled with their inner urge to rise above their disadvantageous situation that accelerated their recruitment into the middle class in such a large scale within a short span of time. However, the process of social change was inadequate in reaching all the Dalits and, at the same time, the opportunities provided for their social and economic mobility are meager compared to the raising aspirations among them. The incongruity in social and economic mobility of the middle class Dalits is a hurdle that has a bearing on the very process of their social mobility.

Elites

The word 'Elite'⁵⁶ first used in the sixteenth century meant a 'choice'. In seventeenth century, it was used to describe 'commodities of particular excellence'; and later on to denote 'superior social groups' such as crack military units or the higher ranks of the nobility. According to Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest use of 'elites' is in 1823, denoting social groups. Until nineteenth century, the term did not become famous in the social and political writings of Europe or until the 1930s in Britain⁵⁷ and America (Bottomore, 1971).⁵⁸ The term came into vogue towards the close of the 19th century in the socio-political literature of Europe, Britain and America, and in 1930, through sociological writings, especially those of the Italian sociologist Pareto. The term was used to mean many things and to describe certain fundamental features of organized social life.

Pareto⁵⁹ observes, the theory of the Elite suggests that, 'in every society there are people who possess in a marked degree the qualities of intelligence, character, skill, and capacity of whatever kind'. Mosca⁶⁰ divided elite into (1) governing elite (directly in Government positions) and (2) Non-governing elite (intellectuals). According to Laswell,⁶¹ there are as many types of elites as there are institutions. According to Kerr (1960),⁶² there are five categories of elite in the industrialization process: 1) a dynamic elite, 2) the middle class, 3) the revolutionary, 4) the colonial

⁵⁶ Rajora Suresh Chandra, (1987) traces the history of the concept of Elite, "During the 16th century, the term 'elite' was used simply to mean a choice. In the 17th century, it signified commodities of a particular excellence. Later it was used to describe the superior social groups (Bottomore, 1964:25)." According to Mannheim 'elites' are those minorities, which are set apart from the rest of the society by their pre-eminence in one or more of these various distributions.

⁵⁷ In Great Britain it was used to denote non-political group i.e., those with assured entry into 'high society' were designated as elites. The term was used to indicate the superiority and exclusiveness pertaining to personal relationships (Cole GDH, 1955:102-103).

⁵⁸ Bottomore TB, 1971.

⁵⁹ Pareto employed this term to designate a class, which held a high status and commanded influence in the community. He suggests, "Let us assume that in every branch of human activity each individual is given an index which stands as a sign of his capacity, in very much the same way as grades are given in the various subjects in examination in schools..." So let us make a class of the people who have the highest indices in their branch of activity and to that class give the name of the elite (As quoted by Bottomore, 1966).

⁶⁰ Mosca (1933:53) defines the elite as an organized minority, obeying a single impulse, which holds domination over the unorganized majority.

⁶¹ For Laswell (1966) the members of the elite are "the holders of high positions in a given society." Cole refers to the elites as "groups, which emerge to positions of leadership and influence at every social level." Nadel has defined the elite as a "body of persons enjoying a position of preeminence over all others." Raymond Aron believes that "the minority which in each of the enumerated professions, has succeeded best and occupied high positions."

⁶² Kerr (1960:50).

administrators and 5) the nationalist leaders. Mosca delineates factors, which help a person or group to emerge as elite. He says wealth is the main factor. In some societies, the priestly class will emerge as the elite and in some other, the hereditary castes. Mosca stressed that wealth and military valor are the characteristic feature of the dominant class.

Weber (1953) classified the elite into political as well as intellectual; they are feudal and charismatic in nature. Similarly, Pareto⁶³ describes, recruitment to elite consists in merit and reorganization. From the lower classes too, an elite could be recruited. The following are the factors in elite recruitment: 1) hereditary (birth in aristocratic families), 2) wealth (richness), 3) religious dominance, 4) education and 5) individual ability.

However, these characteristics are broad in nature and do not help to identify elites in a complex society like India. Lal (1995:148-157) observes that, the problem of identifying elites is not new to social scientists today. Studies conducted in this sphere have mostly been conducted in Western communities following three approaches in the main: (a) positional, (b) reputational, and (c) issue participation approaches to the identification of elites.⁶⁴

Sau (1986: 123-4) notes that there is rapid expansion of white-collar employees in India compared to the industrial workers. And Shah (1990:161) adds that a large majority of the members of the middle class belong to the upper middle castes.

In Indian society, princes, priests, landlords, and top persons in the upper castes may be regarded to form the groups of traditional elites. In the 19th century, education was mainly responsible for the creation of new groups of civil servants, legal and medical practitioners, engineers, university teachers, journalists and creative writers. In the post independence period, with the expansion of administration, education and the

⁶³ As quoted by Bottomore, 1966.

⁶⁴ (a) The *Positional Approach* (which was popular prior to 1953) is one in which, "those holding position of authority actually make key decision while those who do not occupy such positions do not make key decisions" (Those who are occupying objectively defined top positional positions), (b) In *Reputational Approach* the influential persons in the community play a significant role and can get things done for the community and (c) The *Issue Participation Approach* (i.e., 'event analysis' or decision making approach) is based on the assumption that those who actually participate in the decision making process are the elites because they have shown the influence in real life situations.

growth of the centers of administration, now, new groups of elites have also emerged. Actually, the area of elite recruitment has widened (Census of India, 1971: 29-30).

Analysing the term elite under all these definitions, we can arrive at the conclusion that, the elements such as superiority, power and organization are important in defining the term elite. Thus, we may think of the elite as those who are regarded as superior, influential and are held in high esteem by the people; they may or may not have formal positions in politics and the Government, but they are in a position to influence the decision-making process, set values and uphold them.

It is here that the imminent question arises, whether all communities have a free access into the elites, more specifically, do the Dalits become elites? Heimsath (1964:5) argues that in India, social reform did not ordinarily mean a reorganization of the structure of society at large, as it did in the west, for the benefit of the underprivileged social economic classes. Instead, it meant the infusion into the existing social structure of new ways of life and thought; that determined that the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed.

Navlakha (1989) argues that elite formation in India can be understood by studying Industrial managers, civil servants, academicians because these are the areas the elite aspirants are generally attracted to. He mainly focused on the following:⁶⁵

- (1) Caste background, (2) Urban Vs Rural background, (3) Economic background, (4) Father's income, (5) Work/employment of fathers, and (6) Fathers' education.

⁶⁵ The study revealed the following:

(1) Caste background

Caste background (Percent of respondents from)	Population percentage	Elites (in %)
Upper castes	9.9	81.3
Middle Castes (cultivating)	24.1	6.8
Lower castes	45.1	3.5
Scheduled Castes	20.9	1.1
Others	-	0.2
Not stated	-	7.1

(2) Urban Vs Rural background: 86.5 percent of the respondents were of urban origin whereas the total urban population percentage is 18%. (3) Economic background: 84.3% respondents come from high, well to do families, whereas the population percentage of this category is around 5%. (4) Father's income: 61.6% of respondents' fathers' income was more than Rs. 250. 31.6% earned less than that. (5) Work/Employment of Fathers: 87.5% hailed from non-manually engaged families. 54.3% from high occupational stratum and 9.9% came from manual strata. (6) Father's Education: 89.3% fathers have modern education.

His study shows that, 79% of the respondents are from socially and economically advantageous backgrounds while the rest are from moderately advantageous backgrounds and none from socially, economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The other studies conducted on similar themes cited by Navlakha are: background of students (Jayaram and BR Sharma), students' enrollment in IITs (A.D. King), Indian students abroad (Victor Jesudasan), Urban Elite of Jodhpur (SK Lal), Indian Managerial elite (Sagar C Jain), etc. He argues that all these studies show that the aspirants as well as the settled elites hail from somewhat advantageous backgrounds only and lower sections of society are not represented in these even if it is marginal.

Another important observation made from the study is that, 'as a consequence of Western education, the upper castes like Brahmins, Kayasthas, Baniyas, etc., and some Muslims have emerged as middle class and from these middle classes most of the elite, including political bureaucratic, military and business have emerged' (Navlakha, 1989:23).

Sharma (1995: ix) observes that there are two main sources of mobility for Scheduled Castes, namely, (1) the welfare measures and (2) certain socio-cultural movements.⁶⁶ Patwardhan⁶⁷ as cited in Sharma (1995: 186) observes, "The overall perspective is that there is an increasing possibility for upward mobility for all the Harijans." She states, "there are two processes of mobility: (1) through corporate efforts; and (2) by competing between castes and with in a caste." Patwardhan also notices that, migration; education and white-collar jobs particularly outside the village have been the main source of social mobility among the SCs.

The challenge to the ideology of Varna and the construction of a counter-ideology is made possible only with the emergence of new Dalit elite, which is separated from and no longer depended on the traditional order and its political economy. In many

⁶⁶ Based on the innumerable caste studies, the main feature of the caste system are a common name, common descent, hereditary calling and homogeneity of caste members (op. cit., p.42). While criticizing the class studies in Indian society he opines that, "Class has existed along with caste and as an inseparable phenomenon forming the over all system of social stratification" (op. cit., p.45).

⁶⁷ Patwardhan, S, 1973, *Change among India's Harijans*, Delhi, Orient Longman, p.186

senses, the ideology that is fashioned is the product of these elite and has relevance largely within that social context. Yet the legitimacy of that ideology and of those who are elite is defined in terms of its relationship to the Dalit masses. Hence, the articulation of a new Dalit consciousness rests on a fundamental paradox; it is not a mass consciousness but depends for its validity on posited connection with the masses (Gokhale, 1990: 212-3).

The Dalit Elites

The idea behind the 'Harijan' or Scheduled Castes elites had developed from the observation of the 'widening gap' between some SCs⁶⁸ and the rest of the untouchables for whom the policies such as positive discrimination were meant (Dushkin, 1972: 212). KL Sharma argues, "the realization that unevenness exists among the scheduled Castes has led to the exploration of what is popularly known as 'Scheduled caste elites'" (Sharma KL, 1986: 56).

The development of very few persons or families from the SCs who, having utilized all the programmes and block others who are more needy in availing of the same programmes, leads to 'gaps' within the SCs. Thus, some families form as elites or middle classes and the rest remain poor. Consequently, various constitutional measures have produced and will produce, with the present rate of progress, only a minority of the middle classes among the scheduled castes, and the majority have remained and will remain a relatively poor working class.

There are elites among SCs, but the question is who these elites are? What is their socio-economic background? How they reach elite positions? Do they take up the cause of the advancement of their fellowmen? What are the differences between them and the non-Scheduled Caste elite? In a sense, it refers to those who are included/involved to a greater or smaller extent in the decision-making process, which implies the exercise of the intellect and rational judgment on their part (Abbasayulu, 1978).

⁶⁸ 'Fortunate' used in Ram, 1988:

The economic mobility of scheduled castes, which had its origins in the British period itself, registered an improvement only after Independence. Again, this improvement was only among those castes, individual families among them, who have acquired land, utilized various government facilities, and those are concentrated mostly in urban areas (Ram, 1995: 41).

Studies on Dalit Elites

There are quite a few studies on Dalit elites ('Harijan' or Scheduled Caste elites as they were called earlier). KL Sharma (1986: 56) lists the following studies:

Herold's *India's Ex-Untouchables*, Saberwal's *Scheduled Caste Elites of Punjab*, Sachchidanand's *The Harijan Elite* and Deshpande's *Scheduled Caste Elites and Social Change* are some of the most well known titles on this theme. Issacs interviewed fifty educated persons from the Scheduled Castes; Saberwal added eight more, that is, he interviewed fifty eight, Sachchidanand interviewed 200. Deshpande slid down much below Issacs, and interviewed only twenty-nine Harijan elites (Sharma KL, 1986: 56).

He observes that,

Two points of methodological and substantive nature emerge from these studies of Scheduled Caste and their elites: (1) The reliance is on the information which the researchers could gather from their respondents (elites in this case); and (2) it is by and large realised that the 'unevenness' among the Scheduled Castes, inherently prevalent as well as created by the implementation of policies and programmes for their welfare, is mainly responsible for their backwardness (Sharma KL, 1986: 56).

Abbasayulu (1978) studied the elite Dalits in Andhra Pradesh, in which he evolved a criterion to recognize elites⁶⁹. Those who are involved to a greater or smaller extent in the decision-making process, which implies the exercise of intellect and rational judgment on their part, are elites. Thus, (1) those who are elected/nominated to both the legislative assembly and legislative council etc. including ministers, (2) those Scheduled Caste members who have been recruited to the IAS cadre, (3) those who are employed as Lawyers and Judges, (4) those working as Doctors and Engineers and (5) those employed as teachers in the three old⁷⁰ universities. He further categorizes those from category (1) & (2) as political elites, (3) as administrative elites and (4) & (5) as intellectual elites.

⁶⁹ Abbasayulu (1978) evolves new criterion for defining elites. According to him, "elites are those who have intellect and rational judgment which participating in decision making policy and occupy some position of trust and responsibility."

⁷⁰ They are Osmania University, Andhra University and Kakatiya University.

He recognizes the role of the elites in the development of Scheduled castes/Dalits in general. He observes that the Scheduled Caste elite or elite Dalit represent the grievances of scheduled castes at the different fora like the legislative assembly and the political parties.

Sachidananda (1974) made a study of *The Harijan Elites* in Bihar. He took educated Harijans into consideration. He also evolved a criterion to recognize elite Dalits. For him, 'any Harijan who is a matriculate and lives in a village is an elite' and a 'Harijan who is a graduate and lives in a town or a city is considered as an elite'. He finds elite Dalits as 'torch bearers' of social change, for they are most active and powerful agents of social transformation. They are the catalysts of change.

Roy and Singh (1987) in their study of 'Harijan elites' deal with, the 'dilemma that the Scheduled Castes face today' in the context of 'transformation of the social system on the slippery path of socio-economic status upgradation' and observe that the Scheduled Castes now remain suspended 'between the two poles of rebellion and silence (Roy and Singh, 1987: v-iv). The Scheduled Caste elite are concerned with community problems; the issue of reservations; community solidarity and the upliftment of the community.

Roy and Singh (1987: 12-13) observe that the impact of modernization created spaces for scheduled castes to become elites. The journey of scheduled castes 'to the promised land of economic security, equality and dignity' continues contrary to the expectation that it would end upon the availing of facilities like reservations in education and in the services. The worldview introduced by the British Raj lit a ray of hope among Untouchables to overcome their 'fateful condition and their status of passive subjects to that of active citizens', and it set up a new goal to be achieved i.e., 'equality democratically'.

Roy and Singh (1987: 20) further posit a view that Harijan Elites are 'caught between the two worlds of trouble; some past which they can not completely give up and the uncertain future which they must go on trying to share'. 'The Harijan Elites', they say, 'as the most knowledgeable, articulate and advanced sector of the

untouchables, are in a better position to express their community's concerns and the way to realize them'.

Modern consciousness, which contradicts the caste system and 'Untouchability', is gaining importance in India. However, there are several threats posed by the upper strata whose interests lie with the perpetuation of the caste system, who want the traditional values to be continued. The Dalits, realizing that their future will be with the opposition of the caste system, will fight against it. There are two strategies, which they may employ for development. One is collective political action and other is personal or individual salvation. The Dalit elites prefer the path of individual salvation through upward social mobility, better jobs and access to power and positions through different political parties. The Dalit elites who emerged from their depressed positions to acquire elite status are caught between these two worlds. On the one hand, they aspire to be different, while on the other hand they are blamed for maintaining a distance from their own community.

Aggarwal (1983) presented the cases of educated Scheduled Castes who did well in their respective fields; he worked with the categories of Students, Peons, Clerks, Officials, Doctors, Engineers and Politicians in his study *Halfway to Equality* conducted in Delhi in 1983. The study deals with the successful Scheduled Caste men from Delhi, as well as from the other states, drawing upon information pertaining to their personal family background, their mobility 'up from the bottom', the government benefits for SC students, the hardships they faced in the process of reaching present positions, their views on untouchability, personal experiences, friendships with upper castes, its consequences, their attachment to their community, etc., all these were recorded in their own words and narrative style. The author presents all the narratives to the reader and asks him/her to decide themselves whether or not these 'educated, aspired Harijans' achieved equality on par with other castes. In his opinion, these educated SCs derived some privileges, are hopeful about their future and possess greater tolerance with regard to the present conditions than their counterparts i.e., rest of the SCs who have not benefited similarly.

Aggarwal's theorization of the status of mobile Dalits, once they move up from their original socio-economic statuses is that 'they are half way to equality', with the

examples that (1) individual men and women with education and good jobs are being accepted by the high castes as equals, (2) they still carry the stigma of their caste, (3) back in their villages, being untouchables, they are afraid of encountering insults due to the upper castes' jealousy of their achievements.⁷¹ On the issue of 'identification', he observes that most of the respondents do not want to hide their identity and further reports that their experiences reveal that it is futile to hide or pass over their identity, "most people, however, neither announce their caste voluntarily, nor hide it when asked. Something analogous to America's 'Black is beautiful' is happening."⁷²

Further, according to Aggarwal, the educated 'Harijan' elites hailing from different regions and having settled in Delhi, maintain relationships through meetings at conferences and festivals. Interest in Ambedkar and Buddha bonds them together and they utilize this occasion for tasks like matchmaking, etc., because there is a scarcity of educated SCs. One more interesting observation in this regard is that 'most educated Harijans are from the villages', and that, 'rural Harijans are more upwardly mobile than their urban cousins'. He further adds that, "a large proportion of urban Harijans are sweepers whose employment opportunities as well as wages have improved over the years. Consequently they have failed to strive for better positions in society".

Deshpande, who has worked on the problem of social change and the role of elites among scheduled castes, observes that the position of the weaker sections is precarious in the caste hierarchy. To prove their status they have to scale at least some heights in the caste hierarchy. The climb up would become possible only when the elites play a magnificent role for the betterment of scheduled castes. The main thrust of Deshpande's argument is that, social change among SCs is carried through elites.

The process of social change in India has resulted in social mobility among the 'lower castes' especially the Dalits. Such social mobility has been lacking in uniformity and has some limitations. It has not been able to effect changes all the sectors equally, viz., social, economic, political and cultural. Similarly, it has not effected change all

⁷¹ Aggarwal, 1983: 6-8.

⁷² Ibid.

the communities. However, in the case of the Dalits, it has resulted in the formation of a small section of 'Dalit elites' or Dalit middle class, mainly due to the mobility witnessed by them in education and employment.

In this context, the present study undertakes to inquire into the ideology and identity formation among the Dalit middle class. In this process, the study attempts to profile the Dalit middle class with all its general and specific characteristics in relation to the general middle class in India and then juxtapose the same, with its priorities and politics to enquire into the formation process of ideology and identity. The same is attempted in the next two chapters, which not only profiles the Dalit middle class but also deals with the ideology and identity related issues of the Dalit middle class.

In chapter Three, an attempt has been made to profile the Dalit middle class on the one hand through the analysis of their socio-economic background and life circumstances, mainly to understand the correlation between their socio-economic background with their life circumstances. On the other hand, the ideology and identity patterns of the middle class Dalits, juxtaposed against their socio-economic background and life circumstances, are examined in Chapter four. As part of which, their life ~~situation~~ identity patterns, ideological perceptions and political participation are also scrutinized. In order to validate and substantiate the above issues, a few representative case histories of the middle class Dalits are also discussed in Chapter four.

The next chapter provides an empirical profile of the Dalit middle class.

Chapter-3

Dalit Middle Class in the Present Study: A Profile

The socially and economically upwardly mobile section among the Dalits, the Dalit middle class, as has been discussed in depth in the earlier chapters, is unique in terms of its class composition, disposition, lifestyle and political opinions. Dalit middle class, as is considered by various scholars, is distinct from the global as well as the Indian middle class. The Dalit middle class is identified and defined in terms of its marked differences with the 'general' Indian middle class.⁷³

The life circumstances of this class are manifestly different from others, especially the general Indian middle class. Considering the abundant accounts that profiled middle class in India,⁷⁴ the Dalit middle class satisfies all the important features; while specific other features are unique to this class alone. This uniqueness is generally attributed to its atypical location, which necessitates it to deal with varied forms of caste-based discrimination as well as achieving economic mobility. In order to reach the middle class positions, the Dalits need to attempt social as well as economic mobility simultaneously. While the 'caste-Hindu middle class' enjoys a privileged social status independent of its economic attributes, middle classes in other societies as well are not subjected to this kind of socially hierarchical and unequal circumstances.

The studies on general middle class in India, again enumerated at length earlier, largely dealt with the profiling of the members of the middle class by way of providing socio-economic profiles of individuals (and in some cases families), their perceptions on various issues concerning their own lives and also the society, their interests and identification with various socio-political issues.⁷⁵ Similarly, the studies on Dalit middle class also engaged with such issues in addition to laying emphasis on caste and identity.⁷⁶

⁷³ See Kulke, 1976; Ram, 1988; and Omvedt, 2002.

⁷⁴ Misra, 1961; Prasad, 1968; Singh, 1985.

⁷⁵ Prasad, 1968; Singh, 1985.

⁷⁶ Kulke, 1976; Ram, 1988; Srinivas, 1996; Saavala, 2001.

Given the foregoing framework, this chapter outlines and collates various characteristics and the specificities/particulars of Dalit middle-class by juxtaposing it against the general features of the middle class. The objective here is to focus broadly on socio-economic profiles (occupation, age, gender, sub-caste, marital status, educational qualifications, religion, and work career) of the respondents. The same attributes are also compared with the education, occupation, employment and income of their families (spouse and children) and their paternal families (parents, grandparents and siblings). In addition, other determinant factors of their socio-economic status like number of dependents and the nature of their dependence, education patterns in the paternal family, residential locality, status of residential accommodation, consumption patterns, economic status in terms of income, savings and debts, landholding patterns, changes in lifestyle, etc. are analyzed as part of the social background of respondents.

Dalit Middle Class: the Location

The foremost determinant of Dalit middle class is the occupation of its members. Dalits, especially those who got access to modern education, which provided avenues for employment in modern occupations and professions and had consequences for their social and economic upward mobility- became part of the emerging middle class within their community. They are largely concentrated in government service, autonomous institutions, government and private- teaching and research institutions, public sector units like banks, railways, electricity department, APSRTC (Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation), etc. They are also engaged in independent professions like law and medicine as well as employed in the private sector mainly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the print media. Few of them are also in business and entrepreneurship. The demarcation between occupation and profession blur often, in the case of the respondents of the present study, the same is more evident in the case of many technically qualified professionals often taking up jobs. In such instances, the clear indicator was about the sectors – government, autonomous, private, etc., – in which they have been and are employed. Professionals from law and medicine fields find themselves subject to this phenomenon and the switching between being an employee and an independent professional is evident. In

the case of doctors, they start their career as an independent professional and later on switch over to becoming independent professionals. In other cases, it is vice-versa.

Occupation

The respondents in the present study have been drawn from 8 occupational categories namely 1) Officer cadre, 2) Clerk cadre, 3) Advocates, 4) Doctors, 5) University faculty, 6) NGO professionals, 7) Bank employees and 8) Journalists. While all the categories had 15 respondents each, the number of doctors and journalists totalled 10 and 5 respectively, for reasons mentioned earlier in Chapter one. While the first two categories were from the government sector, categories 5 and 7 represented autonomous and the public sector respectively. Among the categories 3 and 4, which primarily represented independent professionals, there were few employees in both the government sector and the judiciary. Categories 6 and 7 completely fell under the private sector and few among them were independent professionals too.

Throughout the present study, respondents from these various sectors, comprising both – occupations and professions – were treated as merely representative of either occupational or professional categories, irrespective of whether or not they were employed or pursuing their profession/ enterprise independently. The respondents included in the study were found to have a monthly income ranging from Rs.8000/- to Rs.23000/-. Among them, the independent professionals had less income compared to the employees. In Table 3.1, a comparison of the respondents' occupation and gender distribution has been provided.

Table-3.1 Occupation-professional distribution of respondents

S No	Occupational category of respondents	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Officer cadre	11 (10.5)*	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)
2	Clerk cadre	10 (9.5)	5 (4.8)	15 (14.3)
3	University faculty	11 (10.5)	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)
4	Bank employee	11 (10.5)	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)
5	NGO sector	8 (7.6)	7 (6.7)	15 (14.3)
6	Advocate	15 (14.3)	-	15 (14.3)
7	Doctor	9 (8.6)	1 (1.0)	10 (9.5)
8	Journalist	5 (4.8)	-	5 (4.8)
Total		80 (76.2)	25 (23.8)	105 (100.0)

* In all tables in this chapter, figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Very few Dalit women have entered into modern professions and occupations and the same is reflected in the sample. The figures indicating the general gender profile in employment among the Dalits reveal that,⁷⁷ the gender profile of the respondents in the sample is 80 (76.2%) males and 25 (23.8%) females. Women's representation in the present sample is nearly half in officer cadre, clerical cadre, university faculty and banks and in the case of NGOs, almost equal to that of men. Reflecting the general absence or negligible presence of Dalit women in professions like law, medicine and journalism, their representation in the present study is also either absent or marginal.

Among those employed in these occupations and professions, very few women were forthcoming in identifying themselves as Dalits and many displayed a reluctance to be interviewed unless strongly recommended to do so by their male colleagues or relatives. It could be partly because of the gender setting, added to the general unwillingness to reveal their caste identity to strangers, especially for research purposes. However, women who agreed to be interviewed were as articulate as the male respondents were.

Education

Education is the means for achieving social and economic mobility and middle class status in general. It is the same for the Dalits as well.⁷⁸ It is evident from the sample that in certain occupations, technical educational credentials are a prerequisite to obtain/achieve it. In the case of the current constitution of Dalit middle class, education is a deciding factor for membership. The education profile of the respondents of the present study also reflects these claims.

Since the respondents belonged to diverse occupational categories ranging from clerks to university faculty, accordingly, their education profile too reflects these variations. It ranges from matriculation to PhD. As part of reservations in employment in government sector, the Dalits are provided with concessions pertaining to minimum qualification for eligibility to these posts. However, the respondents of the present

⁷⁷ See Jain et al, (1997: 154) for employment pattern among Dalit women.

⁷⁸ Ram, 1988: 18 observes that, education plays a pivotal role in social mobility of Dalits.

study possessed minimum and in some cases additional educational qualifications. None of the respondents seem to have utilized such concessions.

The educational profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 3.2.

Table-3.2 Education profile of respondents

Respondents' occupation	Educational profile					Total
	Below Graduation	Graduation	Post Graduation	Technical degree	PhD	
Officer cadre	-	2 (1.9)	10 (9.5)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	1 (1.0)	6 (5.7)	7 (6.7)	1 (1.0)	-	15 (14.3)
University faculty	-	-	3 (2.9)	-	12 (11.4)	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	-	3 (2.9)	12 (11.4)	-	-	15 (14.3)
NGO	-	3 (2.9)	8 (7.6)	4 (3.8)	-	15 (14.3)
Advocate	-	-	-	15 (14.3)	-	15 (14.3)
Doctor	-	-	-	8 (7.6)	2 (1.9)	10 (9.5)
Journalist	-	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	-	5 (4.8)
Total	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)	43 (41.0)	30 (28.6)	16 (15.2)	105 (100.0)

As seen in Table 3.2, more than half (56.2%) of the respondents have post graduation or more educational qualifications. While 30 (28.6%) have technical qualification, one is an undergraduate and 15 (14.3%) are graduates. Interestingly, there are 16 (15.2%) PhDs spread across university faculty in the sample, (11.4%), officer cadre (1.9%) and 2 doctors (1.9%). Ideally, PhD is a desirable qualification for university faculty alone. However, the fact that there are 2 (1.9%) officer cadre employees and 2 (1.9%) doctors with a doctorate degree indicates their individual interest and motivation in pursuing higher studies and their learning aptitude, which high profile professions demand.

Higher the educational qualification of an individual, higher is his/her social status among the Dalits. Highly educated Dalits are greatly admired within the community. Even among the respondents, the display of admiration for highly educated Dalits was evident in their constant reiteration that education had been the sole factor contributing to their social and economic mobility.

Until very recently, in spite of having the facility of reservations in education and employment, very few Dalits could make an entry into the modern occupations and

professions. Owing to which, the average age of middle class Dalits in these occupations and professions is less compared to other communities among these categories in the middle class.

Age and Gender

Majority of respondents in the sample have an average six to ten years of service in their occupation or profession, with nearly half of the respondents falling under the age group of 36 to 45 years. Signifying the first *en masse* entry of Dalits into these occupations and professions during 1980s, there are 21 (20.0%) respondents who are between 46 and 55 years and there is only one respondent above 56 years. There are 11 (10.5%) respondents in the age group of 25-30 years and 26 (24.8%) in 31-35 years age group. This trend is common to both genders according to their representation in the sample, as can be seen in the following table.

Table-3.3 Age and gender profile of respondents

Age group	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
25-30 yrs	6 (5.7)	5 (4.8)	11 (10.5)
31-35 yrs	17 (16.2)	9 (8.6)	26 (24.8)
36-45 yrs	36 (34.3)	10 (9.5)	46 (43.8)
46-55 yrs	20 (19.0)	1 (1.0)	21 (20.0)
56+ yrs	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Total	80 (76.2)	25 (23.8)	105 (100.0)

Comparatively, Dalit men have forged ahead in the realms of education and employment in comparison to Dalit women. In the higher echelons of education and employment, Dalit women are thus inadequately represented compared to Dalit men. The sample is representative of such a trend.

Sub-caste and Religious Profile

To start with, a general overview of the Dalit communities and their religious profile has been provided, which has been further employed to locate them in a regional context. There are 59 communities (sub-castes) among the Scheduled Castes (Dalits) in Andhra Pradesh. Four of them, namely, Chamar, Chalavadi, Madiga and Mala are

spread throughout the state, while the rest of them are concentrated in specific regions or districts of the state. Most of them are small in number and are confined to a few districts. Among the Scheduled Castes, Madiga and Mala are numerically large and dominant. Both Madiga and Mala together constitute nearly 80 percent of the total Dalit population in the state (50 and 30 percent respectively). With these two communities in the lead, the rest of the 57 communities are broadly divided into *right hand* and *left hand castes*. Among them, some numerically small communities are traditionally *satellite castes* (related in a patron-client relationship) to Malas or Madigas.

Hyderabad city alone has 50 sub-castes from among the Dalits, with a total population of 3,07,248 Scheduled caste persons. Among these, 90 percent hail from Madiga and Mala castes- with 50 percent of Madigas, and 40 percent of Malas. According to the 2001 census, the urban population of Andhra Pradesh state is 20,808,940 (27.3 %) and urban population of Hyderabad is 3,829,753 persons. The Dalit population in the state is 1,23,39,496 (16.2 %) persons. The urban Dalit population consists of 21,20,087 (10.2 %) persons. The Dalit population in Hyderabad city totals 3,07,248 people (8.0 %).⁷⁹

Middle class Dalits predominantly originate from a few scheduled castes.⁸⁰ In correspondence with the general pattern of Dalit population in Andhra Pradesh, the Dalit middle class in the state, especially in Hyderabad, is largely constituted in terms of the two numerically dominant castes, namely Mala and Madiga. As they are numerically dominant, these two major communities access all the available mobility options and form 85% of the Dalit middle class. It is widely recognized that the Malas, who are slightly less in terms of population compared to Madigas, have overtaken them not only in terms of constitution of the middle class but also in general social and economic mobility as well. Among the numerically smaller sub-castes, Adi-Andhras are in a better position, similar to the Malas.

⁷⁹ Census of India, 2001.

⁸⁰ Kulke, (1976: 245) observes it as a major characteristic of Dalit middle class.

Sub-caste wise distribution of respondents in the sample is as follows: Mala 46 (43.8%), Madiga 44 (41.9%), Adi-Andhra 7 (6.7%) and other sub-castes 8 (7.6%). Respondents from the other sub-castes include Manyam, Pambala and Relli.

Table-3.4 Community and religious profile of respondents

Sub-caste	Religious profile				Total
	Hindu	Christian	Buddhist	Atheist	
Mala	31 (29.5)	9 (8.6)	2 (1.9)	4 (3.8)	46 (43.8)
Madiga	37 (35.2)	5 (4.8)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	44 (41.9)
Adi-Andhra	6 (5.7)	-	1 (1.0)	-	7 (6.7)
Other*	5 (4.8)	-	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	8 (7.6)
Total	79 (75.2)	14 (13.3)	6 (5.7)	6 (5.7)	105 (100.0)

* Other sub-castes include Manyam, Pambala and Relli.

The presence of religious groups, other than Hindu, is prevalent among the Dalits, as many of them have chosen to convert to other religions during various periods in history for a variety of reasons. Since the 19th century, social consciousness and political awareness has been increasing among the Dalits, especially among Dalit Christians, Dalit Muslims and Neo-Buddhist Dalits⁸¹, compared to Dalits who follow the Hindu religion. In fact, conversions to other religions in recent times have largely to do with such consciousness and awareness rather than any other reason.

Now, the Dalits constitute a considerable number among the Christians as well as the Buddhists. Since these Dalits would lose the benefits of reservations and other facilities, if their conversion to either Christianity or Islam was officially admitted, the number of Christians reported in many official surveys is likely to be less than the actual numbers. However, a considerable number of Christians and Buddhists were present among the respondents of the present study. Religious affiliations of the respondents demonstrate that majority- 79 respondents (75.2%)- followed or claimed affiliation to Hindu religion, while 14 respondents (13.3%) were Christians, 6 respondents (5.7%) were Buddhists and 6 respondents (5.7%) claimed to be Atheists.

However, comparatively speaking, there is not much variation in terms of distribution of communities (sub-castes) among the respondents belonging to different religious groups. The respondents were distributed more or less proportionately in terms of

⁸¹ Webster, 1992: 32 traces the history of Dalits' conversion to other religions, especially to Christianity during 19th century.

different communities within various religious groups. The same was found among those who claimed to be atheists.

Marital status

All the respondents in the present study are well above the legal age of marriage. The marital status of the respondents shows that 96 respondents (75 male and 21 female) were married, 6 were (four male and two female) unmarried, while 2 were divorcees (one male and one female) and one was widowed (female). All the unmarried respondents were in the age groups of 25-30 years and 31-35 years (three in each category), of which, four were male and two were female.

Of the 99 (94.3%) respondents who were married, 58 (55.2%) respondents had got married to persons selected by their families or relatives, whereas the remaining respondents exercised their choice in selecting their spouse. This trend was more or less common to respondents from all occupations and age groups. There was no differentiation in terms of occupation as far as type of marriage (arranged or self-chosen/love marriages) was concerned. The number of love marriages/self-choice of spouse was around half the number of arranged marriages. This trend was observed among both male and female respondents across all occupations and age groups. In all the cases where the partner hailed from a different community, the respondents had had love marriages. This trend was confined to only a few Dalits who were employed in prestigious jobs.

The correlation between age and type of marriage shows that of 11 respondents (10.5%) in the 25-30 years age group, 6 respondents (5.7%) had had arranged marriages, while 2 respondents (1.9%) had had love marriages. Other 2 (1.9%) respondents did not specify the type of marriage entered into. In the 31-35 years age group, 14 (13.3%) respondents had had arranged marriages and 8 respondents (7.6%) had had love marriages. Among the 36-45 years age group, there were 26 (24.8%) arranged marriages and 15 (14.3%) love marriages. Among the 46-55 years age group, 11 (10.5%) had had arranged marriages and 10 respondents (9.5%) had had love/self chosen marriages. The lone respondent in 56+ year's age group had had an arranged marriage.

The variation in terms of age and arranged or love/self chosen marriages suggests that, around the period between 1970s-80s, the economically mobile Dalits, especially the males, exercised their 'freedom' in selecting or choosing their spouse independent of and sometimes contrary to the wishes of their family.

A comparison between gender and type of marriage shows that, of the 76 (72.4%) married male respondents, 44 (41.9%) had had arranged marriages and 27 respondents (25.7%) had had a love marriage. Four respondents (3.8%) did not specify type of marriage. Among the 24 married female respondents, 14 (13.3%) had had arranged marriage, 6 (5.7%) had had love marriage and 3 respondents (2.9%) did not specify the type of marriage they had entered into. Compared to Dalit men, the phenomenon of Dalit women exercising their will in choosing their spouse is a recent one. In spite of the relative freedom they possess due to educational and economic mobility, the Dalit women are controlled by the patriarchal values regarding choice of spouse.

Table-3.5 Community background of Respondents' spouse

Gender	Community background of Respondents' spouse					NA (Unmarried)	Total
	Within SC		Other than SC community				
	Same sub-caste	Different Sub-caste	Schedule d Tribe	Other Backward Classes	Other Community		
Male	61 (58.1)	10 (9.5)	1 (1.0)	-	4 (3.8)	4 (3.8)	80 (76.2)
Female	21 (20.0)	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)	-	2 (1.9)	25 (23.8)
Total	82 (78.1)	11 (10.5)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	6 (5.7)	105 (100.0)

The pattern of marriage among the respondents thus illustrates that while arranged marriages were the norm (55.2%), love marriages too (31.4%) were prevalent among the upwardly mobile Dalits. Among these upwardly mobile Dalits, marriages were arranged with partners, not only within but also outside their community, with friends and acquaintances acting as mediators. In the case of love marriages, marriage with a partner from outside the community was the norm, despite a considerable number of love marriages occurring with partners within the community.

The reasons for having an arranged or love/self-chosen marriage range from: wish of the family members in the case of 58 respondents (55.2%) and personal choice for 30

respondents (28.6%). Of the 11 (10.5%) respondents who did not specify reasons for the type of marriage entered into, 3 respondents (2.9%) had had love marriage.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

In this section, the social background of respondents and the dependency pattern of their ancestral family and others are outlined. This dependency factor, largely characterizes the 'difference' of being the members of Dalit Middle Class.

Respondents' Paternal Family Background and the Dependency Factor

Paternal family plays a pivotal role in the respondents' education and employment, thereby being responsible for the respondents' entry into middle class. At the same time, it also has a bearing on respondents' present economic status in terms of its dependence or non-dependence. In this regard, education, occupation, employment, monthly income and dependence patterns of respondents' parents, grandparents and siblings were analyzed.

Parents and Grandparents

The socio-economic background of the parents has a direct bearing on their children. It manifests itself in terms of their children's level of social and economic mobility. In the case of Dalits, such a desire on the part of their parents motivates them to achieve a higher level of social and economic status compared to that of their parents. Given the levels of their economic affordability, the parents' contribution towards their children's mobility, might sometimes be in terms of encouragement alone. It is widely acknowledged that, many Dalits who entered into modern occupations and thereby into the middle class, have had modest origins. In many instances, they are the sole educated and employed persons in the entire family. However, the socio-economic background of the parents does play a major role in the children's socio-economic status.

The educational profile of the respondents' parents and grandparents suggests that majority of the respondents were first generation educated. In few instances, wherein either the parents and/or the grandparents were educated, the respondents' had

benefited in terms of resources and guidance with respect to their education and career. Second or third generation educated respondents were highly educated in comparison to the first generation educated respondents.

Table-3.6 Educational profiles of respondents, their parents and grandparents

Education level	Respondent	Father	Mother	Grandparents*
Illiterate	-	55 (52.4)	73 (69.5)	98 (93.3)
Literate	-	10 (9.5)	4 (3.8)	2 (1.9)
School level	-	28 (26.7)	27 (25.7)	1 (1.0)
Below Graduation	1 (1.0)	-	-	-
Graduation	15 (14.3)	7 (6.7)	1 (1.0)	-
Post Graduation	43 (41.0)	-	-	-
Technical Education	30 (28.6)	5 (4.8)	-	-
PhD	16 (15.2)	-	-	-
No Response	-	-	-	4 (3.8)
Total	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)

* In cases of variation in educational qualification among grandparents, only the highest education of one or more grandparents has been counted.

While the respondents' educational profile ranges from under graduation to PhD, among parents and grandparents, education levels ranged mostly from graduation to school level respectively. Among them, fathers were comparatively highly educated. This indicated that Dalits had access to education only in recent times. Apart from that, Dalit men had the privilege of being highly educated in comparison to Dalit women. The educational profile of the respondents' fathers, mothers and grandparents shows that the majority among all the three categories are predominantly illiterate. Few of the respondents' fathers, mothers and grandparents had been educated up to the school level; they were 26.7%, 25.7% and 1.0% respectively. There were 6.7%, graduates among fathers and mothers. One percent of the mothers had completed graduation and 4.8% of the fathers had had technical education as well.

The pattern of occupation too corresponds with that of education, placing fathers over mothers and grandparents. Similarly, Dalit men were better placed in modern occupations compared to Dalit women.

Table-3.7 Occupational patterns of respondents and their parents

Occupational pattern	Father	Mother	Grandparents*
Agricultural Labour	28 (26.7)	18 (17.1)	68 (64.8)
Agriculture	23 (21.9)	14 (13.3)	2 (1.9)
Caste occupation	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)
Govt. service	38 (36.2)	9 (8.6)	7 (6.7)
Independent Profession	3 (2.9)	-	5 (4.8)
Business	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Other	4 (3.8)	-	-
Home maker	-	59 (56.2)	-
NR/NA	6 (5.7)	4 (3.8)	21 (20.0)
Total	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)

* Only the highest occupation of one or more grandparents is counted.

The above table shows that at least one third of the respondents were second generation employed, nearly half of them hailed from families with a predominantly agricultural background, while very few had fathers who had pursued modern occupations.

In the case of 51 (48.6%) respondents, their fathers had been agriculturists, while 70 (66.7%) respondents reported that their grand fathers had been agriculturists. This perhaps could be an indicator of an occupational shift away from agriculture in the last two generations.

In the case of 13 respondents, their fathers were currently employed and earning a monthly income, while only 5 (4.8%) respondents' mothers were currently employed. Of them, 10 (9.5%) respondents' fathers were earning a monthly income of Rs. 5000/- and 3 (2.9%) respondents' fathers were earning between Rs. 8001/- to Rs. 15000/-. In the case of mothers, all 5 (4.8%) respondents who were employed were earning in the range of Rs. 5000/- per month.

In the case of grandparents, both maternal and paternal grandparents have been categorized together. There was very little difference between the educational and economic status of the grandparents of both male and female respondents.

Economic status of own, paternal and maternal families

The economic status of a family plays a major role in shaping the future of its members. The role of the respondents' familial economic status in their lives, (those who underwent social and economic upward mobility due to their families' capacity to afford their education) needs to be examined. With a view to compare their economic mobility with that of their families, the respondents were asked to identify the economic status of their own family, paternal family and maternal family.

Table- 3.8 Economic status of respondents' family in comparison with paternal family, maternal family and sub-caste

Family	Economic status as perceived by Respondents					Total
	Upper Middle Class	Middle-Middle Class	Lower Middle Class	Poor	No Response	
Own Family	22 (21.0)	59 (56.2)	12 (11.4)	-	12 (11.4)	105 (100.0)
Paternal Family	-	20 (19.0)	42 (40.0)	29 (27.6)	14 (13.3)	105 (100.0)
Maternal Family	-	16 (15.2)	40 (38.1)	35 (33.3)	14 (13.3)	105 (100.0)

Majority of the respondents identified themselves as 'the middle class proper', (i.e., middle-middle class), their paternal and maternal families as lower middle class and sub-caste as a whole in the category of 'poor'. An inter-generational comparison of economic status shows that, 29 respondents (27.6%) and 34 (32.4%) respondents with poor paternal and maternal family backgrounds had respectively moved into the middle class. From among the 29 respondents (27.6%) with an economically poor paternal family background, 15 (14.3%) respondents had moved into the upper middle class, 8 respondents (7.6%) into middle-middle class category and 6 (5.7%) respondents had moved into lower middle class category.

Similarly, of the 35 respondents (33.3%) with an economically poor maternal family background, 15 respondents (14.3%) had moved into the upper middle class, 13 (12.4%) respondents into the middle-middle class and another 7 respondents (6.7%) into the lower middle class. Of the total 42 respondents (40.0%) who had a lower middle class paternal family background, 3 (2.9%) had moved into upper middle class category and 33 respondents (31.4%) into middle-middle class category. Of the 20 respondents (19.0%) with a middle-middle class paternal family background, 4

respondents (3.8%) had moved into the upper middle class. Similarly, of the 40 (38.1%) respondents belonging to a lower middle class maternal family background, 7 (6.7%) respondents had moved into the upper middle class and 28 respondents (26.7%) into the middle-middle class category.

In all instances, one finds an upward mobility among the respondents compared to their paternal and maternal families. Thus, there is a general feeling among the respondents that there has been an improvement in the economic status of their own family compared to their paternal and maternal families.

Education in Paternal Family

Education is a very important indicator of social and economic mobility, particularly in the case of Dalits who had been kept away from access to education earlier for centuries together. It had been strongly advocated during the Nationalist movement and the socio-religious reform movements, that education among the Dalits would empower them to overcome their social, economical and political disadvantages. Similarly, post-independence Indian State too laid emphasis on the development of Dalits through education. Hence, the reservations in employment and political representation were considered more important rather than economic development.

It is evident from such efforts by the Government that, there is a steady progress in literacy among Dalits, though such progress is sluggish and slight compared to other communities. Independent of this effort, education among the Dalits began one or two generations earlier due to other factors. It was random in nature and confined to very few regions, communities and often to individual families. At a general level, efforts towards education began only recently and it is still a comparatively recent phenomenon. Consequently, the educated among the Dalits in general are predominantly first generation educated.

In the case of the respondents of the present study, more than half were second generation educated. However, the previous generation's level of education was very less. In few instances, such a background helped the respondents to set high goals for themselves education-wise. In few other instances, the respondents' siblings, largely

elder brothers, had been educated, thereby motivating and encouraging them to set higher goals educationally for themselves.

Table-3.9 Education in respondents' paternal family started with

Respondents' occupation	Education in the respondents' family started with					Total
	Respondent	Father	Brother	Sister	Paternal grandfather	
Officer cadre	6 (5.7)	6 (5.7)	-	-	3 (2.9)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	5 (4.8)	5 (4.8)	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	4 (3.8)	7 (6.7)	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	3 (2.9)	-	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)
NGO	4 (3.8)	6 (5.7)	2 (1.9)	-	3 (2.9)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	7 (6.7)	5 (4.8)	3 (2.9)	-	-	15 (14.3)
Doctor	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	2 (1.9)	-	-	10 (9.5)
Journalist	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	-	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)
Total	34 (32.4)	41 (39.0)	15 (14.3)	1 (1.0)	14 (13.3)	105 (100.0)

Overall, education in the respondents' families began with other family members. While in 34 (32.4%) instances, the respondents were the first to be educated, in cases where the other members of the family were the first to be educated, the figures were: father: 41 (39.0%) instances, brother: 15 (14.3%) instances, sister: 1 (1.0%) instance and paternal grandfather: 14 (13.3%) instances. A comparison between male and female respondents shows that, the female respondents were mostly second generation educated, the proportion of educated women in the families of the respondents had risen by almost three times the original figure and in the case of male respondents, the proportion of educated men had doubled. Thus, significant changes seem to have occurred for women in comparison to men, in terms of access to education and motivation and encouragement from family members, which was absent earlier. Another important factor is that access to education becomes possible for Dalit women only when a relative in the previous generation had availed of education. This becomes significant when we find that 28 male respondents and 5 female respondents were first generation educated.

An occupation-wise comparison shows that, respondents employed as officer cadre, university faculty, bank employees, NGO professionals and journalists were second generation educated, while in the case of clerical cadre and advocates, majority were first generation educated. Only in the case of doctors, equal numbers of first and

second generation educated were found. The present generation of the respondents had entered into a diverse range of occupations, partly facilitated by the attempts by the earlier generation to acquire some level of education.

Dependents from Paternal Family- Their Shelter and Economic needs

Middle class Dalits, being the most economically successful compared to their ancestral family, other relatives, friends and acquaintances were dependent on the respondents for various needs like shelter, economic support, career advice, recommendation, etc. An overwhelming majority of respondents from the present study reported that among other forms of help, they had given shelter to paternal family members as well as other relatives under their roof at some point of time or the other.

The dependency patterns of the respondents' paternal family showed that, while in some instances they had lived with the respondents and had been economically dependent on them as well, in other instances, they lived separately, but were nonetheless dependent upon the respondents for the satisfaction of their economic needs. In many instances, it was the paternal family members, i.e., parents as well as siblings, who were dependent on the respondents.

Respondents' Siblings and their dependency on Respondents

Siblings played a crucial role in terms of either contributing to the upward mobility of the respondents or becoming dependent on the respondents for their economic needs. Sibling dependency on the respondents for their education and employment needs examination to establish their economic bearing on the respondents. The following table (3.10) illustrates the number of siblings (brothers and sisters) the respondents had.

Table-3.10 Number of siblings (brothers and sisters)

Respondents' Gender	Number of brothers & Sisters				Total
	No siblings	Have only brothers	Have only sisters	Have both brothers and sisters	
Male	10 (9.5)	17 (16.2)	6 (5.7)	47 (44.8)	80 (76.2)
Female	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	1 (1.0)	18 (17.1)	25 (23.8)
Total	11 (10.5)	22 (21.0)	7 (6.7)	65 (61.9)	105 (100.0)

There were 11 (10.5%) respondents who did not have siblings. There were 22 (21.0%) who had only brothers, 7 (6.7%) had only sisters and 65 (61.9%) had both brothers and sisters.

Table-3.11 Respondents' education, occupation and monthly income in comparison with their siblings

Gradation	Respondents' education, occupation and monthly income in comparison with their brothers & sisters		
	Education	Occupation	Monthly income
Similar	3 (2.9)	6 (5.7)	9 (8.6)
Lower	60 (57.1)	54 (51.4)	64 (61.0)
Higher	2 (1.9)	-	-
Some higher & some lower	29 (27.6)	34 (32.4)	21 (20.0)
Not Applicable*	11 (10.5)	11 (10.5)	11 (10.5)
Total	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)

* No siblings.

A comparison of the respondents' and their siblings' education, occupation and monthly income showed that in majority of the cases, the siblings had lower levels of education (57.1%), occupation (51.4%) and monthly income (61.0%) compared to the respondents. In the case of other respondents, where some siblings had higher and lower levels of education (27.6%), occupation (32.4%) and monthly income (20.0%), the figures shown were significant due to their implications for the social and economic mobility of the respondents. In two cases, the respondents' siblings had higher levels of education than the respondents; however, this difference is absent in the occupation and monthly income categories.

There are no instances of both parents and siblings being dependent on respondents. In the 37(35.2%), cases, only parents were dependent on respondents. Among these, in 4 cases parents were dependent on the respondents but they (the respondents) had no siblings, in 4 of these cases, parents were not dependent and in 1 case parents were no longer alive. Similarly, in 5 cases, only the siblings were dependent on the respondents. There were only 13 cases, where both parents and siblings were not dependent upon the respondents. Significantly, among the cases where the respondents did not have siblings, in 4 cases, the parents were dependent on respondents, in 1 case not dependent and in 6 cases, the parents were no longer alive. Similarly, in 1 case, parents were no longer alive but siblings were dependent, in 43

cases siblings were not dependent and the parents no longer alive and 6 cases in which respondents had no siblings and parents were also no longer alive.

Table-3.12 Nature of dependency of respondents' paternal family

Dependents from paternal family	Nature of dependency				Total
	Living with Respondents' family	Economic dependency	No dependency	Not Applicable*	
Parents	7 (6.7)	30 (28.6)	18 (17.1)	50 (47.6)	105 (100.0)
Siblings	5 (4.8)	-	89 (84.8)	11 (10.5)	105 (100.0)
Total#	12 (11.4)	30 (28.6)	107	61 (58.1)	105 (100.0)

* Not Applicable denotes parents not alive and no siblings.

Totals do not tally to 100%.

In no instance were siblings dependent on respondents for economic needs alone. Their dependence was in terms of shelter, emotional support as well as economic needs, largely by unmarried siblings, who were pursuing their studies or seeking employment. The instances of siblings being dependent on respondents were: in 5 (4.8%) cases, in terms of staying with the respondents. There were 7 (6.7%) parents staying with respondents. Another 30 (28.6%) parents were dependent on respondents for their economic needs. In total, there were dependents in 42 (40.0) cases.

Though in 44 (41.9%) cases, the respondents' parents (both or one) were alive, only in 7 (6.7%) cases were the parent/s are staying with the respondents' family and in 30 (28.6%) cases, dependent on them for their economic needs. Of them, 10 (9.5%) out of 13 (12.4%) single parents alive were economically dependent on respondents. Totally 37 (35.2%) parents were dependent on respondents in terms of economic needs as well as living with the respondents' family.

A comparison in terms of respondents' gender and dependency by their siblings shows that, both male and female respondents have siblings as dependents on them, irrespective of their own marital status and having own family. In the case of parents, 24 male respondents and 6 female respondents had their parents dependent on them.

Another 6 male respondents and 1 female respondent had their parents living with them. Similarly, 4 male respondents and 1 female respondent had their siblings staying with them.

In most cases, the dependency was not only due to the 'need factor' but also due to the relatively better economic status of the respondents compared to their parents or siblings. There were instances where respondents, who were relatively well off financially, had more than one sibling who were solely dependent on them.

A comparison with respondents' occupation and paternal family dependency shows that, respondents from all occupations and professions had dependents. Higher the occupational status of respondents (read income), higher the dependency of paternal family members on them. In the case of less represented professions, like Doctors and Journalists the number of dependents was also less. On an average, 5-7 respondents from each occupation or profession reported such dependency.

All the above figures assume significance since the dependency of parents and siblings mars individuals in the Dalit middle class from enjoying the full benefits of their occupational status and upward mobility in terms of improved standard of living compared to the general middle class. Moreover, it also reveals the close emotional ties with and commitment to parents and siblings, in addition to their own families.

Other Dependents

There were few other dependents from among close relatives, distant relatives, acquaintances and friends from the respondents' native place for both economic needs as well as for shelter. Most of the dependents from others category were students pursuing studies, appearing for government exams, searching for employment, etc. Many respondents informed that they provided economic assistance to relatives and friends on need basis and had sheltered some relatives in the past. However, currently there are not many relatives and friends staying with them.

It would be useful to understand the kind of social relations the respondents were maintaining with their relatives and their friends since childhood.

Table-3.13 Dependents other than family members and nature of dependence

Other dependents	Nature of Dependency			Total
	Staying with Respondent	Economic needs	No dependency	
Close Relatives	6 (5.7)	12 (11.4)	-	18 (17.1)
Distant relatives	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Acquaintances & Friends	-	3 (2.9)	-	3 (2.9)
No dependents	-	-	83 (79.0)	83 (79.0)
Total	6 (5.7)	16 (15.2)	83 (79.0)	105 (100.0)

A total of 22 (21.0%) respondents had shouldered responsibility for their relatives and friends by assisting them for their various needs. Of them, 6 (5.7%) respondents had close relatives, (other than paternal family members), staying with them and 16 (15.2%) had distant relatives, acquaintances and friends depending on them for economic needs.

All these figures are a significant indicator of the respondents' degree of attachment to their extended family, friends and other acquaintances in their community. It reflects a concern for the well being, not only of their immediate family members, but also the other members of their community. This strong 'community orientation' also perhaps singles out the Dalit Middle class from the general middle class.

The social background of middle class Dalits, particularly the respondents suggests that, in general, compared to their present socio-economic status, their paternal family's socio-economic background is low. The education, occupation and income levels of the respondents are higher compared to their paternal families. There is a visible upward mobility in the case of respondents. At the same time, their paternal family's low socio-economic status has a bearing on their upward mobility.

Respondents' families

A family's social and economic status is determined on the basis of its members' education, employment and income patterns. Accordingly, respondents' spouse and children's education, employment and income patterns were analyzed to understand the likely implications for family economic and social status.

Spouse

While 75 (71.4%) male respondents and 21 (20.0%) female respondents had a spouse, 9 (8.6%) respondents did not have a spouse, of which 2 (1.9%) were divorcees, 1 (1.5%) was a widow and 6 (5.7%) were unmarried, of these, 5 (4.8%) were males and 4 (3.8%) were females.

In Table 3.14, education, occupation and monthly income of respondents' spouse were analysed. In the case of occupation and monthly income, spouses of respondents who were employed in lower occupational categories and those who are not employed were classified under lower occupation and monthly income category.

Table-3.14 Respondents' education, occupation and monthly income with that of their spouses

Spouse's	Grading								Total
	Lower		Equal		Higher		NA		
	SMR*	SFR**	SMR	SFR	SMR	SFR	SMR	SFR	
Education	64 (61.0)	-	11 (10.5)	17 (16.2)	-	4 (3.8)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)
Occupation	65 (61.9)	17 (16.2)	6 (5.7)	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)
Monthly Income	64 (61.0)	18 (17.1)	7 (6.7)	-	4 (3.8)	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)

*SMR= Spouse of male respondent

**SFR= Spouse of female respondent

The educational profile of the male respondents were either equal to or higher than their spouse, while in the case of female respondents, not only their spouse's education, but occupation and monthly income were also equal or higher compared to their own. In the case of male respondents, education of their spouse was less than theirs (68.6%), while in the case of female respondents, it was equal (14.3%) or more (8.6%) compared to their spouse. Similarly, occupation and monthly income of male respondents were more than their spouse in comparison to female respondents.

The figures reveal that in the case of occupation and monthly income of spouse, female respondents were better off compared to male respondents since it had implications for social and economic status in terms of a higher standard of living.

Children

The respondents' children were grouped into broad categories - number, age, education, marital status, employment and monthly income - mainly to ascertain their dependency patterns and contribution to family social and economic status.

Of the 99 (94.3%) married respondents (including divorcees and widowed), 90 (85.7%) had children. The respondents without children were distributed across various age groups, 1 (1.0%) in 25-30 years age group, 6 (5.7%) in 31-35 years age group and 2 (1.9%) in 36-45 years age groups. Majority of the respondents without children were in the age group of 31-35 years. Respondents with one child were distributed in all age groups, namely, 1 (1.0%) in 25-30 years age group, 6 (5.7%) in 31-35 years age group and 11 (10.5%) in 36-45 years age group. Overall, having more than one child was the norm and the same was evident among majority of the respondents across all age groups.

Table-3.15 Respondents' age and number of children

Respondents' Age group	Number of children				Total
	No children	One child	More than one child	Not Applicable	
25-30 yrs	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	11 (10.5)
31-35 yrs	6 (5.7)	6 (5.7)	11 (10.5)	3 (2.9)	26 (24.8)
36-45 yrs	2 (1.9)	11 (10.5)	33 (31.4)	-	46 (43.8)
46-55 yrs	-	6 (5.7)	15 (14.3)	-	21 (20.0)
56+ yrs	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Total	9 (8.6)	24 (22.9)	66 (62.9)	6 (5.7)	105 (100.0)

Of the total 11 (10.5%) in the age group of 25-30 years, 8 (7.6%) respondents were married, of which only one respondent was childless while one had one child and 6 (5.7%) had more than one child. In the age group of 31-35 years, among 26 (24.8%) excluding the 3 (2.9%) unmarried, 6 (5.7%) respondents did not have children, 6 (5.7%) had one child each and 11 (10.5%) had more than one child. In the age group of 36-45 years there were 46 (43.8%) respondents of which only 2 (1.9%), did not have children. The remaining 44 (41.9%) respondents were distributed among the categories of 6 (5.7%) respondents with one child and 15 (14.3%) respondents who had more than one child. There was only one respondent in the age group of 56 years and above who had more than one child.

The following table demonstrates number of children and their age distribution.

Table-3.16 Number of children and their age

Number of children	Age of respondents' children				Total
	Between 0-25 years	26 years and above	Both age groups	NA	
No children	-	-	-	9 (8.6)	9 (8.6)
One child	24 (22.9)	-	-	-	24 (22.9)
More than one child	64 (61.0)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	-	66 (62.9)
Not Applicable	-	-	-	6 (5.7)	6 (5.7)
Total	88 (83.8)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)	105 (100.0)

Respondents' children were broadly categorized into two age groups, viz., below 25 years and 26 years and above. Respondents in the age groups of 25-30, 31-35, 36-45 and 56 years and above had children aged below 25 years. Of the 2 (1.9%) respondents in the 46-55 years age group one respondent had children aged 26 years and above and another below 25 and above 26 years of age. Only 2 (1.9%) respondents had children above 25 years of age while another 88 (83.8%) respondents have children below 25 years age. A total of 9 (8.6%) married respondents in the age groups of 25-30 years, 31-35 years and 36-45 years do not have children. All respondents in the age groups of 46-55 years and 56+ years had one or more children.

A comparison between the age and education of respondents' children showed that, of the 90 cases in which respondents had children, there was similarity in terms of age group distribution and education among respondents' children. While 77 (73.3%) of them were below 25 years of age and pursuing their studies, children of 1 respondent (1.0%) in 26 and above age groups had completed their studies, and 1 (1.0%) respondent had children in both age groups, with some pursuing their studies and some who had completed their studies.

Table-3.17 Age and education of respondents' children

Age	Education of respondents' children				Total
	Studying	Studies completed	Few studying & few completed studies	Not Applicable	
Between 0-25 years	77 (73.3)	-	-	11 (10.5)	88 (83.8%)
26 years and above	-	1 (1.0)	-	-	1 (1.0)
Both age groups	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Not Applicable	-	-	-	15 (14.3)	15 (14.3)
Total	77 (73.3)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	26 (24.8)	105 (100.0)

Marriage pattern among respondents' children shows that in many cases respondents' children were below the marriageable age. Only one respondent's children were above 26 years age group and had got married. With respect to the remaining 89 (84.8%) respondents (of which in one case, the children fell into both age groups) marriages of the children had not taken place as yet.

These figures are again significant because they show that in majority of the cases, the income of the respondents not only went towards educating their children, but also towards providing economic and social support for their parents and siblings, and in some cases friends and acquaintances as well, (as discussed in detail earlier). This perhaps may have consequences for the kind of education they are able to provide their children due to these multiple demands made on their income, though this could not be brought out clearly from the available data.

In this regard, the problems faced in terms of children's education at school, college and university levels were analyzed in order to understand the nature of such problems and the coping mechanisms adopted. Table 3.18 presents various such problems faced with regard to education of children.

Table-3.18 Experiences of problems regarding children's education

Problems faced by respondents' children are related to	Experiences of problems regarding children's education					
	At School level		At College level		At University level	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Fees	1 (1.0)	-	-	-	-	-
Standard of institute	1 (1.0)	-	-	-	-	-
Related to learning	12 (11.4)	-	-	-	-	-
Fees & Standard	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	-	-
Not Applicable	-	89 (84.8)	-	105 (100.0)	-	105 (100.0)
Total	16 (15.2)	89 (84.8)	-	105 (100.0)	-	105 (100.0)

As can be seen in the table, only those respondents' children who were pursuing school-level education had problems. Majority of these problems were related to learning and a few were related to fees and standard of the school. These implied their economic inability to afford fees and thereby access to good schools, though it could not be ascertained whether this was due to multiple demands on their limited income. However, in some cases respondents' children were pursuing studies at college and university levels, but no problems were reported in these cases, indicating general affordability among these respondents to provide their children with a good education.

Table-3.19 Occupation and monthly incomes of respondents' children

Children's occupation	Children's monthly income			Total
	Lower than Respondent	Higher than Respondent	NA	
Respondents with non-working children	-	-	88 (83.8)	88 (83.8)
Children's occupation is lower than Respondent	1 (1.0)	-	-	1 (1.0)
Children's occupation is higher than Respondent	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Not Applicable	-	-	15 (14.3)	15 (14.3)
Total	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	44 (41.9)	105 (100.0)

The comparison between occupation and monthly income of respondents and their children showed that, though 90 (85.7%) respondents had children, only two

respondents' children were employed. While one respondent's children earned a monthly income which was lower than his income, the other respondent had children with a higher income level.

Aspirations regarding children's future

Aspirations regarding children's future are reflective of the Dalits' own achievements and their aspirations for future generations. Higher the occupational status and income, higher are the aspirations for their children. Along with stability, high income and social prestige, there are other expectations from the children's career. In the case of those social groups among the Dalits, which have achieved a certain level of social and economic mobility, their children are expected to either achieve more or keep up with their own level. Thus, employment in a similar or higher occupational category is a normal expectation of children's future.

Table-3.20 Respondents' aspirations for children's future

Respondents' occupation	Respondents' aspirations for children's future						Total
	Government job	Settling abroad	Independent professional	Entrepreneurship	Children's own choice	No response	
Officer cadre	9 (8.6)	-	1 (1.0)	-	-	5 (4.8)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	4 (3.8)	-	2 (1.9)	-	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	4 (3.8)	-	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	3 (2.9)	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	-	1 (1.0)	6 (5.7)	15 (14.3)
NGO	4 (3.8)	-	1 (1.0)	-	4 (2.9)	6 (5.7)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	5 (4.8)	-	4 (3.8)	-	2 (1.9)	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)
Doctor	2 (1.9)	-	3 (2.9)	-	3 (2.9)	2 (1.9)	10 (9.5)
Journalist	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)
Total	34 (32.4)	1 (1.0)	17 (16.2)	1 (1.0)	22 (21.0)	30 (28.6)	105 (100.0)

Significantly, the respondents who wanted their children to take up occupations similar to theirs were located in government or public sector jobs. Irrespective of occupation and profession, majority wanted their children to be settled in secure occupations like Government service. Among all occupational categories, the major tilt was towards Government job or an independent profession that was secure and remunerative. Other options like business or settling abroad are still a distant dream for the Dalit middle class given their relatively lower level of achievement with respect to economic and social mobility. However, 22 (21.0%) respondents wanted their children to exercise their own choice with regard to career options. Among the

30 (28.6%) respondents who did not respond in this regard, half of them were unmarried and the remaining did not have any children.

Reservations utilization

The very emergence of Dalit Middle Class has its roots in the Reservations system. Without reservations in education and employment, almost none of the present members of Dalit middle class would have made it into the middle class at all. Even in the case of those respondents who had not availed of reservations, their earlier generations might have utilized reservations.

Utilization of reservations comes about only after the individuals from the eligible communities are able to complete their matriculation. Prior to that, admissions into educational institutions are largely open to all since there is sufficient infrastructure to meet the requirements of all the students. Reservations in education are meant to safeguard the interests of students from weaker sections. It enables them to further their interests pertaining to higher education in various disciplines or courses that are normally not within their reach, given the limited number of seats and high fees for these courses. Reservations for students from weaker sections, including the Dalits, are in the form of seats in proportion to their population and fee waivers, free books and scholarships, etc. Irrespective of the nature of the course, many poor and lower middle class Dalit students avail reservations in education after matriculation, beginning with securing a seat to availing a stipend (popularly known as scholarship). In the field of technical education, children of economically well off Dalits also avail reservations in order to secure admissions, which is otherwise not possible for them.

In this context, it becomes important to look into the reservations availing pattern among the Dalits that essentially has a bearing on their employment pattern. The following table indicates reservations utilization pattern among the respondents in comparison to their occupations.

Table-3.21 Stages at which the respondents availed reservations in getting/reaching the present job/occupation

Respondents' occupation	Stage(s) at which the respondent availed reservations to reach present job/profession				Total
	Education	Employment	Education and Employment	Not availed	
Officer Cadre	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	13 (12.4)	-	15 (14.3)
Clerk Cadre	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	8 (7.6)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	2 (1.9)	5 (4.8)	8 (7.6)	-	15 (14.3)
Bank Employee	3 (2.9)	4 (3.8)	8 (7.6)	-	15 (14.3)
NGO Professional	13 (12.4)	-	-	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	10 (9.5)	-	5 (4.8)	-	15 (14.3)
Doctor	6 (5.7)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	-	10 (9.5)
Journalist	5 (4.8)	-	-	-	5 (4.8)
Total	41 (39.0)	16 (15.2)	45 (42.9)	3 (2.9)	105 (100.0)

In the present study, 102 (97.1%) respondents had availed of reservations at various stages of their life, of which 41 (39.0%) availed of them for only education, 16 (15.2%) respondents for only employment and 45 (42.9%) respondents for both education and employment. Three (2.9%) respondents had not availed of reservations either in education or employment.

A comparison of paternal family economic background and reservations utilization pattern among the respondents is analysed in Table 3.22.

Table-3.22 Paternal family economic background and reservations availing pattern

Economic status of paternal family	Stage(s) at which the respondent availed reservations to reach present job/occupation				Total
	Education	Employment	Education and Employment	Not availed	
Middle-Middle Class	7 (6.7)	5 (4.8)	8 (7.6)	-	20 (19.0)
Lower Middle Class	17 (16.2)	10 (9.5)	15 (14.3)	-	42 (40.0)
Poor	9 (8.6)	-	20 (19.0)	-	29 (27.6)
No Response	8 (7.6)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	14 (13.3)
Total	41 (39.0)	16 (15.2)	45 (42.9)	3 (2.9)	105 (100.0)

A comparison between the pattern of utilization of reservations and paternal family economic background showed that the respondents hailing from poor economic background needed reservations for both education as well as employment. Among these, 20 (19.0%) respondents had availed of reservations as against 15 (14.3%)

respondents from lower middle class families and 8 (7.6%) respondents from middle-middle class families. 8 (7.6%) professionals in occupations like advocates, doctors had availed of reservations in employment too, as they were in Government service.

Career: Trajectory and Problems

As the average age of the respondents of the present study suggests, many of them had 6-10 years of work experience. The number of respondents with less than two years experience in the present job/profession was 12 (11.4%), 21 (20.0%) respondents had 2-5 years of experience, 32 (30.5%) respondents had 6-10 years of experience, 17 (16.2%) respondents had 11-15 years of experience and 23 (21.9%) respondents had around 16 years work experience .

Table-3.23 Years of service in present job/profession and number of years remained unemployed/ without work

Years of service in present job/ profession	Number of years remained Unemployed/without work				Total
	Less than 2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	Never	
Less than 2 years	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	-	7 (6.7)	12 (11.4)
2-5 years	3 (2.9)	4 (3.8)	3 (2.9)	11 (10.5)	21 (20.0)
6-10 years	6 (5.7)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	23 (21.9)	32 (30.5)
11-15 years	3 (2.9)	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	9 (8.6)	17 (16.2)
Above 16 years	7 (6.7)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	13 (12.4)	23 (21.9)
Total	21 (20.0)	14 (13.3)	7 (6.7)	63 (60.0)	105 (100.0)

Intriguingly, the comparison between years of service and years of unemployment among the respondents shows that, majority of the respondents in all occupational categories i.e., 63 (60.0%) had been unemployed at some point in time after completion of studies. Majority of the respondents had directly entered into the present job/profession after completing their studies. Forty two (40.0%) respondents had remained unemployed for varying periods. Of them, 21 (20.0%) had been unemployed for less than two years, 14 (13.3%) respondents for nearly five years and 7 (6.7%) respondents for ten years.

Overall, changes in job/profession by the respondents had occurred in the case of 60 (57.1%) respondents. Among these, while 28 (26.7%) respondents had had one

change of job, another 31 (29.5%) respondents had changed two jobs and 1 (1.0%) respondent had changed jobs more than three times.

Table-3.24 Previous jobs/professions

Number of Previous jobs/ professions if any	Type of jobs/ professions held previously					Total
	Similar	Lower than present	Higher than present	Higher & lower	NA	
Nil	-	-	-	-	45 (42.9)	45 (42.9)
One job	15 (14.3)	12 (11.4)	1 (1.0)	-	-	28 (26.7)
2-3 jobs	10 (9.5)	16 (15.2)	-	5 (4.8)	-	31 (29.5)
More than 3 jobs	-	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Total	25 (23.8)	28 (26.7)	1 (1.0)	6 (5.7)	45 (42.9)	105 (100.0)

A comparison between present job/profession and the earlier ones in terms of high-low category showed that 25 (23.8%) respondents had held a similar job earlier, 28 (26.7%) respondents had held jobs lower than the present one, 1 (1.0%) respondent had held a job higher than the present one and 6 (5.7) respondents had held a mixture of higher and lower jobs in the past. The number of respondents who had directly entered the present job/profession was 45 (42.9%).

These figures related to the respondents' career trajectory and prospects assume significance in the context of caste discrimination against Dalits, sometimes overt, sometimes subtle, which varies in its form and intensity.

Experiences of caste Discrimination

Untouchability, a distinct demarcation between Dalits and caste Hindus is still a problem for rural or urban, illiterate or educated Dalits. Like other Dalits, the middle class Dalits too face or perceive untouchability and other forms of caste discrimination in their everyday life and as well in their occupational realms.

Caste discrimination is pervasive in all spheres of life. In rural areas, it is more visible and often turns into a confrontation, but in cities, such instances are underplayed by both perpetrator and the recipient. In this regard, the respondents were asked to narrate incidences of caste discrimination in various facets of life, viz., workplace, career growth, neighbourhood and public places.

Middle class Dalits, who hail predominantly from a rural background, have experiences of varied forms and intensity of caste discrimination. Memories of such experiences are fundamental in shaping their collective consciousness as a community. Having been removed from such a social and economic setting, the middle class Dalits may or may not perceive caste discrimination in their present setting. Those who perceive caste discrimination might be having sufficient basis for the same or it could be because of their experience that they perceive it larger than its original proportion. Thus, their present social setting prompts them to act against it or tolerate it.

Table-3.25 Caste discrimination at workplace and in career growth

Caste discrimination experienced by respondents at work place from	Form of discrimination experienced in career growth					Total
	Casteism	Personal rivalry/ jealousy	Non-caste groupism	All of them	No Discrimination	
Superiors	15 (14.3)	1 (1.0)	-	-	1 (1.0)	17 (16.2)
Colleagues	2 (1.9)	-	1 (1.0)	-	-	3 (2.9)
All of them	4 (3.8)	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	6 (5.7)
No Discrimination	11 (10.5)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	64 (61.0)	79 (75.2)
Total	32 (30.5)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	67 (63.8)	105 (100.0)

One observes from the above table that less than half of the respondents felt discriminated on the basis of caste. Among those who had experienced such discrimination, the discrimination based on casteism was in majority, when compared to other forms of discrimination they had encountered in their workplace.

A comparison between caste discrimination experienced by the respondents at the workplace and discrimination experienced in career growth (in terms of denial of promotion, career advancement, etc.) shows that 26 (24.8%) respondents felt that they were facing caste discrimination from their superiors 15 (14.3%), 3 (2.9%) respondents from their colleagues and 6 (5.7%) respondents by both superiors and colleagues. On the other hand, 38 (36.2%) respondents had experienced discrimination related to their career growth in various forms like casteism (30.5 %), personal rivalry/jealousy (1.9%), non-caste reason like groupism (1.9%) or all of them

(1.9%). However, though in both these instances, majority of the respondents did not perceive caste related discrimination, it is important to take into account the perceptions of those who felt discriminated on the basis of caste, as this had a bearing on their work and personal life, thus limiting their mobility. It was observed in the case of majority of the respondents that, such experiences had led them towards collective action (through formation of SC/ST Welfare Associations to fight such problems).

The middle class Dalits are empowered economically, socially and politically in comparison to the Dalit masses. However, the Dalit middle class too faces caste prejudices and biases despite its economic mobility, in fact, more often as a result of such mobility. The significant aspect here is that their experiences of caste discrimination are in various new forms. As middle class Dalits, they are mainly subjected to casteism that affects their career growth.

When faced with caste discrimination, in some cases (wherein which they were assertive about their community identity) they had challenged it and in other cases, (where they were not assertive and were concealing their identity in order to pass off as non-Dalits), they became more vulnerable to such discrimination. The degree of reluctance to reveal/assert one's identity is perhaps related to the degree of such discrimination.

The following instance is a case in point. An engineer in a university, who was third generation educated and hailed from an upper middle class background was concealing his community identity, due to which, he felt, he had been saved from the trouble of being subjected to caste based discrimination. His perception was that, due to his upper middle class family background and as a result of not having utilized reservations in education and employment, there was no likelihood of him being subjected to caste discrimination, which he feared was otherwise imminent for a Dalit. Since he had not utilized reservations and as there was no mobilization of Dalits during the initial stages of his career in the university, he had not identified himself with the Dalits. Concealing caste identity, he claimed, had not been intentional on his part; however, people had mistaken him for an 'upper caste', mainly due to his physical features and lifestyle. By the time a strong mobilization of SC/STs had

emerged in the university, he had been established as a non-Dalit beyond suspicion. Throughout, a few other Dalit employees had known about his 'true identity' but had never made it an issue with him or the others. On his part, though, he did not directly involve himself in the activities of the SC/ST Employees Association in the university; he had supported its causes without being subject to suspicion about his caste identity by the employees from the other castes. He also intended to retain the non-Dalit image that had been mainly conferred on him by the 'casteist non-Dalits', as long as possible.

Table-3.26 Caste discrimination experienced by Respondents in neighbourhood & public places

Form of caste discrimination in neighbourhood	Form of caste discrimination in public places					Total
	Refusal of entry	No interaction	Insult/ derogatory comments	All of them	No discrimination	
Casteism	5 (4.8)	2 (1.9)	-	-	12 (11.4)	19 (18.1)
Non-friendship	-	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	-	12 (11.4)	16 (15.2)
Refusal of house for rent	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	9 (8.6)	11 (10.5)
Untouchability	-	-	-	-	1 (1.9)	1 (1.0)
All of them	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	-	-	-	5 (4.8)
No discrimination	-	-	-	-	53 (50.5)	53 (50.5)
Total	6 (5.7)	9 (8.6)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	87 (82.9)	105 (100.0)

In another instance, an employee in a government office revealed that he had initially concealed his caste identity, similarly fearing caste discrimination, only to realize later that with a strong Dalit mobilization in the office, there was no need for him to do so. However, having embarked on the stance of concealment, there was no way he could retract from his earlier position due to the repercussions involved. This had led him to persist with his adopted non-Dalit image. Thus far, he had never faced any situation involving the revelation of his Dalit identity. However, he had also realized the delicacy of the situation and the futility of revealing his caste identity under the circumstances, as it would lead to repercussions from the non-Dalits once his claims about his identity were proved wrong. If such a situation arose, he admitted, he would not be able to fall back on his community's support since they would be equally embarrassed by it.

In addition to discrimination related to their professional locations, some respondents perceived that, as individuals and members of the Dalit community, they were at a disadvantage in their neighbourhood and public places as well. Nearly half of the respondents had experienced caste based discrimination in their neighbourhoods, varying from casteism (18.1%), non-friendship (15.2%), refusal of house on rental basis (10.5%), untouchability (1.0 %) or all of the above mentioned forms of caste discrimination (4.8%). In contrast, with regard to discrimination in public places, they perceived that though the extent of caste discrimination here was relatively less, they had experienced it in various forms like: refusal of entry (5.7%), no interaction (8.6%), insults/derogatory comments (1.0%) or all of them (1.9%).

All these instances testify that, in spite of their progress in the fields of education and employment, Dalits still experience caste discrimination in conventional and some times newer forms. The locations of such discrimination have expanded even as Dalits have forged an entry into diversified and newer locations.

Help received from others in education and career planning

In understanding the Dalit middle class, it also becomes important to analyze the influence of others, (members of their own and other communities), on their lives. Friends and other well-wishers play a significant role in the lives of upwardly mobile Dalits, along with their paternal family. In the present study, the contribution of these individuals towards the upward mobility of the respondents in their student days and formative stages of their careers was perceived as being very significant in more ways than one. The influence of the persons who assisted them, had not only influenced their careers or aided their upward mobility, but had also had a bearing on their social relations in their new location, the middle class.

In order to understand the nature of assistance extended to them during their student days, as well as in their careers, the caste and occupational profiles of the individuals who helped them were analysed. These individuals, who extended assistance to the respondents in the above-mentioned ways, mostly belonged to a higher economic and social position in comparison to the respondents and their paternal families. In the

course of receiving help from these individuals, some respondents were also motivated to forge an entry into their benefactors' occupations

Nearly half of the respondents had received help from individuals (other than family members) during the pursuit of their studies and before embarking on their careers. In all such instances, more than one person had extended help to the respondents. No respondent reported benefiting only from a single individual.

The caste profiles of individuals who had helped the respondents psychologically, (by way of emotional support or encouragement to pursue education and/or career guidance), or economically and motivated/inspired them to reach their present occupational/economic position shows that, 7 (6.7%) respondents had received help from persons belonging to the same sub-caste, 17 (16.2%) respondents from persons from other sub-castes and another 15 (14.3%) from other caste persons (non-Dalits). On the other hand, 58 (55.2%) respondents had not received any such help. The figures once again illustrate a significant 'community orientation' among the Dalit Middle class.

Table-3.27 Caste and occupational profiles of persons who helped the respondents

Caste background of persons who helped respondents	Occupational status of the persons helped respondents				Total
	Similar	Higher	Mixed*	No Response	
Same sub-caste	4 (3.8)	3 (2.9)	-	-	7 (6.7)
Different sub-caste	5 (4.8)	10 (9.5)	2 (1.9)	-	17 (16.2)
Other castes	6 (5.7)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	-	15 (14.3)
Mixed	-	-	8 (7.6)	-	8 (7.6)
No Response	-	-	-	58 (55.2)	58 (55.2)
Total	15 (14.3)	18 (17.1)	14 (13.3)	58 (55.2)	105 (100.0)

*Similar, higher and lower

The occupational profile of the individuals who had extended such forms of help to the respondents shows that in the case of 15 (14.3%) respondents, the benefactors had belonged to the same occupational category, in the case of 18 (17.1%) respondents,

from an occupation higher in economic and social status compared to their occupation, and for 14 (13.3%) respondents, from various other occupations.

Table-3.28 Caste background of persons who helped respondents and nature of help received

Caste background of persons who helped respondents	Nature of help					Total
	Financial help	Career guidance	Recommendation for job	Introduction	No Response	
Same sub-caste	3 (2.9)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	-	7(6.7)
Different sub-caste	-	4 (3.8)	8 (7.6)	5 (4.8)	-	17 (16.2)
Other castes	-	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	6 (5.7)	-	15 (14.3)
Mixed	-	4 (3.8)	-	4 (3.8)	-	8 (7.6)
No Response	-	-	-	-	58 (55.2)	58 (55.2)
Total	3 (2.9)	16 (15.2)	12 (11.4)	16 (15.2)	58 (55.2)	105 (100.0)

Help had been extended in various forms such as: financial support during the period of studies in the case of 3 (2.9%) respondents, career guidance for 16 (15.2%) respondents, formal/informal recommendation for jobs in the case of 12 (11.4%) respondents and introducing the respondents informally/through letters to their employers in the case of 16 (15.2%) respondents. While tangible assistance to these middle class Dalits had been provided by the members of their sub-caste, mainly in the form of financial assistance, non-tangible assistance in the form of career guidance, introduction to employers and recommendations had been provided by members belonging to other sub-castes in their community and other castes.

Table-3.29 Occupational background of persons who helped the respondents and nature of help extended

Occupational background of persons who helped the respondents	Nature of help					Total
	Financial help	Career guidance	Recommendation	Introduction	No Response	
Similar to respondent	3	2	9	1	-	15
Higher than respondent	-	10	3	5	-	18
Mixed	-	4	-	10	-	14
NR/Not Applicable	-	-	-	-	58	58
Total	3	16	12	16	58	105

Individuals from occupational backgrounds similar to the respondents had provided them with financial help and recommendations for jobs, individuals with higher occupational status had largely provided career guidance and mentoring, and persons belonging to diverse occupations had provided assistance by way of introducing them to different career prospects.

Middle Class Conditions of Existence of Dalits

This section features the middle class characteristics of the respondents and their households with particular reference to the background of reservations that had facilitated their socio-economic mobility, the economic constraints they had experienced, and their lifestyles, in general, their conditions of existence.

Economic status

The economic status of the middle class Dalits is not in congruence with their income. Some of the reasons for this have been outlined in the earlier sections. Unlike, most members of the general middle class, most members of the Dalit middle class would not benefit merely from a comfortable economic position, profession/occupation wise, due to the demands made on them, financially and otherwise, from their relatives, friends and acquaintances and also because they solely depend on the income they

earn from their present occupation or profession to support themselves and these other individuals.

The income and expenditure patterns among the respondents suggested that they were largely distributed in income groups ranging below Rs. one lakh to Rs. 2-3 lakhs per annum. Most of them were located in the Rs. 1-2 lakh per annum group. In most cases, the respondents were the sole earning members of their family, the main source of income being their occupation or profession. Their lives were organized around the incomes earned from their occupations. Comparatively, government and public sector employees had larger incomes and majority of them were distributed in Rs. 1-2 lakh and Rs.2-3 lakh income groups. On the other hand, majority of the professionals, especially, those in the NGO sector, legal and journalism fields were concentrated in below Rs. one lakh income category. Among the professionals, doctors were relatively well placed economically, owing to the greater prestige of the profession and also due to the nature of their employment.

Table-3.30 Details of respondent's family income per annum from all sources

Respondents' occupation	Details of family income					Total
	Below Rs 1 lakh	Rs 1 to 2 lakhs	Rs 2 to 3 lakhs	Rs 3 to 4 lakhs	Rs 4 to 5 lakhs	
Officer cadre	-	11 (10.5)	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	-	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	5 (4.8)	6 (5.7)	4 (3.8)	-	-	15 (14.3)
University faculty	-	11 (10.5)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	6 (5.7)	8 (7.6)	-	-	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
NGO	9 (8.6)	3 (2.9)	3 (2.9)	-	-	15 (14.3)
Advocate	7 (6.7)	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	-	-	15 (14.3)
Doctor	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	-	-	10 (9.5)
Journalist	4 (3.8)	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	5 (4.8)
Total	32 (30.5)	47 (44.8)	21 (20.0)	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)

Considering the fact that many of the respondents belonged to the first generation of the economically upward mobile in their families, they had financial and other responsibilities towards their paternal family, and their expenses generally exceeded their income. Except a few, almost all respondents fell in the range of an annual income of Rs. 1-2 lakh. Among them, a considerable number had an income below Rs. one lakh per annum.

Table-3.31 Family income and consumption pattern

Family income per annum from all sources (in Rs.)	Respondents' family consumption pattern			Total
	High	Moderate	Low	
Below Rs 1 lakh	2 (1.9)	13 (12.4)	17 (16.2)	32 (30.5)
Rs 1 to 2 lakhs	1 (1.0)	42 (40.0)	4 (3.8)	47 (44.8)
Rs 2 to 3 lakhs	5 (4.8)	15 (14.3)	1 (1.0)	21 (20.0)
Rs 3 to 4 lakhs	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	4 (3.8)
Rs 4 to 5 lakhs	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Total	10 (9.5)	73 (69.5)	22 (21.0)	105 (100.0)

With regard to expenditure, a major chunk went towards household expenses, expenditure directed towards creation of assets, on children (for their education, etc.) and other needs formed a negligible percentage.

Table-3.32 Details of income per annum from all sources and average monthly expenditure of respondents' families

Income per annum (in Rs.)	Monthly expenditure				Total
	Expenses	Assets	On children	Other	
Below Rs. 1 lakh	30 (28.6)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	37 (35.2)
Rs. 1 to 2 lakhs	36 (34.3)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	3 (2.9)	43 (41.0)
Rs. 2 to 3 lakhs	17 (16.2)	2 (1.9)	-	-	19 (18.1)
Rs. 3 to 4 lakhs	3 (2.9)	-	-	-	3 (2.9)
Rs. 4 to 5 lakhs	1 (1.0)	-	-	-	1 (1.0)
No Response	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	2 (1.9)
Total	89 (84.8)	4 (3.8)	4 (3.8)	8 (7.6)	105 (100.0)

Savings and Indebtedness

Savings and insurance for emergencies were a common phenomenon among the regular income groups (salaried employees). Almost all these respondents had some savings and/or subscribed to various insurance schemes. Overall, not much variation was found in this practice among different occupational groups, except that the number of subscriptions to insurance schemes and savings were relatively greater among the salaried employees in comparison to professionals (due to their irregular income).

Table-3.33 Investments and savings for emergencies

Savings/investments	Insurance schemes					Total
	LIC	Health Schemes	Chit funds	All	No Response	
Investment in Agriculture/ House assets	7 (6.7)	4 (3.8)	-	2 (1.9)	-	13 (12.4)
Savings in Shares/ Chit Funds	29 (27.6)	5 (4.8)	2 (1.9)	-	-	36 (34.3)
Mandatory Govt. saving schemes	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	5 (4.8)	-	12 (11.4)
Investment and savings in Agriculture/ House assets & Govt. saving schemes	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	-	11 (10.5)	-	14 (13.3)
Shares/Chit Funds & Govt. saving schemes	-	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
Savings in Banks	1 (1.0)	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	2 (1.9)
No Savings	1 (1.0)	-	-	3 (2.9)	-	4 (3.8)
No Response	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	-	-	14 (13.3)	23 (21.9)
Total	47 (44.8)	17 (16.2)	4 (3.8)	23 (21.9)	14 (13.3)	105 (100.0)

Respondents had generally invested a portion of their earnings in various savings related schemes, shares and chit funds. The majority had opted for private savings schemes like chit funds and investments in shares, which were perceived as flexible and more attractive compared to other institutionalized savings sources like government savings schemes and schemes offered by banks. However, 4 (3.8%) respondents reported not having any savings/investments, mainly due to economic constraints.

The insurance schemes that the respondents preferred to subscribe to were those of the public sector, with a large number of them subscribing to LIC, in addition to other health related schemes. These figures indicate that their priorities and outlook with regard to savings/ subscriptions to scheme largely mirror those of the general middle class.

Except in the case of 28 (26.7%) respondents, others had incurred debts ranging from below Rs. one lakh to Rs. 10 lakh and above. Among these, 21 (20.0%) had incurred debts below Rs. One lakh, 6 (5.7%) respondents: Rs. 1 to 2 lakhs, 12 (11.4%) respondents: Rs. 2 to 5 lakh, 5 (4.8%) respondents: 5 to 10 lakh and 3 (2.9%) respondents had incurred debts above Rs. 10 lakh. The sources of credit for these debts were formal, informal and both: 46 (43.8%) respondents had borrowed these

money from formal sources (banks, place of employment, other institutions), 11 (10.5%) respondents had borrowed the money from informal sources (family, relatives, friends and acquaintances) and 10 (9.5%) respondents had obtained the money from both these sources.

Table-3.34 Details of standing debts.

Table-3.34 Details of standing debts. Amount (in lakh Rs)	Debts and their source					Total
	Formal sources	Informal sources	Both	No debts	No Response	
Below Rs. 1 lakh	15 (14.3)	3 (2.9)	3 (2.9)	-	-	21 (20.0)
Rs. 1 to 2 lakhs	5 (4.8)	1 (1.0)	-	-	-	6 (5.7)
Rs. 2 to 5 lakhs	8 (7.6)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	-	12 (11.4)
Rs. 5 to 10 lakhs	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	-	5 (4.8)
Rs. 10 lakhs and above	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)		-	-	3 (2.9)
No Response	15 (14.3)	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	-	-	20 (19.0)
Not Applicable	-	-	-	28 (26.7)	10 (9.5)	38 (36.2)
Total	46 (43.8)	11 (10.5)	10 (9.5)	28 (26.7)	10 (9.5)	105 (100.0)

The debts are incurred for various needs and reasons, mostly personal in nature. However, not much information could be obtained from the respondents in this regard.

Residential locality / Neighbourhood

One of the basic features of the middle class is that of residing in a locality, which can also be termed as predominantly 'middle class', with all the attendant amenities and facilities a middle class income group requires and desires. There are distinctly middle class, posh and poor localities in Hyderabad city, which are defined in terms of their residents' economic class. However, such localities are not separated geographically on the basis of these classifications. They may be at times located next to each other, some times as islands. A poor neighborhood is not uncommon in the midst of a posh locality and the reverse is also true.

The respondents of the present study, having a predominantly middle class income and lifestyle, though sharing a common social background with the people living in poor localities, had chosen middle class localities for residential purposes. With respect to the poor localities, it is generally perceived that, the majority dwelling there

hail from socially disadvantaged sections, largely the Dalits. The members of Dalit middle class, at least those who are locals, might, not infrequently, be having relatives living in these poor localities. Thus far, it has been the other communities, who have had possession of middle class and posh localities and Dalits are the new entrants into such localities, predominantly composed of other communities. In this context, it becomes important to understand their arrival into such a locality and most importantly their experiences in their neighbourhood.

Table-3.35 Residential locality

Current residential Locality	Number of years living in present place of residence			Total
	0-5 years	5-10 years	10+ years	
Middle class locality	36 (34.3)	32 (30.5)	35 (33.3)	103 (98.1)
Poor locality	2 (1.9)	-	-	2 (1.9)
Total	38 (36.2)	32 (30.5)	35 (33.3)	105 (100.0)

When asked to classify their present and past residential localities as posh, middle class and poor localities, the respondents chose to classify them as markedly middle class locality. All, except two respondents, lived in middle class localities. Even these two respondents had shifted from a poor to a middle class locality in the last five years.

This could be partly because the majority of these individuals had migrated to the city, for purposes of either education or employment, that had necessitated them take up residence in a middle class locality. Unlike in the past where the majority of Dalits who migrated to the city were illiterate and sought employment in unskilled sectors, the new migrants were educated and employable in modern occupations. Even in the case of 12 local (predominantly second or third generation migrants) respondents, their families had migrated long back and undergone some upward economic mobility; therefore, they were now placed in a middle class locality.

An examination of the respondents' house ownership status in relation to their neighborhood showed that, both in cases where respondents possessed own house or were living in rented houses; they were mostly concentrated in either non-Dalit

localities or localities with Dalit and other communities, in comparison to exclusively Dalit localities.

Table-3.36 House ownership status and respondents' neighbourhood

Ownership of house	Neighbourhood				Total
	Dalit	Non-Dalit	Both	No Response	
Own house	6 (5.7)	12 (11.4)	21 (20.0)	-	39 (37.1)
Rented house	7 (6.7)	19 (18.1)	38 (36.3)	2 (1.9)	66 (62.9)
Total	13 (12.4)	31 (29.5)	59 (56.2)	2 (1.9)	105 (100.0)

The reasons proffered for choosing their present locality/neighborhood in the case of respondents with own house ranged from easy availability for 17 (16.2%) respondents, economic affordability for 14 (13.3%) respondents, allotments by the office/employer in the case of 4 (3.8%) respondents and other reasons for 4 (3.8%) respondents.

Table-3.37 Reasons for choosing the neighbourhood in the case of own house

Respondents' neighborhood is predominantly	Reasons					Total
	Easy availability	Economic affordability	Allotted by office/ employer	Other	Not Applicable	
Dalit	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	-	-	11 (10.5)	13 (12.4)
Non-Dalit	6 (5.7)	5 (4.8)		2 (1.9)	18 (17.1)	31 (29.5)
Both	10 (9.5)	8 (7.6)	4 (3.8)	2 (1.9)	35 (33.3)	59 (56.2)
NR	-	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)
Total	17 (16.2)	14 (13.3)	4 (3.8)	4 (3.8)	66 (62.9)	105 (100.0)

Type of house

In comparison to their paternal families, majority of the respondents were first generation migrants to Hyderabad city, who had arrived largely for purposes of education and/or employment.

Table-3.38 Type of house and status of residential accommodation

Type of house	Status of residential accommodation		Total
	Own	Rental	
Independent house	28 (26.7)	48 (45.7)	76 (72.4)
Flat in an apartment	11 (10.5)	18 (17.1)	29 (27.6)
Total	39 (37.1)	66 (62.9)	105 (100.0)

Initially, some of them had resided in rented houses and later had purchased a place of their own. Presently, 39 (37.1%) respondents owned a house in the city, while 66 (62.9%) respondents were residing in rented houses.

Table-3.39 Type of house and number of rooms

Number of Rooms	Type of house		Total
	Independent House	Flat in an Apartment	
Single room	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.9)
Single bedroom	14 (13.3)	4 (3.8)	18 (17.1)
Double bedroom	21 (20.0)	13 (11.4)	34 (32.4)
More than 3 rooms	31 (29.5)	5 (4.8)	36 (34.3)
NR	8 (7.6)	7 (6.7)	15 (14.3)
Total	76 (72.4)	29 (27.6)	105 (100.0)

The type of residential accommodation that the respondents had largely indicated that majority preferred residing in an independent house 76 (72.4%) compared to an apartment 29 (27.6%).

Table-3.40 Status of residential accommodation

Present market value in case of own house (Rs. in lakhs)	Status of residential accommodation		Total
	Own	Rental	
Below 1	8 (7.6)	-	8 (7.6)
Below 2	7 (6.7)	-	7 (6.7)
2 to 5 lakhs	6 (5.7)	-	6 (5.7)
5 to 10 lakhs	13 (12.4)	-	13 (12.4)
More than 10 lakhs	5 (4.8)	-	5 (4.8)
NA/Not own house	-	66 (62.9)	66 (62.9)
Total	39 (37.1)	66 (62.9)	105 (100.0)

An examination of the present market value of the houses owned by respondents showed that, of 39 (37.1%) respondents who owned a house, majority of them, namely 26 (24.8%) respondents, owned houses worth below Rs five lakh. However, another 13 (12.4%) respondents owned houses worth between Rs 5-10 lakh, while only 5 (4.8%) respondents owned houses worth more than 10 lakh.

Consumption pattern

Owning assets is an important cultural marker for the middle class. It also reflects their consumption patterns and life style. The consumption pattern among the

respondents showed that, majority of the respondents i.e., 73 (69.5%) had a moderate tendency towards consumerism.

Consumption patterns of the respondents were measured in relation to the number of consumer durables used and their prices. Luxurious items such as car, refrigerator, washing machine, VCR/ VCP, computer were accorded high rank, while motor bike/moped, dining table, cell phone, credit card were given a moderate rank and TV (CTV/BW), telephone, and bicycle were given a low rank.

While there were 9 (8.6%) respondents with a high propensity for consumption of these durables, a considerable number, i.e., 23 (21.9%) respondents were at a low level of the overall consumption index. This trend has a bearing largely on their income and their responsibilities towards their paternal families. Those respondents who did not have to shoulder the economic responsibilities of their paternal families lived comfortably with a moderate consumption pattern, which also corresponded with their income level.

Table-3.41 Consumption pattern based on rank given to consumer goods

Respondents' consumption pattern	Frequency & Percent
High	9 (8.6)
Moderate	73 (69.5)
Low	23 (21.9)
Total	105 (100.0)

Almost all respondents possessed at least one each of the consumer durables mentioned and cases of ownership of more than one of these durables were rare and occurred mostly in the form of low ranked consumer durables.

Landholding pattern

Ownership of land is an important indicator of economic status in rural areas. Dalits' major source of livelihood in rural areas is agriculture labour. Traditionally, they do not belong to the land owning population. Except for the traditional *Inam* lands (community land gifted to Dalits in recognition of their services to village

community), many Dalits did not possess agricultural land. Only in the post-independence period, after other traditional land owning communities moved away from agriculture, some Dalits gained ownership of agricultural land in rural areas. However, such landholdings of Dalits' are largely comprised of lands distributed by the government as part of land reforms.

In cities, it is a remote possibility of Dalits owning lands, except those who migrated one or two generations earlier. In few cases, they had such ownership of land; it had, however, reduced significantly, owing to various reasons (urban land ceiling, growth in family size, slow-paced economic mobility among those families, etc.). Non-locals or the first generation migrants to the city do not have landholdings in the city, except land acquired by some of them for housing purpose.

Landholding pattern among respondents shows that 45 (42.9%) have landholdings, of which 5 (4.8%) are in the city and 40 are (38.1%) at their native place. Among those 42 (40.0%) who do not own any land, 6 (5.7%) are locals and 36 (34.3%) are non-locals. A considerable number of them i.e., 18 (17.1%) did not respond to the question. Almost equal numbers of respondents have or do not have landholdings.

Table-3.42 Landholding pattern

Respondents' occupation	Landholding pattern			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Officer cadre	6 (5.7)	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	6 (5.7)	8 (7.6)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	10 (9.5)	3 (2.9)	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	4 (3.8)	6 (5.7)	5 (4.8)	15 (14.3)
NGO	6 (5.7)	7 (6.7)	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	6 (5.7)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)
Doctor	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	10 (9.5)
Journalist	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	-	5 (4.8)
Total	45 (42.9)	42 (40.0)	18 (17.1)	105 (100.0)

Analysis of land ownership in their native place has some significance, i.e., to ascertain respondents' tendency towards investments in agriculture and shouldering agriculture-related responsibilities. Land ownership, as indicated in the above table, takes the form of mostly agricultural land of their native places. The practice (out of interest and/or as responsibility towards the ancestral family) of sending part of their

income to native place was found among a few respondents. However, such a practice is in decline now. Except few, majority of the respondents do not have stakes in these lands as they are the most economically well off in their families and have given up their share in them for their siblings' or parents' subsistence needs. In the absence of lands in their native place, many respondents have had to shoulder the economic dependence of their paternal family. A few others showed interest in family-related agricultural activities by providing financial inputs sporadically but also expected returns from such investments.

Lifestyle

Each social and economic class has a distinctive lifestyle. Members of a class follow the normative-material⁸² practices of that class and generally adhere to the class character. The educated Dalits, after entering into an occupation/profession that provides them with a middle class income naturally take to middle class lifestyle, until other circumstances force them towards their own community circles. Depending on the result of their initial attempts to interact with others, they either get assimilated in the general middle class or get alienated and move towards forming their own Dalit Middle Class.⁸³

A few lifestyle aspects like food habits and dressing, usage of a particular accent, tone in language or usage of English; religious practices, making or leaving out friends and acquaintances; family outing for cinema, eating out, etc., have been analyzed with an assumption that there would be a change in their lifestyle with their entry into the middle class, especially in the case of those who come from a poor economic background. Though, most of the respondents were not alien to these lifestyle practices of the middle class, those who had come from rural and poor backgrounds had also experienced or witnessed them during their pursuit of education, well in advance, to acquaint themselves with the middle class lifestyle. For majority of the respondents, changes in these lifestyle aspects were not sudden occurrences but had taken place over a period of time.

⁸² van Dijk, 1998: 152.

⁸³ Kulke, (1976: 252) explains how the attempts of Dalit middle class to integrate in the general middle class do not materialize and consequently lead to 'rejection' and 'alienation'.

In Table 3.43, the lifestyle changes in terms of increase or decrease in lifestyle, as perceived by the respondents, are presented.

Table-3.43 Aspects of lifestyle undergone changes

Aspects of lifestyle that have undergone changes over the years	Increased	Remained same	Decreased	Total
Consumption pattern: Food habits, Dressing, etc.	65 (61.9)	40 (38.1)	-	105 (100.0)
Language: Adoption of accent, English, etc.	66 (62.9)	39 (37.1)	-	105 (100.0)
Religion: Visiting temples, Worshipping new deities, etc.	26 (24.8)	77 (73.3)	2 (1.9)	105 (100.0)
w Friends & Acquaintances	83 (79.0)	20 (19.0)	2 (1.9)	105 (100.0)
Family outing: Cinema, Hotel, etc.	40 (38.1)	55 (52.4)	10 (9.5)	105 (100.0)

There was a noticeable surge in terms of qualitative changes in the respondents' lifestyle after entering into their present occupation/profession; these were largely related to food habits and dressing among 65 (61.9%) respondents and language among 66 (62.9%) respondents. Interestingly, these two aspects either witnessed an increase in terms of quantity and quality or remained same. However, 40 (38.1%) respondents found no change in their consumption pattern and 39 (37.1%) respondents had found no change with respect to language, since these individuals had been acquainted with these lifestyle patterns from their student days, in either their hostels or the hotels they frequented. In contrast, in the case of religion and family outings, 2 (1.9%) respondents perceived a decline in their frequency of visits to temples and 10 (9.5%) respondents found a decline in the frequency of their family outings. The circle of friends & acquaintances had widened for 80 (79.0%) respondents, remained the same for 20 (19.0%) respondents and decreased for 2 (1.9%) respondents. These new friends were generally from other communities. There is thus a marked increase in the interaction of middle class Dalits with members of other communities.

Table-3.44 Reasons proffered for Lifestyle changes

Respondents' occupation	Changes in lifestyle can be attributed to the factors like					Total
	Economic status	Social status	Occupation/ Profession	All of these	No Response	
Officer cadre	5 (4.8)	-	4 (3.8)	6 (5.7)	-	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	5 (4.8)	-	-	9 (8.6)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	9 (8.6)	-	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	9 (8.6)	-	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
NGO	6 (5.7)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	6 (5.7)	-	15 (14.3)
Advocate	7 (6.7)	-	2 (1.9)	6 (5.7)	-	15 (14.3)
Doctor	4 (3.8)	-	-	5 (4.8)	1 (1.0)	10 (9.5)
Journalist	2 (1.9)	-	-	3 (2.9)	-	5 (4.8)
Total	47 (44.8)	1 (1.0)	11 (10.5)	42 (40.0)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)

The paternal family economic status of the respondents had a bearing on their perceptions regarding changes in their lifestyle. Most of the respondents, whose origins were either modest or poor had been motivated by their life experiences in their paternal family to bring about improvements in their lifestyle. Generally, economic status was perceived by 47 respondents (44.8%) to be the main factor that had motivated them to bring about changes in their lifestyle compared to social status or occupation/profession. The acquisition of economic status combined with other factors seemed to have led to significant changes in the lifestyle of 42 respondents (40.0%).

In this chapter, the socio-economic status of the middle class Dalits was analyzed in relation to various factors like number of dependents and their nature of dependence, education pattern in the paternal family, residential locality, status of residential accommodation, consumption pattern, economic status in terms of income, savings and debts, landholding pattern, changes in lifestyle, etc.

The next chapter deals with the respondents' perceptions on various social, economic and political issues with an intention to ascertain their patterns of ideology and identity.

Chapter-4

Ideology and Identity of Middle Class Dalits

Caste as a system and as an ideology and practice was/is a priori condition of structural discrimination, which is omnipotent and omnipresent in Indian society. The structural discrimination continues to strongly affect the everyday lives of the Dalit community across all the sections and classes. Middle Class Dalits face many kinds of discriminations and disadvantages in their social relations and career. To understand the nature of Dalit middle class within the given context, its ideology and identity, lifestyle, life circumstances and priorities, and politics of the members are important. In this chapter, an attempt is made to comprehend the life circumstances that lead members of the Dalit Middle Class to gravitate towards Dalit identity and ideology. The analysis outlines the life experiences and life circumstances of middle class Dalits across modern occupations and various facets of their social life - in the "secular-modern" context - to understand various situations that create a *Dalit collective conscience* to organize and identify themselves as Dalits. Van Dijk (1998: 120) explains,

Ideologies are essentially shared and hence need to be defined at group level. The same is true for the social or collective 'identity' of the group as a group. Usually, identity is taken in an individualistic fashion in terms of representations and identification processes of group members. However, in the same way as groups may be said to share knowledge, attitudes and an ideology, we may assume that they share a social representation that defines their identity or 'social self' as a group.

The Dalit Middle Class in its pursuit of an identity formulates its own ideology in order to justify its location, beliefs, values and politics. Identity "is decisively a question of empowerment" (Friedman, 1992: 837). It is true in the case of Dalits and especially the middle class Dalits, whose location of origin and present locations equally shape their- life world, identity, ideology and politics.

Here, an attempt is made to understand the ideology and identity formation among the Dalit middle class at four levels. They are: 1) life ~~situation~~ (circumstances, experiences

and expectations), 2) identity pattern (personal and social), 3) ideology formation (social, economic and political), and 4) politics (pragmatic and ideological).

In the first level, an attempt to understand life world (circumstances, experiences and expectations) was carried out through analysis of their interpersonal relationships, social relations, community connections, their interaction with other 'successful' Dalits and own collective/individual efforts towards development of Dalits.

At the second level, their identity patterns (personal and social) were taken up, in which, their self-description, identity patterns and status differentiation with others and criteria for identifying Dalits were analysed.

At the third level, their ideology (social, economic and political) formations of the middle class Dalits were constructed through enquiring into their views and perceptions on progress made by Dalits since independence, status of Dalit women, Dalit movement, Dalit leaders and greatest personalities of 20th century.

And finally, their politics (pragmatic and ideological) were analyzed with the help of their membership in organizations/ political parties, their preference to effective models/strategy for overall development of Dalits, views on reservations, views related to political options before the Dalits for achieving equality, knowledge about issues/measure related to Dalits, prioritization of socio-economic and political issues and their views on some important socio-economic and political issues in understanding their identity and ideology.

I. Life Situation of the Middle Class Dalits

As part of understanding the life ~~situation~~ (circumstances, experiences and expectations) of the Dalit middle class, their interpersonal relationships, social relations, community connections, their interaction with other 'successful' Dalits, own collective/individual efforts towards development of Dalits were analysed.

1. Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships (mostly collaboration in work, forging of alliances other than friendship, camaraderie or acquaintance) in various occupations and professions were generally formed on caste lines. In some instances, they were direct and openly visible and in others, they were discreet and hard to prove. On the lines of caste-based mobilizations for political and social occasions, at the workplace too, individuals belonging to the same community come together and have more trust in each other compared to individuals from other communities. At times, if there is competition and clash of interests among these individuals, then they fall back on individuals from other communities who share their temperament, views and political understanding. In all these instances, same caste or same *varna*⁸⁴ and similar interests form basis for interpersonal relationships at workplace in that order.

Table-4.1 Caste and interpersonal relationships at the office/ workplace

Respondents' occupation	Interpersonal relationships at the office/ workplace are formed on caste lines?				Total
	Yes	No	Can't say	No Response	
Officer cadre	5 (4.8)*	7 (6.7)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	4 (3.8)	11 (10.5)	-	-	15 (14.3)
University faculty	7 (6.7)	8 (7.6)	-	-	15 (14.3)
Bank employee	5 (4.8)	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	15 (14.3)
NGO	5 (4.8)	7 (6.7)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	6 (5.7)	6 (5.7)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	15 (14.3)
Doctor	3 (2.9)	7 (6.7)	-	-	10 (9.5)
Journalist	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	-	-	5 (4.8)
Total	36 (34.3)	52 (49.5)	7 (6.7)	10 (9.5)	105 (100.0)

* In all tables in this chapter, figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Among the respondents, only 36 (34.3%) felt interpersonal relationships at their workplace were formed on caste lines, while majority 52 (49.5%) did not find caste influencing interpersonal relations at the work place. On the other hand, the number of respondents who were not sure about such a tendency was 7 (6.7%). Another 10 (9.5%) respondents did not respond to the query.

Compared to the findings from earlier studies, where the Dalit employees were subjected to alienation at the work place, the situation is slowly improving in this

⁸⁴ On the lines of traditional *varna* order, viz., Dalit, OBC and other 'upper castes'.

regard. Many of the Dalit employees are now part of SC/ST Employees Welfare Associations that are well organized to fight caste discrimination, and offer comradeship at the same time. With such support structures to deal with alienation and discrimination based on caste, the middle class Dalits are trying to arrest the spread of 'older' problems into newer locations.

2. Social Relations at Workplace and Neighbourhood

Social relations at the workplace are indicative of their attempts to rise above caste barriers. Social relations in terms of friendship with colleagues from different socio-economic backgrounds in everyday interactions are an indication in this direction. Regarding personal friendships, the Dalits exhibit no particular preference for their own community; they have friends from all castes. In the process of naming five close friends at the work place, the respondents informed that they had friends from all communities; nevertheless, their closest friends were Dalits. On everyday basis, in their work as well as personal needs, they interacted with a few colleagues whose interests were similar to their own. As part of their professional vocation, they interacted with people from all communities and thus had friends across all communities. However, proximity of such friendship varied between friends from own and other communities. In some cases in which the respondents had to work in a group or had a collective work responsibility, they seem to enjoy the partnership of persons from other communities. Having friends from other communities was not a problem for majority of the respondents, in a few instances; however, they did have difficulty in seeking out friends from other communities.

Table-4.2 Particulars of respondents' friends in office/workplace

Respondents' friends in office/workplace	Particulars of Respondents' friends in office/workplace				Total
	Similar	Different	Mixed	No Response	
Occupation	-	-	75 (71.4)	30 (28.6)	105 (100.0)
Age	-	-	75 (71.4)	30 (28.6)	105 (100.0)
Gender	47 (44.8)	-	28 (26.7)	30 (28.6)	105 (100.0)
Caste	12 (11.4)	6 (5.7)	54 (51.4)	33 (31.4)	105 (100.0)
Religion	52 (49.5)	-	23 (21.9)	30 (28.6)	105 (100.0)

Occupational position and age seemed to pose no barriers in forming friendships across various gender, class, caste and age groups for the respondents compared to gender, caste and religion. Respondents' friends in office/workplace belonged to various occupational categories and age groups, while 47 (44.8%) of them had same gender friends and 52 (49.5%) of them had from the same religion. In the case of caste, 12 (11.4%) respondents had persons from their own caste as friends and 6 (5.7%) respondents had only other caste persons as close friends. Others considered none of these aspects while choosing friends, they had friends across occupation, age group, gender, caste and religions. This indicated the kind of commonality they had with middle class members from other communities. Social integration had taken place as far as friendship was concerned. However, these social interactions were individual in nature and did not involve their families and were not an indication of the assimilation of different communities. These relationships were basically secondary in nature.

On the other hand, choice of friends in the neighborhood was marked by certain limitations, compared to the office or workplace. Forming friendships on mutually agreeable terms in the neighborhood, suiting all their interests was difficult compared to office or the work place. As can be seen in Table no 4.11, the friendship patterns in their place of residence, neighbourhood or the city in general, showed that the respondents engaged more with their persons from their own community for family level interactions and community level interactions. As family level interactions involved social and religious occasions, their preferences lay towards their own community rather than other communities.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Minna Saavala's study (2001) suggests the religious observance among middle class Dalits has few takers from caste-Hindus.

Table-4.3 Particulars of Respondents' friends in the city with whom respondents interact at personal and family levels

Particulars of Respondents' friends in the city	In comparison with the Respondents				Total
	Similar	Different	Mixed	No Response	
Occupation	5 (4.8)	5 (4.8)	57 (54.3)	38 (36.2)	105 (100.0)
Age	-	17 (16.2)	50 (47.6)	38 (36.2)	105 (100.0)
Gender	59 (56.2)	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	38 (36.2)	105 (100.0)
Caste	10 (9.5)	13 (12.4)	44 (41.9)	38 (36.2)	105 (100.0)
Religion	48 (45.7)	-	19 (18.1)	38 (36.2)	105 (100.0)

In contrast to the nature of friendships at the office or work place that were largely secondary in nature, friendships in the neighborhood required a broad based social acceptance of not only individuals but also their families. Social interactions at family level between Dalits and non-Dalits were still bound by many caste-based prejudices, notions of hierarchy and purity and pollution. Except in few cases, where the Dalits were employed in high government positions or the non-Dalits had disbanded such purity-pollution, hierarchical notions, and interaction at family levels were taking place. On their part, many Dalits did not feel disconcerted over the denial of such occasions for interactions by the non-Dalits.

The very fact that, many of them had non-Dalit friends at the office and the work place and not as many at the family level suggests that, the middle class Dalits do not intend to pursue it in haste. Social relations are mutual, largely sustained by reciprocity from both the sides. In the case of social relations between Dalits and non-Dalits, there is a gradual progress in terms of the numbers of Dalits and non-Dalits seeking friendship and trust from each other.

3. Interaction with Own Community

The most important criticism on the middle class Dalits has been about 'forgetting roots' and not caring for their own community after moving up in the economic

ladder. It is generally felt by almost all the middle class Dalits that they were not making their best efforts to empower the Dalit masses.

Dalits' position becomes delicate when they get embedded into the middle class. They try to retain close community based connections with their Dalit colleagues on the one hand and the other acquaintances living in the city, on the other hand. Those who have strong familial bonding in the rural areas try to retain them as well. Since their assimilation into the general middle class is uncertain, many middle class Dalits seem to be giving priority to their social relations within their own community.

Table-4.4 Respondents visiting their native place and people from native place visiting them

Respondents visiting their native place	People from native place visiting respondents				Total
	Visiting Frequently	Visiting rarely	Not Applicable	No Response	
Visiting Frequently	49 (46.7)	12 (11.4)	-	-	61 (58.1)
Visiting rarely	22 (21.0)	15 (14.3)	-	-	37 (35.2)
Not Applicable	-	-	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.9)
No Response	-	-	-	5 (4.8)	5 (4.8)
Total	71 (67.6)	27 (25.7)	2 (1.9)	5 (4.8)	105 (100.0)

Among the majority of respondents of the present study, visiting community members either in native place or in the city was a regular practice. The reverse trend was also prevalent. As majority of the respondents were migrants to the city, whose kith and kin were not present in the city, maintaining connections with them became important for them. The frequency of visits on both sides was used as an indicator to measure connections with individuals from their community.

Table-4.5 Respondents visiting community people in the city and community people (from city) visiting them

Respondents visiting community people in the city	Community people (from city) visiting respondents				Total
	Visiting Frequently	Visiting rarely	Not Applicable	No Response	
Visiting Frequently	70 (66.7)	2 (1.9)	-	-	72 (68.6)
Visiting rarely	16 (15.2)	14 (13.3)	-	-	30 (28.6)
Not Applicable	-	-	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.9)
No Response	-	-	-	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)
Total	84 (80.0)	16 (15.2)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)

There were 62 (59.0%) respondents who made visits to their native place frequently, whereas 71 (67.6%) of them were visited frequently by the people from their native place. Similarly, 70 (66.7%) respondents made visits to people from their community in the city and 84 (80.0%) respondents were visited by their community people in the city. In some instances the respondents' visits to the people belonging to their community were rare, in other instances; the level of reciprocity from the other side was lower compared to the respondents who frequented their homes on a regular basis. In the case of three respondents, where there were no visits on both sides, the respondents were maintaining connections with the members of their community within the city itself.

Table-4.6 Respondents' visits to their native place and community people in the city

Respondents visiting their native place	Respondents visiting community people in the city				Total
	Visiting Frequently	Visiting rarely	Not Applicable	No Response	
Visiting Frequently	54 (51.4)	7 (6.7)	-	-	61 (58.1)
Visiting rarely	14 (13.3)	23 (21.9)	-	-	37 (35.2)
Not Applicable	-	-	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.9)
No Response	4 (3.8)	-	-	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)
Total	72 (68.6)	30 (28.6)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)

As seen in Table 4.5, majority of the people visiting their native place also visited the homes of persons belonging to their community in the city, who were not related to them. Similarly, majority of the respondents whose visits to their native place were rare also made very few visits to the homes of people belonging to their community in the city.

Thus, keeping connections with members of their community was important for majority of the respondents who had made their homes in the city. In the light of the fact that, majority of their social relations at the family level were confined to their own community people, this aspect assumes importance. Their close interaction with community people constituted an important part of their social relations. However, it need not be seen as purely ethnocentric behaviour, due the fact that many of these individuals were residing away from their native place, where social relations are more or less formed on caste lines.

4. Interaction with “successful” Dalits

Middle class Dalits, especially the respondents were successful Dalits themselves in a sense. Compared to their parents’ and grandparents’ generation, the respondents had achieved significant social and economic mobility. They are considered successful by the poor Dalits. It is interesting to note that the standards set for success by the middle class Dalits included achievement in terms of political leadership, high rank bureaucratic positions and economically successful business/enterprise ventures. Respondents named persons who had achieved such success in various fields, who were known to them personally. Majority of the respondents named a few individuals, who were known to them personally and/or with whom they interacted on a regular basis in this regard. The persons thus named were commonly those who had made it big in the fields of government service and/or as political leaders.

The successful Dalits, named by the respondents, who had achieved success in social, economic and political fields, were not their own relatives, in majority of the cases, they were not known to them since childhood. Similarly, they did not belong to their native place and/or to their present occupation. Majority of the respondents considered these individuals as having achieved a higher degree of social and economic mobility compared to their own. Most of the respondents interacted with them regularly. It indicates that such “successful” Dalits have a strong psychological influence on the respondents for emulation as role models. In case the respondents cannot aspire to achieve such “success” themselves, in all probability, their children would be encouraged to do so.

Table-4.7 Field of excellence of ten successful Dalits whom the respondents know personally

Respondents’ occupation	Field of excellence of successful Dalits				Total
	Govt. service	Professionals	Various fields	No Response	
Officer cadre	-	2 (1.9)	7 (6.7)	6 (5.7)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	-	-	9 (8.6)	6 (5.7)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	-	-	6 (5.7)	9 (8.6)	15 (14.3)
Bank employees	1 (1.0)	-	9 (8.6)	5 (4.8)	15 (14.3)
NGO	-	-	8 (7.6)	7 (6.7)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	-	1 (1.0)	6 (5.7)	8 (7.6)	15 (14.3)
Doctor	-	-	5 (4.8)	5 (4.8)	10 (9.5)

Journalist	-	-	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	5 (4.8)
Total	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	52 (49.5)	49 (46.7)	105 (100.0)

Respondents from all occupational groups personally knew the successful Dalits from various social, economic and political fields. In the case of 15 (14.3%) respondents, the successful Dalits named by the respondents belonged to their own community and in the case of 41 (39.0%) respondents, to other sub-castes. Significantly 49 (46.7%) of them had not interacted with the successful Dalits whom they regarded as role models on a personal level.

Among the 56 (53.3%) respondents, who named successful Dalits known to them personally, 19 (18.1%) of them mentioned the names of 10 successful Dalits, while 18 (17.1%) named between 5-9 persons, 17 (16.2%) named 2-4 persons and 2 (1.9%) mentioned just one successful Dalit.

5. Initiatives for Development of Dalits

Individual and collective activities for development of Dalits, in which respondents had participated, show that the respondents were involved in many initiatives for the economic and educational benefit and moral encouragement of the Dalits, which had as their objectives, the development of the community.

An examination of the number and types of collective/individual activities the respondents were involved in reveal that 17 (16.2%) respondents were involved in at least one such activity and 54 (51.4%) respondents were involved in more than one activity. The number of respondents who were not involved in any such activities were 32 (30.5%) and no responses could be obtained in this regard from 2 (1.9%) persons.

The activities in which the respondents were involved in range from financial help in their individual capacity and demonstration of their solidarity to playing an active role as part of an existing collective body. However, not all preferred being part of already established organizations and some of them had launched new individual or small collective efforts. This is in consonance with the views expressed by some of them

that, in a collective form, the Dalit middle class has not been able to accomplish much. Hence, their individual efforts were most important for the development of Dalits.

Table-4.8 Collective/individual activities for development of Dalits

Number of activities	Nature of activities						Total
	Financial help and economic development oriented	Activities related to education & skill development	Solidarity and motivation oriented	Political mobilization	Mixed	Not Applicable	
Only one	12 (11.4)	-	-	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	-	17 (16.2)
More than one	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	41 (39.0)	8 (7.6)	-	54 (51.4)
Nil	-	-	-	-	-	32 (30.5)	32 (30.5)
No Response	-	-	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)
Total	13 (12.4)	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	42 (40.0)	12 (11.4)	34 (32.4)	105 (100.0)

The individual/collective efforts aimed at development of Dalits, that had been initiated by the respondents or involved their contribution varied from participation in meetings to organizing them, from personally extending monetary support to mobilizing financial resources, from membership in an association to launching such organizations and heading them. It is quite interesting to note that many respondents believe that the smallest of gestures on their part in terms of responding to local issues also would contribute to the development of Dalits.

The individual/collective activities (for Development of Dalits) in which the respondents had participated included participation in various socio-political mobilizations to organizing the same; membership in various organizations to launching or heading such organizations; individual financial contributions to participation in campaigns for greater economic benefits from the government. The individual / collective activities the respondents had taken part in included:

- 1) *Writings*: Writings on Dalits (books, newspaper articles, etc.), publishing of books written by Dalit writers and literature on Ambedkar.
- 2) *Legal aid to Dalits*: Fact finding in cases of atrocities upon Dalits, reporting on atrocities on SCs/STs, extending support to the victims of atrocities etc.
- 3) *Meetings*: Attending national and international conferences related to Dalits to represent Dalit cause viz., Durban Conference, Bhopal Conference etc, initiating and

participating in seminars on reservations, organizing national/state level workshops on Dalit concerns, participation in workshops related SC/ST Atrocities Act etc.

4) *Trainings*: Training for Dalits and Dalit political representatives, organizing awareness programmes for leather workers, etc.

5) *Help to Dalit students*: Providing financial help to poor students, providing free education, admitting Dalit boys and girls to social welfare hostels, initiating self-employment projects for the youth, promotion of Dalits' admissions in university, encouragement to SCs in hostels, career counseling for Dalit students, organizing night schools, coaching provided to unemployed youth for appearing in competitive exams, conducting sports/games and quiz competitions for village children, etc.

6) *Associations/organizations*: Dalit NGOs and Volunteers network, APSC Welfare Association, SC/ST Welfare Trusts, SC/ST Employees' Welfare Association, SC/ST cell in-charge in a university, Member of BR Ambedkar Open University center for Dalit studies, Solving employees' problem, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, coordinator of DVAF, member of Sakshi (Dalit Human Rights Network, AP), etc.

7) *Campaigns/ mobilizations for a cause*: Uniting Dalits, campaigning for Bahujan Samaj Party, human rights campaigns, campaigns against communal riots, campaigns/dharnas for reservations as part of SC/ST protection forum, campaigns for abolition of Jogini and bonded labour, etc.

8) *Economic development oriented*: Encouraged an NGO to work for Dalits, land allotments to SCs, community hall for SCs in native village, financial contribution to poor Dalits, distribution of clothes to the poor, flood relief programmes, counseling and free medical treatment to poor Dalits, etc.

9) *Political mobilizations*: Participation in Dalit movement, supporting Dalit candidates in elections, dissemination of Ambedkar's ideology, etc.

10) *Participation in various social mobilizations*: Anti-arrack movement, participation in Dandora (Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi's struggle for SC reservations categorization in Andhra Pradesh) movement, participated in political movements, meetings, functions of Ambedkar birth anniversary, awareness camps, capitation movement, participation in Asian Social Forum in January 2003, Jashuva birthday celebrations, participation in anti-caste movements, fighting for employees' rights, participation in movement against rustication of Dalit students in a Central University, etc.

11) *Reservations*: Filed a case in court on behalf of Dalit employees seeking reservation in promotions, pro-reservation movement, etc.

12) *Land struggles*: Struggle for land distribution.

13) *Miscellaneous*: Participation in Budget Analysis in 2002 with regard to Special Component Plan for SCs, literacy development, etc.

The **life situation** of middle class Dalits is influenced and shaped by various circumstances, experiences and expectations, viz., the extent and nature of caste influence on their *interpersonal relationships* with others at their workplace, the kind of *social relations*, largely their friendship and interactions patterns with persons from various caste, gender, occupational categories at personal and family levels, their *community connections* as part of which frequency of interaction with their own community (including all Dalits) at their native place and also in the city, their personal *interaction with other 'successful' Dalits* (community background and area excelled), and finally, *their own collective/individual efforts towards development of Dalits*, nature of such activities and their significance have been analysed to understand the impact of all these on shaping of their identity.

II. Identity Patterns among the Middle Class Dalits

In order to understand personal and social identity patterns among the respondents, their self-description, identity patterns and status differentiation with others and criteria for identifying Dalits were analysed.

1. Self-description of Personality Type and Expectations from Others

Self-description of respondents in socio-psychological terms brought out their personality in individual terms as opposed to the community or group identity. In this regard, their own personal traits and the personality traits they liked in others were analysed. The respondents, in more or less similar numbers, described themselves as composed, serious or jovial personality types. Similarly, the personality traits they liked in others were related to behaviour/attitude, morals and discipline/nature. When the respondents' self-description of their personality type were contrasted with the personal qualities they appreciated in other persons, respondents who described

themselves as composed and jovial types of persons accorded more importance to morals and the respondents who described their personality type as serious rated good behaviour as being the most important quality that was appreciated by them .

Table-4.9 Self-description of type personality of respondents and most appreciated qualities in others

Self-description of type of personality	Most appreciated qualities in others				Total
	Behaviour/ Attitude	Morals	Discipline/ Nature	No Response	
Composed	14 (13.3)	18 (17.1)	2 (1.9)	-	34 (32.4)
Serious	15 (14.3)	6 (5.7)	2 (1.9)	-	23 (21.9)
Jovial	10 (9.5)	15 (14.3)	3 (2.9)	3 (2.9)	31 (29.5)
Other*	3 (2.9)	-	-	2 (1.9)	5 (4.8)
No Response	-	1 (1.0)	-	11 (10.5)	12 (11.4)
Total	42 (40.0)	40 (38.1)	7 (6.7)	16 (15.2)	105 (100.0)

* Combination of two personality types mentioned above.

2. Identity Patterns

Identification is a social act. Every individual has multiple identities to choose from. However, it is not merely dependent upon the individual's choice since sometimes others too influence and impose identities on an individual. Nevertheless, how an individual prefers to identify himself/herself in a social setting is more important than the ascribed identities. Personal identity has two forms - (a) a mental representation (personal) of the 'self' as a unique human being with its own, personal experiences as represented in accumulated mental models; and (b) a mental representation of the social self as (being part of) a collection of group membership, and the identification processes that are related to such membership representations (van Dijk, 1998: 119).

It is in this context that exploring the identity choices of respondents becomes important. Since they belonged to multiple social groups and perform various social roles, it becomes important to examine the particular identity with which the respondents preferred to identify themselves in the context of their social and economic mobility and their life circumstances. Few broad identities were provided to the respondents to rank those according to their preference (see table below) with

an assumption that given their social and economic background the respondents primarily belonged to the middle class.

Table-4.10 Identification pattern

Social categories	Identification pattern						Total
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	No Rank	
With Sub-Caste	16 (15.2)	5 (4.8)	10 (9.5)	12 (11.4)	31 (29.5)	31 (29.5)	105 (100.0)
As a Dalit	35 (33.3)	9 (8.6)	12 (11.4)	38 (36.2)	-	11 (10.5)	105 (100.0)
As a person belonging to Middle class	-	8 (7.6)	52 (49.5)	13 (12.4)	15 (14.3)	17 (16.2)	105 (100.0)
With Occupation	13 (12.4)	63 (60.0)	10 (9.5)	6 (5.7)	4 (3.8)	9 (8.6)	105 (100.0)
As an Individual with no specific group identity	36 (34.3)	11(10.5)	4 (3.8)	17 (16.2)	24 (22.9)	13 (12.4)	105 (100.0)
Total	100	96	88	86	72	81	

As seen in the above table, a comparison of identity preferences reveals that the highest number of them had an urge to be recognized as an individual with no specific group identity, this category included 36 (34.3%) respondents who identified themselves in terms of a secular identity. Others, around 35 (33.3%) respondents, preferred to identify themselves as Dalit, 16 (15.2%) chose to identify themselves in terms of their sub-caste identity, those who identified themselves in terms of their occupation were 13 (12.4%). Interestingly, *no one preferred to be identified as an individual purely belonging to middle class*⁸⁶. For them middle class was a given identity that led them nowhere since such a clear identification with only the 'middle class' would lead to their alienation from other communities and rejection by the Dalits. In the present context, the taking up of a middle class identity as an alternative to their community identity was not helpful to the respondents in any way. The reasons provided for ranking a particular identity over others were more in terms of reiteration of their identity preferences rather than those of an explanatory nature.

86 Sheth (1999: 2510) observes that, 'Membership of today's middle class is associated with new life styles (modern consumption patterns), ownership of certain economic assets and the self consciousness of belonging to the middle class. As such, it is open to members of different castes – which have acquired modern education, taken to non-traditional occupations and/or command higher incomes and the political power – to enter this middle class.'

Ascribed Identity

The respondents' perceived that the identity ascribed to them by their Dalit and non-Dalit friends and acquaintances was largely dependant on the identity of the 'ascriber' (identity provider) himself/herself. While their Dalit friends and acquaintances identified the respondents in terms of being essentially Dalits, others saw them as persons belonging to the middle class. However, in both the cases, this did not imply the negation of their Dalit identity.

Such ascription of identity could be understood in two ways. Firstly, the members of the Dalit middle class were being accepted in the society by non-Dalits on an equal footing primarily due to their middle class status and secondly, the Dalit identity itself was being accepted in the society, thereby middle class Dalits were primarily identified as Dalits. However, a congruence of both the identities was also possible.

Table:4.11 Identity ascribed by respondents' Dalit and non-Dalit friends & acquaintances

By Dalit friends & acquaintances	By Non-Dalit friends & acquaintances				Total
	Dalit	Middle class	Middle class Dalit	No Response	
Dalit	23 (21.9)	18 (17.1)	12 (11.4)	-	53 (50.5)
Middle class	4 (3.8)	15 (14.3)	-	-	19 (18.1)
Middle class Dalit	-	2 (1.9)	27 (25.7)	2 (1.9)	31 (29.5)
No Response	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)
Total	27 (25.7)	35 (33.3)	39 (37.1)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)

The above table indicates that other Dalits, which included 53 (50.5%) respondents, identified them largely as Dalits, compared to 27 (25.7%) respondents who were non-Dalit, who gave equal importance to their dual identities of being a Dalit and a middle class individual. In both the cases, it was largely other Dalits (both middle class as well as non-middle class Dalits), who continued to ascribe the Dalit identity to them.

3. Status Differentiation with Others

Society is divided into various social groups with varied statuses. Each social group perceives its position according to its material wealth and political authority in

relation to other groups. In Indian society, in addition to those two status ranks, ritual purity based social ranking is also in practice among the Hindus. Dalits being at the bottom in social, economic, political and ritual hierarchy were looked down upon in many ways. Only recently have the Dalits begun contesting such discriminatory ranking through assertion of identity and various forms of socio-political mobilizations. However, caste based ranking is still in practice and Dalits are aware of it.

Now, with a comprehensible socio-economic mobility that is taking place among the Dalits, it is important to understand this status differentiation, especially as perceived by the upwardly mobile Dalits. Perceptions of a particular group about its own status vis-à-vis others is either contested or accepted by others. Today, Dalits are contesting the definitions of their status by others. Similarly, others also contest claims of the Dalits when the latter try to redefine them according to their own ideology, which destabilizes the former claims.

With reference to status, the differences respondents perceived between themselves and the poor Dalits, the other middle class Dalits and the non-Dalit middle class were largely related to education, economic status and social status. In relation to poor Dalits, they perceived education and economic status as major status differentiators and in comparison to other non-Dalit middle class; they perceived social status as the sole differentiator. In the case of other middle class Dalits, there were no differences except minor variations in education levels and lifestyles, as they shared the same socio-economic location. However, their articulation of status differentiation with reference to the general middle class was in terms of the latter's cultural and social capital. As articulated by many respondents, their income and education levels and lifestyles were similar to those of the general middle class. However, in terms of commanding social respectability and also acceptability, they perceived themselves to be lagging behind compared to the general middle class, which was largely composed of caste-Hindus.

Table-4.12 Status differences between self and the below mentioned

Status differences the Respondents perceive with respect to	Poor Dalits	Other Middle class Dalits	Non-Dalits
Education	11 (10.5)	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)
Economic status	61 (58.1)	12 (11.4)	26 (24.8)
Social status	-	3 (2.9)	53 (50.5)
No differences	26 (24.8)	69 (65.7)	7 (6.7)
No Response	17 (16.2)	17 (16.2)	18 (17.1)
Total	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)

Status differences perceived by the respondents vis-à-vis the poor Dalits and non-Dalits showed that very few respondents, 19 (18.1%) in all, perceived status differences in status compared to other middle class Dalits. Status differentiation was done by 72 (68.6%) respondents vis-à-vis the Dalits and 80 (76.2%) respondents vis-à-vis the non-Dalits in economic terms.

4. Criteria for Identifying Dalits

The term Dalit, which was in usage locally in Maharashtra and the Hindi spoken states in central India, has now become popular in almost all parts of the country. Its modern usage began with the neo-Buddhist Mahar writers who adopted the name 'Dalit Panthers' to propagate Ambedkar's ideology of liberation. The Dalit Panthers included all the oppressed sections of the society including the Other Backward Classes, the poor and women from all communities, due to their social and economic subordination in order to mobilize all these sections to fight against caste hierarchy and its value system. Thus, it was developed into an ideology of liberation and was adopted by Dalit movements in various states as well as political parties. However, over a period of time, owing to the identity assertion by various oppressed groups in terms of more relativistic and specific identities that are traditionally associated with them, and also due to its specific reference to the Scheduled Castes, the term was largely being used by the original referents, the Scheduled Castes alone.

The questions 'who are Dalits', and 'what are the criteria for identifying them' assume importance for three reasons. Firstly, the term has its origins in traditional

usage, with more secular connotations⁸⁷ unlike the other terms, both traditional and invented, to denote the marginalized sections.⁸⁸ Secondly, in its new political usage, it is articulated to include only the politically conscious Scheduled Castes and not all of them, in other words, Dalit by consciousness and not by birth. Finally, as opposed to the second view, when articulated in official context, it is expected to confine only to denote marginality, exclusion and oppressed status as equivalent to the term Scheduled Castes. These three aspects can be taken as equivalent to social, political and economic identities in that order. The real problem lies in the attribution of all these meanings to the term, which is warranted by the fragile location of the Scheduled Castes today. They are still subjected to the caste discrimination, trying to fight it with the limited resources they acquired in the recent past and at the same time not yet ready to shake off the image of the marginalized. Any move to underplay one aspect and overplay the other is in all probability antithetical to their objective of achieving social, economic and political equality on par with others in the society.

The criteria to identify Dalits are a combination of social, economic, political and cultural disadvantages than any one of them in particular. Dalits consider that the criteria should be a composition which takes into consideration all such disadvantages since they have been facing problems on all these fronts, with continued persecution of and biases against the upwardly mobile among them.

Table-4.13 The criteria for identifying Dalits according to the respondents

Criteria for identifying Dalits	Frequency & Percentage
Economic backwardness	2 (1.9)
Social discrimination	41 (39.0)
Economic & Social disadvantages	3 (2.9)
Economic & Political disadvantages	18 (17.1)
All	26 (24.8)
No Response	15 (14.3)
Total	105 (100.0)

⁸⁷ Its literal meaning is 'broken' or 'grounded down', see Zelliot (1992: 267)

⁸⁸ See Sharma (2001: 98). In the case of Scheduled Castes, the terms 'untouchables', 'harijans', etc. have a derogatory meaning which is contested by them. For similar reasons the term 'shudra' has been replaced by Other Backward Classes in official parlance and the 'Bahujans' in political articulations, and in the case of Scheduled Tribes, the term 'tribal' has been replaced by 'Adivasi' mostly in the latter.

The respondents felt that social '*castification*' had made the Dalits vulnerable on all fronts. Table no 4.22 amply indicates the views of respondents on this score. The respondents (39.0%) felt that social discrimination ought to be regarded as a major criterion for identifying any of them as Dalits. However, the number of those who considered economic and political disadvantages as the main criterion was significant (17.1%), whereas some of them proposed that a combination of all these factors ought to be taken into consideration (24.8%). The number of no responses is 15 (14.3%).

At the second level of understanding the **identity patterns** (personal and social) of the middle class Dalits, as part of which, *self-description* of their personality type and the personality traits they most appreciate among others, their own *identity patterns*, in which the preference they give to various identities and the identity ascribed to them by their Dalit and non-Dalit friends, the *status differentiation* they perceive vis-à-vis poor Dalits, other middle class Dalits and the members of general middle class, and finally, their preferred *criteria for identifying Dalits* and the reasons for the same are analysed to understand their correlation with their ideological leanings at the next level.

III. Ideology of the Dalit middle class

In understanding the social, economic and political components of their ideology, formations of their views and perceptions on progress made by Dalits since independence, status of Dalit women, Dalit movement, Dalit leaders and greatest personalities of 20th century were analysed.

1. Progress made by the Dalits since independence

There are divergent positions on the issue of progress made by Dalits since independence with reference to development in social, economic and political spheres. Perceivably, there is very little progress on all these spheres in terms of uniformity, quality of progress, its effectiveness and the expectations attributed to it.

The respondents felt very strongly about the mode, process and pace of progress made by the Dalits since independence. Their views were reflective of the collective notions of the community concerning the progress or quite contrarily the lack of it.

Their views also represented the aspirations for progress in a much more systematic manner than it was being pursued currently. While some merely listed the kinds of changes that had affected Dalits in a positive or negative manner, others embarked on the task of precisely pinpointing the lacunas.

Table-4.14 Progress made by Dalits since independence

Sector	Progress made by Dalits				Total
	Significant	Insignificant	No progress	No Response	
In social status	19 (18.1)	37 (35.2)	7 (6.7)	42 (40.0)	105 (100.0)
In economic status	1 (1.0)	60 (57.1)	3 (2.9)	41 (39.0)	105 (100.0)
In political status	2 (1.9)	59 (56.2)	2 (1.9)	42 (40.0)	105 (100.0)

The progress made by the Dalits since independence in various spheres of life, as perceived by the respondents, is broadly in terms of social, economic and educational realms. These positive developments range from the upward mobility of a small section of the middle class among the Dalits to improvements in the level of acceptance and respectability achieved by them. The views as expressed by the respondents in this regard have been summarized below:

The respondents perceived that, though there was some progress, it was not uniform in all these above-mentioned aspects, and that these differences could be identified as affecting very specific aspects of the Dalits' lives. To begin with, Dalits had 'achieved social status on par with others at least legally' which facilitated 'opportunities to earn equality in the society' with a 'new status'. With 'implementation of reservations the education level of Dalits' had witnessed a surge' and thereby 'a semi-layer was increasing among them', that could be regarded as composed of 'a section of the urban Dalit middle class' mainly comprising of 'employees and businessmen', with its 'presence (in a small percentage) in the organized sector'. In a general level, 'compared to the past' there was 'improvement in respectability and acceptance' that facilitated 'both economic and social improvement', thereby resulting in the 'emergence of a class of Dalit politicians', who were acting as a 'politically strong pressure group', 'demanding equality in all walks of life'.

On the other hand, the absence of expected progress was dwelt upon with greater intensity. The same was articulated in terms of implications that such an absence had resulted in the present status of despair among Dalits. Some of the statements made by the respondents have been presented in a summated form in this regard. There were 'no considerable changes' 'despite governmental interventions, the progress (was) only 20% attitudinal change towards Dalits'. The absence of development among the Dalits was perceived to be mainly 'due to lack of commitment by the government'. In addition, the respondents emphasized that 'though some progress has occurred' 'the presence of casteism (did not) allow for adequate economic progress of Dalits'. Dalits were still lagging behind when it came to social status. There was no proportionate acquisition of power vis-à-vis development in consciousness. Dalits had not received any support to reach positions of power. Progress in political status was also not as expected and Dalits have had to fight for their rights. Progress had not up to the expectations of Dr. BR Ambedkar. There was still religious and cultural distance between Hindus and Dalits. Dalits were still the vote banks for political parties and their economic status had deteriorated from occupational security to no work. These broad perceptions, revealed the dissatisfaction among the respondents with regard to the lack of sufficient progress achieved by the members of their community in social, economic and political realms.

2. Status of Dalit women

Dalit women constitute an important constituency within the Dalit middle class. As a community that is voicing issues related to equal rights and seeking opportunities on par with other social groups, the Dalit middle class is sensitive to the question of Dalit women. Considering the social, economic and political statuses of Dalit women in society as well as in the Dalit community, the middle class Dalits accord equal or more importance to Dalit women and the problems faced by them. There is a glaring difference between Dalit men and women in terms of levels of education, employment and participation in decision-making processes. This fact is unequivocally recognized by the members of Dalit middle class, and they advocate giving more importance to the education of Dalit women compared to Dalit men.

The status of Dalit women in the society and within family is subservient. Therefore, they are doubly disadvantaged. Dalit women, despite their personal achievements, continue to face subservience and exploitation. Being doubly disadvantaged on the grounds of caste and gender, the Dalit women find it difficult to fight the caste system as well as patriarchy. In spite of reservations in education and employment, many Dalit women are unable to come out of the exploitative clutches of casteism and gender discrimination that is widespread in the society, which creates numerous hurdles for them. All the measures provided by the Constitution and the government policies to mitigate gender discrimination are yet to reach the Dalit women.

Table-4.15 Dalit women's status in comparison to Dalit men and other women

Dalit women in comparison to Dalit men	Dalit women in comparison to Other women			Total
	Equal position	Better position	Disadvantageous position	
Equal position	-	-	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)
Better position	-	-	-	-
Disadvantageous position	-	-	104 (99.0)	104 (99.0)
Total	-	-	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)

Though, there were only 25 (23.8%) women respondents in the sample, both male as well as female respondents unequivocally felt that when compared to Dalit men, Dalit women were in a disadvantageous position. Except one respondent, who felt that Dalit women were in an equal position compared to Dalit men and in a disadvantageous position in comparison to other women, all others felt Dalit women were undoubtedly in a disadvantageous position. Such disadvantages were expressed in terms of the additional problems they faced within the family and in the society.

Additional problems Dalit women face within family and in society

Additional problems Dalit women face within their families are largely related to patriarchy, burden of household responsibility, lack of opportunities for growth, and exploitation and violence. In the society, they face disadvantages such as caste discrimination, and economic dependency, lack of opportunities, exploitation and violence. Within the family, they confront patriarchy, household responsibility, and lack of opportunities for growth.

In the family, Dalit women encounter a variety of problems that are largely related to their gender setting. They range from gender discrimination to lack of opportunities for development. The problems related to gender discrimination within family are, male dominance, patriarchy, household responsibilities, which are solely entrusted to women, family restrictions, very less space for personal intellectual and professional growth due to family burdens, no role in decision-making and lack of freedom. The problems directly affecting their development are, inequality in education, lack of economic independence, lack of facilities, lack of opportunities to participate in social activities, political disadvantages and middle class *sanskritic* ethos. In the case of working women, they have to work outside equally with men, thus women work more than men do.

In society, the Dalit women are doubly disadvantaged with economic, social and political disadvantages (gender, caste and class discriminations). Society treats Dalit women differently, inferior to all other women and subjects them to caste cruelty. Dalit women are most prone to caste atrocities, caste discrimination, class discrimination, untouchability, harassment, sexual exploitation, insecurity and inequality. They are more prone to exploitation compared to others. Dalit women face severe social discrimination, external representation (often represented by Dalit men with regard to their caste identity and other women in terms of gender identity), financial problems, social discrimination clubbed with insecurity and all kinds of disadvantages. They also suffer due to low level of education, less access to resources, less participation in social activities, inferiority, hesitation and no respect. Despite not having proper space in society, the work burden and socio-economic responsibilities are more for Dalit women. They are not cared for at all and are ill equipped to compete with other women. They are made followers of other women.

Table-4.16 The additional problems Dalit women face within family and in society

Additional problems Dalit women face with in family	Respondents' Gender			Additional problems Dalit women face in society	Respondents' Gender		
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
Patriarchy	24 (22.9)	8 (7.6)	32 (30.5)	Caste discrimination	58 (55.2)	17 (16.2)	75 (71.4)
Household responsibility	20 (19.0)	6 (5.7)	26 (24.8)	Economic dependency	7 (6.7)	2 (1.9)	9 (8.6)
Lack of opportunities for growth	18 (17.1)	8 (7.6)	26 (24.8)	Lack of opportunities	6 (5.7)	1 (1.0)	7 (6.7)
Exploitation and violence	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.9)	Exploitation and violence	-	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)
No Response	16	3 (2.9)	19 (18.1)	No Response	9 (8.6)	3 (2.9)	12 (11.4)
Total	80 (76.2)	25 (23.8)	105 (100.0)	Total	80 (76.2)	25 (23.8)	105 (100.0)

Both male and female respondents felt that Dalit women need not be simplistically categorized into either of those identities as 'Dalit women's problems'. The problem of doubly disadvantaged question, they felt, ought to be dealt with as one question than two because caste and gender were interrelated questions. The important identity for Dalit women was an exclusive neither 'Dalit' nor 'woman' identity but a composite identity of Dalit women.

Table-4.17 Important identity for Dalit women

Important identity for Dalit women is	Respondents' Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Dalit	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)
Woman	28 (26.7)	9 (8.6)	37 (35.2)
Dalit woman	36 (34.3)	11 (10.5)	47 (44.8)
No Response	12 (11.4)	4 (3.8)	16 (15.2)
Total	80 (76.2)	25 (23.8)	105 (100.0)

Despite the existing disadvantaged position of Dalit women at various levels, there was a growing awareness about the importance of Dalit women's education, employment and role in making among the middle class. The same was reflected in the views expressed by the male as well as female respondents.

Table-4.18 Importance of Dalit women's education, employment and role in decision-making in comparison to Dalit men

Dalit women's	In comparison to Dalit men				Total
	Equally important	More important	Less important	No Response	
Education	62 (59.0)	42 (40.0)	-	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Employment	66 (62.9)	38 (36.2)	-	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Role in decision-making	78 (74.3)	22 (21.0)	3 (2.9)	2 (1.9)	105 (100.0)

Except few, majority of respondents were in favour of equal or more importance for women in education, employment and role in decision-making. The respondents stressed on the rectification of all existing inequalities, with emphasis on equal importance to Dalit women. Among the three issues: education, employment and role in decision-making were ranked in that order. There were only 3 (2.9%) respondents who felt that women should play a less important role in decision-making.

3. Dalit movement

Andhra Pradesh has a long history of Dalit movement. It is one of the important states in south India, in which a vibrant Dalit movement emerged, parallel to the Dalit movement led by Dr. BR Ambedkar in 1930s. During that time itself, there was a strong Dalit movement in Hyderabad state, (erstwhile Nizam state), spearheaded by many local leaders, who fought against caste discrimination and sought state favours for educational development of the Dalits. Some of these movements had merged with the Ambedkar led movement later on. During the late 1930s, Ambedkar largely concentrated on Andhra Pradesh to spread his movement apart from Maharashtra. However, in the post-independence period, these movements were largely appropriated by the political parties and hence, lost their 'movement specific' nature. Again, during the 1980s, Dalit movement was revived in response to the major atrocities committed upon the Dalits and in early 1990s, it was further consolidated during the Mandal agitation. Thus, Andhra Pradesh is one of the few states in India to have witnessed a strong Dalit movement. However, each time, after a glorious existence for a brief spell, these movements fell into a deep slumber.

Inspired by these movements, many associations and organizations have emerged. Some of those with a strong membership base and long-term objectives are active even today. Of late, these associations and organizations alone have assumed the capacity to launch the Dalit movements. Now, the Dalit movement is largely dependent on these associations and organizations for mass base, leadership and some times even the agenda. Thus, these associations and organizations have largely replaced the need for a continuous Dalit movement. Instead, they are continuing to function as an active Dalit movement. In a sense, the Dalit movement is institutionalized in the form of these associations and organizations.

Table-4.19 Most interesting aspects of the Dalit movement today

Most interesting aspects of the Dalit movement today	Number of responses
Facilitation of Unity	8 (7.6)
Fighting for Rights	23 (21.9)
Disunity	8 (7.6)
Inactivity	31 (29.5)
No response	35 (33.3)
Total	105 (100.0)

Some of the respondents were also part of the Dalit movement either directly or through Dalit associations and organizations. In this context, views of the respondents on the Dalit movement vis-à-vis its significance and effectiveness were analysed. The most interesting aspects of the Dalit movement today were broadly categorized by the respondents into four aspects: two positive and two negative aspects. Among the positive and interesting aspects, 8 (7.6%) respondents dwelt upon the Dalit movements' facilitation of unity among the community members and 23 (21.9%) respondents highlighted the movement's contribution in terms of fighting for the rights of the Dalits. Similarly, the negative but interesting aspects as perceived by the respondents included, disunity among the practitioners of the movement in the case of 8 (7.6%) respondents and its inactivity for 31 (29.5%) respondents. The number of respondents from whom responses could not be obtained was 35 (33.3%).

The positive aspects mentioned by the respondents about the Dalit movement have been classified as under:

1. achieving rights framed in the constitution, struggle for self respect, ability to fight casteism, organizing resistance against atrocities, fighting for reservations (including the private sector), social justice movements, protection of Dalit rights, social justice and identity of caste with self-dignity, fighting together for a common cause,
2. political empowerment, consolidation of Dalits as a group, political unity and integrity, educational development,
3. respect for other suppressed castes in the process of upliftment and development (of Dalits), SC reservations categorization/MRPS, sub-caste identity assertion, taking the shape of a movement which had asserted *jati* identity and culture,
4. reading writing and interpreting society from a Dalit perspective, and
5. stress on economic development

On the other hand, the negative aspects hindering Dalit movement today were perceived in terms of :

1. its emptiness (lack of a political programme and *NGOisation* of Dalit movement),
2. Dalit movement being sustained for individual fame,
3. caste divisions hindering Dalit unity, and
4. no real Dalit movement happening today.

4. Dalit Leaders' contributions towards development of Dalits

Leaders from the community heading the Dalit movement and the political sphere were identified by the respondents. A total of 31 contemporary Dalit leaders were identified by the respondents. They are spread across various fields from top-level bureaucrats in government service to leaders of mass Dalit movements to political leaders. Their contribution was assessed mainly in terms of spearheading the Dalit movement and winning various socio-economic and political rights for the Dalit community.

In an attempt to understand the respondents' reasons for their admiration of the identified Dalit leaders, the respondents were asked to list the contributions of these leaders.

Table-4.20 Community of the Dalit leaders contributing towards Dalit development

Community of Dalit leaders, activists contributing towards Dalit development	Contribution					Total
	Strengthened Dalit movement	Economic development	Fulfillment of Political rights	Variety of contribution	No Response	
Same community	2 (1.9)	10 (9.5)	-	1 (1.0)	-	13 (12.4)
Different	20 (19.0)	-	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	-	23 (21.9)
Mixed	-	-	1 (1.0)	20 (19.0)	-	21 (20.0)
No one	-	-	-	-	23 (21.9)	23 (21.9)
No Response	-	-	-	-	25 (23.8)	25 (23.8)
Total	22 (21.0)	10 (9.5)	2 (1.9)	23 (21.9)	48 (45.7)	105 (100.0)

Of the 57 (54.3%) respondents who identified various Dalit leaders, 22 (21.0%) of them felt that these leaders had contributed to the strengthening of the Dalit movement, 10 (9.5%) perceived them as playing an integral role in the economic development of the Dalits, 2 (1.9%) respondents believed that these leaders were working towards fulfillment of political rights and another 23 (21.9%) respondents emphasized that they had contributed positively towards Dalit development.

However, 23 (21.9%) respondents believed that there was not a single person at present that they could identify as the leader of the Dalits. Significantly, the number of those who did not respond was 25 (23.8%). This is perhaps a reflection of the dissatisfaction felt by the respondents with regard to the present state of the Dalit movement.

5. Greatest personalities of the 20th century

The greatest Indian personalities of the 20th century, according to the respondents, belonged to the fields of politics and social service in terms of their commitment and achievements towards the Dalit cause and in general. The greatest personalities

according to the respondents were Dr. BR Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Kanshiram and Mayavati.

The most important issues in the 20th century, according to the respondents, were socio-political movements in relation to Dalit rights, compared to the realm of politics and development. It is evident from their naming/identification of the greatest personalities of the 20th century that the persons who had strived for social change and Dalit rights were their favorites rather than individuals who had contributed to the area of politics and development. However, majority of the respondents believed that the greatest personalities identified by them had contributed to both these fields.

Table-4.21 Field of contribution of the greatest personalities of 20th Century

The greatest personalities of 20 th Century and their field of contribution	
Movements and Dalit Rights	46 (43.8)
Politics and Development sector	4 (3.8)
All fields	53 (50.5)
No Response	2 (1.9)
Total	105 (100.0)

The importance and prominence of Dalit leaders among the greatest personalities of the 20th century is reflected in the fact that 85 (81%) respondents accorded the highest rankings to one or more Dalit leaders, 13 (12.4%) respondents ranked them towards the middle and one respondent accorded lowest ranking to them. There were 4 (3.8%) respondents who ignored Dalit leaders and 2 (1.9%) did not respond in this regard.

Table no 4.22 Ranking of Dalit leaders

Number of Dalit leaders mentioned	Related to Dalit leaders					Total
	Dalit leaders ranked among first few	Dalit Leaders ranked in the middle	Dalit Leaders ranked towards the end	No Dalit leaders	No Response	
Only one Dalit leader	58 (55.2)	11 (10.5)	1 (1.0)	-	-	70 (66.7)
More than one Dalit leader	27	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	29 (27.6)
No Dalit leaders	-	-	-	4 (3.8)	-	4 (3.8)
No Response	-	-	-	-	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)
Total	85 (81.0)	13 (12.4)	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	2 (1.9)	105 (100.0)

An attempt towards measuring the popularity of Ambedkar and Gandhi⁸⁹ among the respondents, in acknowledging either of them as a greatest personality of the 20th century, showed that 77 (73.3%) respondents accorded importance solely to Ambedkar, as opposed to 1 (1.0%) respondent who accorded importance solely to Gandhi, while both of them were mentioned as the greatest personalities by 21 (20.0%) respondents. Neither of them got a mention by 4 (3.8%) respondents and 2 (1.9%) did not respond to the query. Ambedkar was perceived as a cause for the accomplishments of the Dalit middle class as well as the predominant source for the 'pricking' of its conscience. Many respondents quoted various strategies for the development of the Dalits and had inculcated their vision for the Dalit movement from Ambedkar's writings. They also drew comparisons between Ambedkar and other contemporary Dalit leaders to describe the depleted status of Dalit movement at present. They dwelt at length on the shortfalls of contemporary Dalit leaders and held them responsible for the diminishing status of the Dalit movement. A few respondents who remembered other Dalit leaders (in addition to Ambedkar) had had experiences of participating in the Dalit movement in various capacities in the past and some were still actively involved in it.

The idea behind eliciting respondents' views on the greatest personalities of twentieth century was also to understand the levels of their awareness about and acceptance of recent developments in the Dalit movement and leadership. The respondents were not prompted with any names. This also helped to measure their political interests as well as ideological leanings. It became evident from the responses received that majority of the respondents evinced interest in knowing about the developments related to political mobilizations but participation in such a mobilization was not a priority among the middle class Dalits. Leaders other than Ambedkar were referred to by many respondents, indicating their interest in contemporary Dalit movements. Apart from Ambedkar, a great Dalit leader and among the most popular greatest personalities of 20th century, 43 (41.0%) respondents mentioned other Dalit leaders as well, compared to 60 (57.1%) respondents who did not mention any other Dalit leader, while 2 (1.9%) did not respond.

⁸⁹ The respondents in Kulke's study (1976: 251) preferred Gandhi (58.5%) to Ambedkar (31.7%). Further, the educated showed allegiance to Ambedkar (70.8%) as against illiterates towards Gandhi (84.9%).

At this level, the social, economic and political **ideology** formations of the middle class Dalits are constructed by enquiring into their views and perceptions on *progress made by Dalits since independence*, the *status of Dalit women*, the *Dalit movement*, the *Dalit leaders* and the *greatest personalities of 20th century*. In the next level, their involvement in the Dalit politics are would be attempted.

IV. Politics of the Dalit middle class

The pragmatic and ideological politics of the respondents are analysed with the help of their membership in organizations/ political parties, their preference to effective models/strategy for overall development of Dalits, views on reservations, views related to political options before the Dalits for achieving equality, knowledge about issues/measure related to Dalits, prioritization of socio-economic and political issues and their views on some important socio-economic and political issues in understanding their identity and ideology.

1. Membership in social/political organizations

Caste associations have expanded their areas of concern beyond traditional elite emulation and local politics into the wider political arenas of state and national politics. Finding power in numbers within India's democratic system, caste groups are pulling together closely allied sub-castes in their quest for political influence. In efforts to solidify caste bonds, some caste associations have organized marriage fairs where families can make matches for their children. Traditional hierarchical concerns are being minimized in favour of strengthening horizontal unity. Thus, while pollution observances are declining, caste consciousness is not.

Existence of SC/ST Employees Welfare Associations alongside other employees' welfare organizations is a common phenomenon in all government offices and institutions. When there are no separate organizations for Dalits, general employees' welfare associations represent Dalits' issues. The respondents in the present study were members of Dalit organizations and Political parties working with Dalit ideology. All employees (61.9%) were members of SC/ST employees' associations in their concerned organizations. Most (28.6%) of the respondents among the

independent professionals were members of more than one Dalit organization/association. Majority of respondents from the officer cadre, who were 12 (11.5%) in number were members of Dalit organizations/political parties.

While 22 (21.0%) of them were members of one organization, 34 (32.4%) respondents were members of more than one organization, 18 (17.1%) respondents were not members of any organization and in 31 (29.5%) instances, no responses could be obtained. Across occupations, in the Officer cadre 12 (11.4%) were members of one or more organizations. Clerk cadre, bank employees and university faculty, all belonging to Government/public sector institutions, who were members of these organizations, constituted 8 (7.6%) in number. Among the professionals, respondents working in NGOs, 8 (7.6%) in number, were members of such organizations, whereas doctors, advocates and journalists did not possess memberships in any Dalit/political organizations.

Table-4.23 Organizations/political parties (including Dalit oriented) in which the respondents are members

Respondents' occupation	Nature of the organizations					Total
	Work related associations	Dalit organizations	General political parties	Dalit political parties	None/ Not Applicable	
Officer cadre	6 (5.7)	2 (1.9)	4 (3.8)	-	3 (2.9)	15 (14.3)
Clerk cadre	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	-	7 (6.7)	15 (14.3)
University faculty	3 (2.9)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	8 (7.6)	15 (14.3)
Bank employees	2 (1.9)	-	5 (4.8)	1 (1.0)	7 (6.7)	15 (14.3)
NGO	3 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	-	7 (6.7)	15 (14.3)
Advocates	-	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	-	10 (9.5)	15 (14.3)
Doctors	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	-	5 (4.8)	10 (9.5)
Journalists	2 (1.9)	-	1 (1.0)	-	2 (1.9)	5 (4.8)
Total	19 (18.1)	10 (9.5)	26 (24.8)	1 (1.0)	49 (46.7)	105 (100.0)

2. Effective model(s)/strategies for the overall development of Dalits

Six pre-identified models/ strategies that would assist the Dalits in their overall development were provided to the respondents for ranking them in the order of their preference. They were: 1) reservations, 2) socialist revolution, 3) cultural change, 4)

economic development, 5) urbanization and 6) political power. Their responses are presented in Table 4.24.

Table-4.24 Effective model(s)/strategies for the overall development of Dalits

Model/ Strategy	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	No Rank	Total
Reservations	50 (47.6)	10 (9.5)	9 (8.6)	15 (14.3)	17 (16.2)	-	-	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)
Socialist revolution	4 (3.8)	12 (11.4)	43 (41.0)	7 (6.7)	12 (11.4)	21 (20.0)	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	105 (100.0)
Cultural change	3 (2.9)	6 (5.7)	25 (23.8)	40 (38.1)	16 (15.2)	10 (9.5)	1 (1.0)	4 (3.8)	105 (100.0)
Economic development	21 (20.0)	62 (59.0)	8 (7.6)	12 (11.4)	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	105 (100.0)
Urbanization	-	4 (3.8)	6 (5.7)	10 (9.5)	44 (41.9)	33 (31.4)	1 (1.0)	7 (6.7)	105 (100.0)
Political power	25 (23.8)	10 (9.5)	13 (12.4)	16 (15.2)	9 (8.6)	31 (29.5)	-	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Other*	2 (1.9)	-	-	1 (1.0)	-	-	5 (4.8)	97 (92.4)	105 (100.0)
Total	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	105 (100.0)

* Education as other model/strategy has been suggested by few respondents.

The explanation offered by the respondents for according rank 1 to a particular model or strategy was analysed. In their opinion, the most suitable model/strategy for the overall development of the Dalits should be an immediate measure for 14 (13.3%) respondents. While, 18 (17.1%) felt it should be a permanent solution and another 12 (11.4) preferred it to be gradual progress. Others did not explain their ranking preferences.

In ranking the various strategies/models in order of their preference, some of the respondents also attempted to construct their own models for the overall development of Dalits. Broad summations of these have been presented below in the form of statements:

1. Economic development assures development in other fields, it provides space for other kinds of development in the present situation, economic status guarantees self-respect and hence progress, economic development and education through reservations have to precede other models of development
2. Cultural change would facilitate appropriate usage of reservations too
3. Reservations' system is the first step with which awareness and economic status would improve, socialist revolution and economic development are prerequisites that effect overall development,
4. Reservations and economic development are the first steps for overall development
5. Education is more important for realization of higher status for Dalits, next to it economic development is essential for progress, and then achieving cultural change would silence the criticisms against Dalits
6. When socialist revolution occurs there is no need for reservations, an economy based on the model of China would ensure that there would be no caste system.
7. Reservations are necessary and subsequently economic development to capture political power
8. Government must help Dalits to set up industries by providing them loans (without interest) so that they develop economically, rest of the changes would follow automatically. There should be lower interest rates for Dalits so that it would be possible for them to repay loans without much burden
9. Development is possible only with attitudinal change among Dalits, social change would lead to cultural change, and ensure that Dalits do not lag behind

10. Urbanization does not change caste discrimination
11. Only social movements can lead to social transformation and the overall development of Dalits
12. Education and reservations enable Dalits to access all fields. Proper utilization of reservations and government policies, combined with Ambedkar ideology, would give sufficient push (education and employment wise), and lead to cultural change
13. Socio-economic and cultural development is a pre-condition for overall development.

3. Reservations

In the wake of contestations regarding suitable criterion for the provision of reservations, the very design of reservations system assumes importance. In the recent past, the Mandal commission's recommendations for extension of reservations related benefits to the 'Other Backward Classes' reiterated the rationale for such provision and justification for certain castes to be covered under the reservations system. The 'Mandal controversy' has thrown up issues that concern Dalits as well.

It has often been articulated that, the entire system of reservations needs to be rethought in the wake of success or failure of reservations system in uplifting the marginalized communities from their relative educational, social and economical backwardness. The 'success' theory articulates that, now, after the long presence of reservations in the fields of education and employment, a considerable number of individuals have benefited from it, hence, it can be withdrawn, not only for them but also to others. On the other hand, the 'ineffectiveness' attributed to the reservations system in its present form in terms of uplifting the 'real poor' and the 'most needy', also suggest the closure of the reservations policy. The underlying assumption in both the articulations is to prevent the 'ineligible' from benefiting through reservations.

Experiences related to their family economic background and their own usage of reservations had made the respondents develop their own opinions regarding the purpose and utility of reservations. While some found the role of reservations to be crucial in ensuring social and economic mobility for Dalits, others perceived it as having a negative impact on the degree of competitiveness or competence among them and thus earning the wrath of other communities, especially those who were envious of such 'favouritism' towards Dalits from the Government. However, these impressions had been formed on the lines of the anti-reservationists' criticisms. During the anti-Mandal agitations, the 'upper-caste' Hindus often proffered such views against the entire policy of reservations. It has been widely observed that, in order to avoid such criticism, some Dalits subscribed to their detractors' very notions, thus giving scope for false assumptions that the 'mobile Dalits' were against reservations.

In order to elicit the views of the respondents on the policy of reservations the following statements were presented to them.

- 1) Reservations must continue for betterment of Dalits
- 2) Reservations should be extended to the private sector
- 3) The Creamy layer should be covered under reservations
- 4) The Creamy layer should be kept out of reservations
- 5) Reservations should be extended to Dalits converted into other religions (Islam, Christianity, etc.)

The respondents chose one or more from the above statements. Based on their responses, the following classifications were evolved to group them into four categories, viz.,

- 1) Proactive - those who chose 1, 2, 3 & 5 leaving out statement 4 suggesting that creamy layer Dalits should not avail reservations,
- 2) Statusquo – those who chose 1, 2, 4 & 5 together in line with the spirit of social justice to keep only the marginalized under the gamut of reservations,
- 3) Positive - those who chose 1, 2 & 3 together suggesting that beneficiaries of reservations should be only those who are presently defined as Dalits, and
- 4) Negative - of those who chose 1, 2 & 5 statements together.

The above statements aimed at understanding the views of a class, which had largely benefited from the reservations policy and continued to have a personal stake in it for the welfare of its future generations. Dalit middle class is seen as a product of the policy of reservations in the society and in their occupation or daily life. They are reminded of this fact – the reservations - in various ways by others.

Table-4.25 Respondents' opinions on reservations

Respondents' occupation	Respondents' opinion on reservations					Total
	Proactive	Status-quo	Positive	Negative	No Response	
Officer Cadre	3 (2.9)	10 (9.5)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	-	15 (14.3)
Clerk Cadre	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	6 (5.7)	-	-	15 (14.3)
University Faculty	3 (2.7)	9 (8.6)	3 (2.7)	-	-	15 (14.3)
Bank Employee	3 (2.7)	10 (9.5)	2 (1.9)	-	-	15 (14.3)
NGO	2 (1.9)	7 (6.7)	5 (4.8)	-	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
Advocate	1 (1.0)	8 (7.6)	5 (4.8)	-	1 (1.0)	15 (14.3)
Doctor	1 (1.0)	5 (4.8)	4 (3.8)	-	-	10 (9.5)
Journalist	1 (1.0)	3 (2.7)	1 (1.0)	-	-	5 (4.8)
Total	19 (18.1)	56 (53.3)	27 (25.7)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.9)	105 (100.0)

All the respondents, irrespective of occupation and gender, had a common view on the first two issues in terms of continuing with reservations and further extending it to the private sector in the changing scenario of shrinking opportunities in the public sector. The division of opinions was reflected only in the case of reservations for the creamy layer Dalits and extending them to Dalits who had converted to other religions like Islam and Christianity.

4. Political Options before the Dalits to Achieve Equality

The Dalit movements and various political mobilizations of the Dalits have been in existence for a long time. On many occasions, they have worked in collaboration with other organizations and political movements.

Table-4.26 Political options before the Dalits to achieve equality

Possible allies for Dalits	Political options before the Dalits to achieve equality			Total
	Struggling alone	Aligning with others	No Response	
Tribals	-	1 (1.0)	-	1 (1.0)
OBCs	-	17 (16.2)	-	17 (16.2)
Left parties	-	3 (2.9)	-	3 (2.9)
All political parties	-	56 (53.3)	-	56 (53.3)
All	-	9 (8.6)	-	9 (8.6)
No Response	-	8 (7.6)	-	8 (7.6)
Not Applicable	8 (7.6)	-	3 (2.9)	11 (10.5)
Total	8 (7.6)	94 (89.5)	3 (2.9)	105 (100.0)

An overwhelming majority of 94 (89.5%) respondents felt that it was essential to align with other likeminded communities and/or political parties in the pursuit of socio-economic and political equality. On the other hand, 8 (7.6%) respondents felt that other communities or parties could not be relied upon completely to support the Dalits and hence, the only option left before them was to fight alone for their rights.

A further classification between social groups and political parties showed that a majority of 56 (53.3%) respondents wanted alliances to be forged with all political parties, compared to the preference shown by 3 (2.9%) respondents for left parties alone. Similarly, among the social groups, the numerically dominant OBCs were more preferable as political allies for 17 (16.2%) respondents, compared to the tribals, who were preferable as allies for a sole respondent. Another 9 (8.6%) respondents preferred alliances with all social groups and all political parties for the Dalits since they felt that the Dalits needed help from every quarter and relying solely on mobilizations by other weaker groups would not be of much assistance to them.

5. Issues / measures related to Dalits that are known

Middle class Dalits have access to all kinds of media, and are constantly in touch with various social, economic and political issues, especially those concerning Dalits. They discuss and debate social and political issues within their own circles and with others. Their understandings about various socio-political issues in groups have shaped groups as the locus for the development of a collective consciousness.

Table-4.27 Issues/measures related to Dalits that are known to Respondents

Issues/measures known to respondents	Knowledge about issues/measures related to Dalits			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Chundur/ Karamchedu/ Vempenta massacres	100 (95.2)	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Reservations in education employment & political spheres	103 (98.1)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
National SC/ST Commission	91 (86.7)	13 (12.4)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Special economic measures	95 (90.5)	9 (8.6)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Ban on Untouchability	102 (97.1)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)

Except one respondent, all the other respondents had high levels of awareness on many issues related to Dalits. The overall awareness about various atrocities committed upon Dalits, the special economic measures provided to Dalits, reservations in various fields and the legal measures banning untouchability are an indication of their constant engagement with such issues. Further, many respondents also suggested a few necessary changes for the effective implementation of those measures.

6. Prioritization of socio-economic and political issues

Many socio-economic and political issues are a cause for concern among all Dalits in the present times. Some of these issues are articulated by the Dalit middle class in response to the problems faced by the Dalits. Such issues usually evoke a lot of interest in the members of the Dalit middle class who engage with them extensively. In that process, the middle class Dalits also prioritize these issues. In this regard, an attempt has been made to understand their priorities in relation to such issues.

Table-4.28 Social, economic and political issues in order of interest/ concern/ priorities

Issues	Order of preference							Total
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	No Rank	
Dalit identity/ Self respect	72 (68.6)	10 (9.5)	3 (2.9)	3 (2.9)	16 (15.2)	-	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Economic inequality	10 (9.5)	71 (67.6)	16 (15.2)	-	5 (4.8)	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	105 (100.0)
Social, economic & political equality	18 (17.1)	16 (15.2)	36 (34.3)	22 (21.0)	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	8 (7.6)	105 (100.0)
Unemployment/ Poverty/ Landlessness/ Illiteracy	1 (1.0)	6 (5.7)	9 (8.6)	44 (41.9)	24 (22.9)	7 (6.7)	14 (13.3)	105 (100.0)
Caste discrimination	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	20 (19.0)	18 (17.1)	38 (36.2)	18 (17.1)	6 (5.7)	105 (100.0)
Conversions to Christianity/ Buddhism	-	-	15 (14.3)	11 (10.5)	7 (6.7)	59 (56.2)	13 (12.4)	105 (100.0)
Total	105 (100.0)	104 (99.0)	99 (94.3)	98 (93.3)	92 (87.6)	89 (84.8)	43 (41.0)	105 (100.0)

For as many as 72 (68.6%) respondents, Dalit identity / self-respect is more important than the problem of economic inequality (9.5%). All those who accorded first rank to Dalit identity have given second rank to economic inequality and vice-versa. The first ranks were given to social, economic and political equality by 17.1% of the respondents, caste discrimination by 3.8% of the respondents, problems like unemployment, poverty, landlessness and illiteracy among Dalits by 1.0% of the respondents and not to issues related to conversions to Christianity, Buddhism, etc. This revealed that majority of the Dalit middle class were engaged with the question of self-respect and identity rather than other social, economic and political issues. They were indeed seriously contemplating issues concerned to identity and ideology in a much more practical way.

7. Opinions on general issues

Two sets of statements dealing with (1) globalization, reservations and corruption and (2) caste and Dalits were presented to the respondents for their views and comments.

Table-4.29 Opinions on globalization, reservations and corruption

Opinions on	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No Response	Total
Globalization eradicates caste system in India	5 (4.8)	92 (87.6)	1 (1.0)	7 (6.7)	105 (100.0)
Merit should be the criterion for job recruitment	7 (6.7)	91 (86.7)	-	7 (6.7)	105 (100.0)
Economic growth with social justice is an unachievable idea	13 (12.4)	85 (81.0)	-	7 (6.7)	105 (100.0)
The policy of reservations has increased the scope for corruption in India	1 (1.0)	97 (92.4)	-	7 (6.7)	105 (100.0)

Though the priorities of the government were changing in favour of privatization and thereby reducing employment opportunities for Dalits, the respondents largely felt that the principle of social justice could not be done away with at this point of time. Similarly, they contested other notions like globalization leading to the eradication of the caste system, merit being the sole criterion in job selections and the notion that the reservations system had increased the scope for corruption. An overwhelming majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with these notions.

On the other hand, a few respondents agreed with these notions. The notion that 'globalization would eradicate caste system in India' was agreeable to 5 (4.8%) respondents. Merit as the criterion for job recruitment found favour with 7 (6.7%) respondents. In the present times, the notion that economic growth with social justice was unachievable was shared by 13 (12.4%) respondents. The notion that the 'policy of reservations has increased the scope for corruption in India' found favour with only one respondent.

9. Perceptions on issues related to caste and Dalits

The basic idea here was to assess the respondents' perceptions about the contemporary nature of caste and its consequences for the Dalits. Issues like Brahminism, purity and pollution, casteism and communalism, achieving Dalit unity

through inter-community marriages amongst the Dalits and additional burdens that the Dalit women faced in comparison to Dalit men were presented to the respondents for their opinions.

Table-4.30 Opinions on Brahminism, purity and pollution, casteism-communalism, Dalit unity and additional burdens of Dalit women

Issues	Opinions					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No Response	
Brahminism is all pervasive	51 (48.6)	46 (43.8)	-	1 (1.0)	7 (6.7)	105 (100.0)
Questions of purity and pollution are unobservable in urban life	41 (39.0)	31 (29.5)	9 (8.6)	21 (20.0)	3 (2.9)	105 (100.0)
Casteism is not the bane of Indian politics like communalism is	47 (44.8)	31 (29.5)	2 (1.9)	17 (16.2)	8 (7.6)	105 (100.0)
Inter-community marriages amongst Dalits would achieve Dalit unity	40 (38.1)	53 (50.5)	3 (2.9)	4 (3.8)	5 (4.8)	105 (100.0)
Dalit women do not face additional burdens as distinct from Dalit men	42 (40.0)	7 (6.7)	9 (8.6)	44 (41.9)	3 (2.9)	105 (100.0)

Of these statements, only the notion that Brahminism was all pervasive was agreed upon by almost all the respondents. In contrast, the other two general issues pertaining to caste were contested by the respondents. Thirty (28.6%) respondents disagreed with the notion that purity and pollution were non-observable in urban life and 19 (18.1%) respondents disagreed with the notion that 'casteism is not the bane of Indian politics like communalism is'. The two perceptions related to the Dalits, viz., 'Dalit unity through inter-community marriages' was agreed upon by 93 (88.6%) respondents and the issue of Dalit women facing additional burdens compared to the Dalit men was contested by 51 (48.6%) respondents.

The **politics** (pragmatic and ideological) of the Dalit middle class are analyzed in terms of their *membership in organizations / political parties*, their preferences in *effective models/strategy for overall development of Dalits*, views on *reservations*, views related to *political options before the Dalits for achieving equality*, knowledge about *issues/measure related to Dalits*, prioritization of *socio-economic and political*

issues and their views on some important *socio-economic and political issues* in understanding their identity and ideology.

Thus, this chapter made an attempt to comprehend the ideology and identity patterns of the middle class Dalits, specifically the respondents, through understanding their 1) life situation, 2) Identity patterns, 3) Ideology and 4) politics. Their life situation when contrasted to their socio-economic background and their middle class location, in terms of education and employment, indicates a uniqueness that is specific to the Dalit middle class. Similarly, the members of Dalit middle class's identity patterns are distinctive compared to others. Though, the middle class Dalits have many identity options before them, their most preferred identity in most given social, economic and political contexts is Dalit. At personal level, they prefer a non-caste identity for them. Though, they have experienced upward mobility in their education and employment statuses, they are not yet 'free' of caste biases and discrimination, the same was well outlined in responses provided by the respondents. They have definitive views on many social, economic and political issues affecting the Dalits today. Individually, all of them are not in a position to constantly engage with the Dalit politics, but, each individual possesses strong political convictions with concern for the poor Dalits and the overall development of all Dalits in mind.

In the next section, case histories of few middle class Dalits are provided.

Section II: Case Studies

This section includes eight case studies of respondents, one from each occupation/profession covered in the study. These case studies, which take the form of simple narratives, sometimes in the respondent's words, do not necessarily represent all the Dalits pursuing these occupations in general or even the respondents in particular; rather they are reflective or indicative of the life trajectories of the individuals in them, and seek to represent the most outstanding individuals pursuing these occupations. A brief analysis and conclusion has also been presented at the close of each case study.

Case study I: Mr. Eswar, Bank Employee

Mr. Eswar is an Assistant Manager in the State Bank of India. Aged 49 years, he belongs to the Mala community and was born and brought up in Hyderabad city. His father, an illiterate, hailing from a small village in nearby Mahabubnagar district, migrated to Hyderabad in search of work and was employed as a Class-IV employee in Andhra Pradesh State Electricity Board (APSEB). His mother was also a Class-IV employee.

He has two children, (a daughter and a son), who are pursuing their Intermediate and X standards respectively.

Eswar's childhood was spent in a prominent Dalit slum (*Basti*). All four of his siblings (two sisters and two brothers, all elder to him) are educated. While one sister and one brother are settled as Class-IV employees, one brother is an ex-serviceman and a bank clerk now. Another sister is a housewife.

The most memorable incident in his childhood, as he recounts it is, reading Ambedkar's life story, (*Ambedkar Jeevitha Charithra* by Yendluri Chinnaiah), while he was in VII standard in 1968. In 1969, within a year, he translated it into English and spoke from a dais on the eve of Ambedkar Jayanthi in his basti. In the history of Hyderabad, that was the first public celebration of Ambedkar Jayanthi in Hyderabad city. Prior to that, Ambedkar Jayanthi was usually celebrated in closed circles, within four walls.

The night school run by the Bhajana mandali in the basti, encouraged school-going children to study under the supervision of volunteers. Eswar was thus able to do well in his studies.

During his student days, he took an active part in all Dalit mobilizations and activities. Mr. J.B. Raju, a Dalit IAS Officer, who was also an active and important leader of Dalit movement, inspired the Dalit youth during those days with his speeches on Ambedkar. He was considered a promising youth with a strong Dalit orientation. At

the same, he resolved to enter government service as most of the Dalit leaders of the time were government employees. In the period 1969-71, he participated in the separate Telangana agitation and was jailed twice along with other activists.

He was one among the few who formed Ambedkar Yuvajana Sangham (Ambedkar Youth Association) that became the first state level organization, with large membership base, and was instrumental in spreading Ambedkar's ideology among the rural youth. It continuously engaged in many issues related to Dalits and actively contributed to the strengthening of the Dalit movement.

However, soon after the completion of his graduation (B.Com) in 1973, he was appointed as a clerk in State Bank of India at Hyderabad. Since then, he has been organizing the employees and taking part in the activities of various other Dalit organizations. Now he holds the rank of Assistant Manager, with a posting at Hyderabad.

Continuing with his involvement in Dalit political activities, he became a committee member in the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes Welfare Association (APSCWA) in March 1974. Then, the association was headed by Mr. C. Ramulu (an assistant director in Social Welfare department) and Dr. K. Nagaiah (Postal Department), who were president and general secretary respectively. Later on, he rose in rank in the organization and became its General Secretary by 1981.

One important issue the APSCWA took up under his leadership was, protesting against the denial of entry of Mr. Masala Eeranna, a Telugu Desam Party MLA, into Mantralayam temple in 1981. Both Ambedkar Yuvajana Sangham and APSCWA took out rallies protesting against the discrimination.

Recently, during the MRPS's Madiga Dandora Movement, he along with other Mala leaders, suggested an alternative to MRPS's demand of categorization of SCs into ABCD groups, namely dividing Dalit groups into three groups, consisting of below-poverty line (8% of SC population) middle class (5% of the population) and upper middle class (2% of the population) in order to provide reservations in proportion to their population. He felt that instead of dividing the SCs, reservations could be

provided to the needy, based on their educational and economic backwardness. His view was to earmark a total budget of one five year plan period for the development of only the below poverty line population without allocating budget for any other social groups, so that the poorest sections would be benefited by it.

He strongly feels that, “a social tax should be imposed (5% or 10% of their salary) on all employees or only the reserved category employees who had availed reservations, which should be spent it on the development of Below Poverty Level (BPL) families.”

He observes, “Nowadays, there are many changes in Dalits’ lifestyle and politics. In Hyderabad city, many Dalit youth drop out from schools or colleges and as they are unemployed, their political allegiance develops more in conformity to the present day politics. Instead of developing their own political symbols, the Dalits are becoming followers in mainstream political parties.”

With regard to the growing number of Dalit organizations, he feels, “unlike in the past, where few organizations existed and everybody worked for one or the other organization, with a view to strengthen the already existing Dalit organizations, these days, many Dalits prefer to form new organizations for the sake of their own individual identity.”

With reservations three significant changes have taken place, according to him, namely economic development, social awareness and improvement in the numbers of educated Dalits.

According to him, twenty years ago, revealing caste identity was out of the question for many economically and socially successful Dalits. Now, with the increasing awareness and politicization with newer caste movements, asserting caste identity has become easier. In his personal experience, ‘urbanization had not had much influence in reducing caste discrimination.’ During his childhood, he had lived in a slum along with other Dalits and faced the same kind of discrimination that was prevalent in the rural areas. Only after entering into his present job, involving a predominantly middle class life style, had he found that the degree of caste discrimination at place of

residence and work had reduced. Since he lives in a bank employees' colony, he interacted with both Dalits as well as non-Dalits at the family level as well.

He advocates, "What is needed today is activism concentrating on legal aid to victims of caste atrocities and assertion of a Buddhist identity for Dalits. This alone could help Dalits face the increasing atrocities and prevent such atrocities from occurring in the future."

As at present Dalit politics was heading towards disunity, witnessing the breaking up of organizations due to individuals' selfish egoistic nature, the future of the Dalit politics seemed very grim, in his opinion. He further adds," at this rate, there is no hope in the near future that all the Dalit leaders and organizations would come together to forge a broader Dalit platform that would work towards claiming political power." However, he is not going to 'give up in despair'. He wants to make his best efforts to change the present situation, to bring in unity among all Dalits, in order to resume the aborted struggle for Dalit emancipation.

Analysis and Conclusion

Mr. Eswar is a typical Dalit leader actively involved in the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh. His life trajectory mainly reflects the life circumstances of Dalits living in Hyderabad city 30 years back. He is also a typical example of an individual recruited into the Dalit movement early in life who eventually grew into a Dalit leader. His views, politics were all shaped in a collective process.

His contribution to the Dalit movement is very significant compared to many of his contemporaries. He is a state level Dalit leader representing Dalit employees as well as other Dalits' interests. He had risen early in leadership, enjoys the privilege of being one among the prominent Dalit leaders. So far, he had not diverged from his original enthusiasm and was still planning many activities for Dalit development.

Case study II : Veeraiah, University Teacher

Veeraiah is a lecturer in a state university having nine years of service. He is forty-two years old and belongs to the Madiga sub-caste. For a brief period of six months, he worked as a Trainee Manager in the Railway Recruitment Board. Later on, he worked in the SC Corporation for two years on deputation.

He hails from a village in Rangareddy district and migrated to the city in 1980 for his studies. He is a third generation literate. His grandfather had been a bonded labourer in his youth. Unable to bear the workload and ill-treatment, Veeraiah's grandfather ran away from his employers. He was sheltered by Christian missionaries who taught him to read and write. Later on, his grandfather was brought back to the family and was made to continue with bonded labour. Veeraiah's father too was literate. Unlike his grandfather, his father was an agriculturist. The family had four acres of land and sold two acres in 1973 towards Veeraiah's educational expenses. In turn, after obtaining a job, he had invested Rs. 40,000/- for sinking a bore well in his ancestral land.

He has two siblings, a brother and a sister. The brother is less educated and hence, is looking after the agricultural activities of the family. Since Veeraiah is economically well off compared to his brother, he does not want to claim his share in the ancestral family property. Now, Veeraiah does not contribute towards the family's agricultural activities. Instead, he intends to take up the responsibility for performing the marriages of the children of his siblings.

Recently, his wife contested in the municipal elections in Hyderabad, as a ward councilor on the basis of reservations for SCs. That could be the first time, he thinks, that people in his locality had found out his caste background. Prior to that, there had been no other situation where he had had to reveal his caste identity.

Personally, as an educated Dalit he claimed that he had never faced caste discrimination. He reflects, "in those days caste discrimination was widely prevalent in villages". One incident of caste discrimination he remembers in this context is related to his school days. While rehearsing for a school play, his role was changed to

suit the prevailing caste sentiments. Originally, he had been selected for a role which required the touching of his feet by a co-actor, a caste-Hindu boy. But the village elders did not permit this to occur.

When he was young and still residing in his native place, he protested against the bonded labour, contract annual labour system and *Uronthu* (traditional village services the Dalits have to do on a nominal payment like removing the dead cattle, assisting in cremation of the deceased and advertising important news to villagers by beating a drum) in his village as he felt that these systems were oppressive and exploitative.

In 1982, in the context of Meenakshipuram (in Tamil Nadu) religious conversions the local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unit (at his native place in Rangareddy district) held a meeting against religious conversions. He opposed the BJP in the meeting who, he felt, had tried to make it a political issue in his village when it had no basis. Instead, he demanded that the BJP take a clear stand on the “system of using two glasses” in the hotels, one for caste-Hindus and the other for Dalits, which he felt was a clear example of discrimination against Dalits. Later on, he was instrumental in the formation of an ‘SC, ST, BC, Minority Welfare Association’ at the Mandal level to fight against Reddy’s domination.

He has a strong commitment towards the overall development of all the Dalits in his village. Similarly, he has been contributing to the development of his native village. He was instrumental in getting a ‘Community Hall’ sanctioned for Dalits. He has an active role in his native village development programmes. He helps village youth to organize sports and cultural events in the village. He encouraged an NGO to adopt his village for development. While he was in SC Corporation on deputation, he recommended land allotments to few landless Dalits.

Throughout his studies and career, he had received help from caste-Hindus. A Brahmin teacher as well as his childhood friends from OBC and upper caste backgrounds had helped him financially and by way of providing career related advice. Similarly, he had helped others, when he had attained economic stability. He

sheltered a Mala youth who was pursuing studies, for eight years and two OBCs for a year.

Analysis and Conclusion

Veeraiah is a typical example of a successful Dalit, who has achieved social and economic mobility. He has strong family ties and community consciousness and thereby, involves himself in various development activities. Due to his offers of financial and other assistance and participation in development related activities in his native village, he is respected by all the villagers. In his present location, Hyderabad, he is respected in his social milieu for his compassionate nature and commitment to the cause of Dalits.

Case study III: Ramaswamy, Advocate

Ramaswamy is an advocate. He is 37 years old. He has done MA, LLB and has been working as an advocate for the last four years. He got married at the age of 35 and has a child. His wife, who is a graduate, works as a clerk in a private concern.

He hails from Guntur district, where he has pursued most of his studies. He belongs to a large family of three brothers and three sisters. His father was a teacher who was interested in providing education to all his children. All his brothers and sisters are qualified teachers. He too worked as a teacher for a brief period.

During his intermediate course, he was attracted to Left politics. After getting through his intermediate examination in 1983, he came under the influence of the local people's war squad (*Dalam*). When he joined for BA in 1987 at a college in Guntur, he was made the in-charge to organize the students of that college by the People's War Group (PWG). He joined for an M.A. course in 1988 at Nagarjuna University; however, due to his involvement in Party activities, he could not complete the course. In 1989, when he became a full-time member in the party, he was asked to work with the villagers near Tenali town. He also served as the town cell member-in-charge of students' mobilizations.

In 1986, he was arrested by the Police and was freed after three days. In 1987, when he was arrested for the second time, his identity was known to the police and he subsequently spent a week in jail. A bind over case was booked against him; however, he managed to get off with a warning, forbidding him to engage in Party related activities. He worked in the Party for two more years before quitting it in 1992.

Later on, he studied LLB during 1995-98, and has stayed away from Party politics since then. After completion of his LLB, with a view to begin his professional career in Hyderabad, he took a crop loan of Rs. 20000/- from a bank to come to Hyderabad city in 1999 and began his apprenticeship to a legal practitioner in 2001. From 2001 to May 2003, he worked as a legal assistant to a well-known advocate at the High Court. Prior to that, in the initial days of his career in the city, as he had no contacts,

he had to join under an advocate much younger to him. Ramaswamy was “ill-treated” by this advocate and hence, had to look out for apprenticeship under another senior advocate. He did not perceive any caste discrimination by seniors or clients all through his career. However, inspite of his best efforts, he found that he was “unable to work with any senior advocate on a sustained basis”. He feels that, “inter-personal relations are indeed formed on caste basis” at his workplace, though he adds that “it is very difficult to prove it”. Such discrimination, he says, is ‘a mental perception one always feels’, at the same time, it is an ‘unseen feeling’.

While he was working as a legal assistant, he was paid a monthly salary of Rs. 2000/-. After quitting the last senior advocate, he received a contract from a reputed cement company to represent their cases. The mode of payment was on case-to-case basis. As the Company lawyer, he has to deal with recovery and check bounce cases in the lower court at Secunderabad.

Even after two years of legal practice, he has not fixed his nameplate in front of his residence. He wishes to first learn law ‘adequately’ and only then display his nameplate. At present, he finds no use for a nameplate as most of his cases come from his native place, mostly recommended by his friends and relatives.

In between, he tried becoming a pastor (priest) in a Church and tried his hands at Dalit politics. He brought out a collection of Dalit poetry in 1998. He is “always ready to work for his community”, but at present, his “economic conditions do not permit it”. However, he wants to help the Dalits, within the purview of his profession, by providing legal aid. His views regarding the Dalit movement and Dalit politics are firmly based on his exposure to few important Dalit leaders. He is most appreciative of the movement led by Madiga Reservations Porata Samithi for sub-categorization of reservations in favour of Madigas and other Dalit communities who underutilized them.

He finds himself “lost in this world”, for he is still struggling to make a career for himself. As of now, his wife, who is working as a clerk in private company with her earnings of Rs. 5000/- a month, is managing the household. Though he sometimes

earns Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 7000/- a month, his income is mostly “irregular and uncertain”.

He prefers to work on contract basis with companies or obtain an assistant government pleader post in order to earn a regular income and to survive in this profession. He feels that establishing himself independently, solely on the basis of individual cases, is non-affordable.

He finds the legal profession increasingly competitive and ruthless, “which does not care much for the well being of others”. So far, he had faced problems in terms of improving his skills, increasing his practice, earning more money and coping with the system. He is very critical of the profession, but at the same time, finds it fascinating and engaging. If not for his interest in legal profession, as such, he would not have stayed back in Hyderabad, he feels. If he is unable to make a future in this profession, he is “ready to migrate abroad even to work as a casual labourer” and has been making attempts in that direction.

He grew up in the protected environment of a well-educated family. In his childhood, his family enjoyed a lot of respect, as his father was schoolteacher. In his youth, he got drawn into radical left movement, hence missed out on a regular work career. After quitting politics, he studied law and has been trying to make a career for himself. He is still struggling.

Analysis and Conclusion

Ramaswamy is a struggling middle class Dalit. Belonging to a lower middle class background, Ramaswamy had witnessed economic insecurity, mainly due to his involvement in the Left movement for nearly five years. He now considers those years, during which he was unemployed, as an unproductive period in his life. However, he quickly got back to his studies, graduated with an LLB degree and tried to settle down as an advocate. However, his struggles in the pursuit of economic stability are not over as yet.

However, despite all these uncertainties, his political understanding had developed under the influence of both Dalit ideology and Marxism. Thus, he could easily

assume a Dalit activist role, soon after coming out of the Left movement. His problems are more to do with the 'elusive stability' in work career rather than related to identity and ideology. His problems from the beginning are related to, his social location in those sites which are characterized by anxiety and uncertainty.

Case study IV: Koteswar Rao , Employee, Clerk Cadre

Koteswar Rao is a Junior Office Assistant, aged 39 years, hails from a very poor family in East Godavary District. He has two daughters and one son. He wants his three children to study MBBS and become doctors, a profession he likes the most. He likes to teach children and consequently teaches many of them who reside in his neighbourhood. He values education so much that he spends most of his free time in teaching young children subjects like, mental aptitude, general knowledge and mathematics. He also lectures on memory skills and preparation for examinations in schools and colleges on invitation. He believes that “one should cultivate one’s mental abilities on one’s own”.

So far he has admitted 50 boys and girls in hostels and helped them with some kind of financial assistance. During Sundays and holidays, he conducts special classes for village children on mental ability and memory skills. He is also providing guidance to a few uneducated youth on how to prepare for competitive examinations and encouraging some of them to learn shorthand and typewriting. He likes to conduct games and quiz competitions for village children. Since he accords a lot of value to education, he sometimes spends his own money towards stationary related expenditure and prizes, when he conducts special classes and summer camps.

He describes himself as a ‘self-motivated’ person. He tries to instill joy and hope in others. Rao, who migrated to Hyderabad in 1990, plays a very active role in the Dalit employees’ association. He is the President of SC, ST employees’ association in his office. He interacts closely with many Dalit leaders. In his view, any Dalit who gets into a government job or is pursuing a profitable profession is ‘successful’. He sees success in relative terms. He considers, “an improvement in the original social and economic status as success.” In his opinion, he is also a ‘successful’ Dalit.

At his workplace, he discovered that Dalits were not being recruited as per reservations quota. Currently, he is mobilizing the few Dalit employees to represent this issue to the Government. Similarly, he is also playing a lead role in representing the employees’ problems to the officials.

Koteswar Rao keeps in touch with all his Dalit colleagues even after office hours, and also maintains relations with their families. He feels, as non-Dalit colleagues do not interact at family level with Dalits, “all Dalit employees have to maintain close family based interactions, even if they reside in places which are located far away from each other”.

With regard to the development of Dalits, he feels, “donations could be collected from all Dalit employees and used for financing education and employment related training programmes for Dalit children and youth.”

He feels, “to achieve equality in the society, firstly, Dalits have to aim at achieving unity among themselves and also address their differences. Education and awareness regarding the changes that are taking place worldwide are needed to guide the Dalits towards social and economic equality, on par with others. Education is very important for realization of such equal status”.

Analysis and Conclusion

Koteswar Rao is hard working by nature. He has built his life all by himself. He had neither family support nor the guidance of friends and well-wishers in his struggle to achieve educational and economic mobility. His mobility was aided by the utilization of reservations in education and employment. He is aware of the importance of education and hard work in a Dalit's life. Thus, he motivates youth to give their best in their pursuit of education and employment.

His interest and contribution in development of the Dalit community has been primarily the form of educational development. He believes that development in education would lead to economic development. Though, he is adequately motivated and has a strong commitment towards the development of all Dalits, he knows his limitations, and thus focuses only on one activity, that of providing education to Dalit children and career guidance to the youth.

Case study V: Ramaiah, Journalist

Ramaiah is aged 41 years and belongs to Mamam caste from the Telangana region. He got married at the age of 16 and “recently celebrated the Silver Jubilee of (his) wedding anniversary”. He is one of the very few Dalit journalists who work in Hyderabad City. His forefathers were employed as Sunkari (tax collectors). Two of his brothers and one sister work in the coalmines at Kothagudem in Karimnagar District.

Initially, he was selected as a rural/mofussil contributor/reporter in the newspaper *Andhra Patrika*. He worked until 1989 as a rural contributor and moved to Hyderabad in 1990 as a reporter in the head office. After arriving here he realized that, except for himself, there was not a single Dalit journalist in the city. In the next five years, he tried to actively encourage many Dalit youths to enter the field of journalism. As a result, now, there are a few Dalit journalists in Hyderabad City, along with a number of rural/mofussil contributors/reporters all over the State. In his 13 years of experience, he learnt “how difficult it is to survive in a field like journalism”. Whenever he raised the issue of absence of Dalit journalists, he was “mocked at and faced hostility from (his non-Dalit) colleagues and the management”. He says that since the last 13 years, he has continued to carry out his agenda and is unmindful of its consequences to his career.

As a journalist, Ramaiah always tried to focus on new and emerging issues. His professional performance could not further his career prospects since his social background was not conducive to it, he feels. He maintains that caste is very crucial in the profession of journalism. He has worked in *Andhra Patrika*, *Samayam*, *Suprabhatam*, *Vaaritha* and *Think Soft*. He opines that, “like in any other field, journalism is full of caste bias, nepotism and is prejudiced against assertive Dalits. Dalits are not encouraged to work in this profession. Many of the superiors in the journalism field possess a mentality of harassing talented people, especially if one is a talented Dalit”. Ramaiah had to face harassment, discrimination from superiors and the management and had also had to frequently shift from one newspaper to another.

He is highly active in Dalit politics. He works closely with several Dalit organizations. He is an active member of National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). He was one of the founding members of the Centre for Dalit Studies which was formed by 20 like minded Dalits and non-Dalits to address research, documentation and policy related issues. He was also the founder of *Janapada Kalaparishodhana Vedika* (Folklore Research Centre). He is also a member of Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ).

Analysis and Conclusion

Ramaiah belongs to a numerically small Dalit community. He is a professional, who was the pioneer among the existing few Dalit Journalists in Hyderabad and was well established in his field. He is also one of the few Dalit intellectuals to have risen from among Dalit professionals. At present, he is diversifying into research on Dalit issues. His success in the profession of journalism has fetched him reputation and recognition as an intellectual.

He is very proficient in many contemporary Dalit issues and of late, has also evinced interest in developmental issues. He has been formulating strategies for the Dalit movement and the socio-economic development of Dalits. His involvement in research would further enable him to hone his skills as an individual and the same would result in comprehensive articulations by an intellectual of his reputation. It certainly helps his profession and the Dalit movement as well.

Case study VI. Ramesh, NGO professional

Ramesh, aged 40 years, is an NGO professional who belongs to the Mala community. He has done MA, LLB and is presently pursuing a PhD at Osmania University. His father is a supervisor in a spinning mill in Bombay. He has a brother who works in a private company. In his native place in Nizamabad district, his family owns a small piece of agricultural land, which is not being cultivated as his father resides in Bombay and he and his brother are living in Hyderabad.

Ramesh got married four years ago and has a one year old daughter. His wife is a graduate and presently a house wife. He is the sole bread winner of the family. He used to shoulder his brother's expenses while he (the brother) was pursuing his studies. His brother was dependent on him till last year.

He is the first generation educated in his family who migrated to Hyderabad for purposes of education. Even as a student, he began working in projects and financed his studies himself. For nearly six years now, he has worked in various government projects and small NGOs in and around Hyderabad. During his student days, he was an active member of student organizations and was instrumental in mobilizing Dalit students. After entering the NGO sector, he had acquired membership in Dalit NGOs and Volunteers' Network and is actively pursuing the Dalit cause through NGO sector.

Ramesh believes in collective actions and mass mobilizations to solve the problems faced by rural Dalits, hence, he chose the profession. His experience of working at grass roots level had helped him in formulating a suitable development model for Dalits. Ever since he entered the NGO sector, he has been attempting to sensitize it to be receptive to the needs of the Dalits in designing and implementing projects for development.

He has built a house recently with loans taken from his office and finance companies. Even though his family does not own much property in his native place and he had

begun earning only recently, it has not prevented him from realizing his dream of owning a house in the city.

In spite of resource constraints, he somehow manages to be part of informal collective efforts towards providing financial help to poor Dalit students and occasionally engages in such activities on his own. He is actively involved in many Dalit organizations. He is a member in *Kula Vivaksha Vyatirekha Porata Samithi* (Struggle Forum Against Caste Discrimination). He, along with few of his friends, extends legal and financial help to persons who wish to enter into intercaste marriages. So far they have conducted half a dozen intercaste marriages in which either the groom or the bride was a Dalit. Besides conducting the marriage, they provide protection and legal assistance to the couple until the problems with their respective families are resolved. In these issues the group seeks police assistance in providing protection for the couple. In cases where legal complaints are lodged against the Dalit groom or bride, the group provides legal assistance to them.

Along with individual and collective efforts, he feels Dalit employees and professionals should symbolically participate in the activities of larger organizations. Further, it is a social responsibility of all those who avail the reservations to take part in meetings and Ambedkar birthday celebrations.

Analysis and Conclusion

Ramesh has a strong Dalit consciousness. Having lived in Hyderabad city as a student, he was exposed to the most sophisticated Dalit ideology early in life. Moreover, his rural background made him stand apart from the others in his urban setting. Since his student days, he has had wide exposure to the problems of untouchability and caste discrimination at personal and community levels. Such experiences drew him nearer to the other Dalit students, who had similar backgrounds and experiences, to foster a group identity as a Dalit. Thus, he grew in articulations of the problems of the Dalit students and thereby emerged as a student leader.

The same objectives set the agenda for his career. Thus, he chose to work in the NGO sector. As part of his work, he is focusing on developmental issues related to Dalits. His participation in Dalit politics is more pragmatic and result oriented. He believes

that a sustained contribution to the Dalit cause is essential by all the members of the community in their individual capacity and as well as through their vocation. Every Dalit, he feels, should think and act, taking into consideration the welfare of poor Dalits from their respective locations, to realize the overall objective of Dalit development.

Case study VII Dr. Venkatagiri, Doctor

Dr. Venkatgiri works as a medical officer in a Public Limited Company. He has an M.D. and has put in 15 years of service in his profession. He belongs to the Madiga community and hails from a village in Warangal district. His father was a mason, the first literate person in the family. Having understood the importance of education and the opening up of many opportunities for educated Dalit youth in those days, his father educated all his children.

He has two sisters and two brothers, all of whom are married and well settled. His parents live independently at his native place. All the brothers and sisters reside in different places. Dr. Venkatagiri is the second son in the family. He had developed a fascination for the medical field in his childhood and was determined to pursue medicine. His parents encouraged him and his elder male sibling in their studies and had borne all expenses from their meagre earnings. He and his elder brother were very hard working and through their success, they could influence many other youths from among their relatives to take up professional courses and become well settled.

During his pursuit of a medical degree, he fell in love with a girl who belonged to the Reddy community and married her. The marriage had occurred 17 years ago. Now, he has a son and a daughter aged 16 and 14 respectively who are pursuing intermediate and 9th class respectively. He wants to provide all the requisite educational facilities for his children and leave the choice of career options to them.

He lives in the company allotted quarters and bought a site for constructing a house in the city in 1996, having taken a loan of Rs four lakh from his office. He intends to build a house and settle down in Hyderabad after retirement. He has all the consumer goods that an average upper middle class family possesses and has adapted to a middle class lifestyle.

Before joining the present job, he ran his own clinic at his native place for three years. After being selected for the present job, 14 years ago, he shifted to Hyderabad.

Two persons from his native place helped him with economic assistance and career guidance. He still maintains close relations with them. Having realized the importance of such assistance to him during his studies, he extends financial help to the Dalit youth pursuing their studies and also provides them with career counseling. In terms of his individual contribution to the Dalit community, he has been developing a few health projects for rural Dalits. He intends to provide medical help and health education to the poor Dalits.

As part of his professional interaction with other colleagues, he came under the influence of Osho's teachings and took to meditation. Now, he actively works towards spreading awareness on the importance of Yoga which he prescribes for his patients. His free time is dedicated to the cause of advocating the importance of meditation as an aid in medical treatment.

He has a strong sub-caste consciousness and feels that asserting sub-caste identity is a must for the development of his community. He had contributed financially to the MRPS's movement for SC reservations categorization. He finds reservations an effective tool for the uplift of the Dalits. He is not a member of any organization or political party but believes in individual contributions for the development of the Dalits.

Analysis and Conclusion

Dr. Venkatagiri is second generation educated, who had the support of parents and elder siblings to pursue higher education and settle well professionally. In a way, his paternal family background facilitated his upward economic mobility. After completion of his studies he forged an entry into the medical profession. Since then, he has been much focused and career oriented.

He has not been exposed to Dalit ideology, but has a strong community identity. However, his involvement is limited to supporting the most important issues pertaining to their economic development. His financial contribution to the SC Reservations Categorization movement, he feels, is his responsibility towards his own community. At the same time, he believes in contributing in an individual capacity to the well being of Dalits.

Case study VIII: Narsinga Rao, Employee, Officer Cadre

Narsinga Rao, B.A., aged 46 years is a Superintendent in a University. He belongs to the Mala community. He had completed his graduation in 1984. He has one brother, elder to him, who works as an agricultural labourer cum sharecropper at his native place in Amalapuram in East Godavari district.

Narsinga Rao's brother's income is uncertain. His father and mother were landless agricultural labourers. His father expired when he was 4 years old. His mother brought up, both him and his brother, by working as a daily wage labourer. As his mother's income was insufficient to support both their education, his brother discontinued his studies after the 5th standard and started working as a labourer, while Narsinga Rao continued with his studies. His brother and mother, who were working as labourers, supported his studies till he completed his BA. Soon after completing his studies, he obtained a clerk's job in his present office. Since the family's economic condition was not stable, he immediately took up the job. He is the first person from his family to migrate to Hyderabad. Since his brother is unable to earn enough money to support his family on his own, Narsinga Rao extends financial assistance to him very often.

Rao got married four years after he first began working. His wife hails from the same community and is a matriculate. She is a housewife. He has one daughter and one son. His daughter is pursuing an M.Sc.degree and the son is pursuing a B.Tech (Computers). His brother's daughter came to Hyderabad to pursue her studies and she stays with his family. He is supporting his niece financially with regard to tuition fees etc. as his brother cannot afford it. Narsinga Rao feels it is his obligation to sponsor her studies, as his brother supported his studies.

He lives in the house of a Dalit, in a predominantly Dalit colony in the city. Initially, when he was searching for rental accommodation, he experienced some form of caste discrimination. The present house, owned by a Dalit, is very small in size and inconvenient for residential purposes. However, he has never tried to change his residence since he cannot afford the rent in other areas of the city. Recently, he took a housing loan from his office and bought a site near his rented house. As of now, he is not in a position, financially, to build a house on the site.

He owns very minimum number of consumer goods. The necessity never arose earlier because his family lives in a lower middle class locality, moreover, the children were very young and did not demand such comforts then. Recently, he had purchased a motor bike and a colour TV on the insistence of his children. He does not find any sudden changes in his lifestyle. Throughout, he has tried to resist imitating other people who could afford luxuries. But, also kept with the changes that are required for the new 'income group'. The changes that have occurred in his lifestyle over a period of time has been mainly due to his improved economic status. His perceptions on these lifestyle changes are reflected in the comment that, "arriving into the middle class is like entering a totally different class. This class has a lifestyle similar to the rich." He devotes a lot of time in his office. Hence, family outings are also very rare.

His two children have studied in private educational institutions, since he wished to give them the best possible education. Though he wanted his son to pursue an M.Sc degree like his daughter, his son preferred to pursue a B.Tech degree. With regard to their career options, he prefers to leave the choice to them. He feels that they would have to make their decision based on opportunities available to them.

Caste discrimination, he feels, is a community question, not one concerning the individual. It is always community oriented, though it affects individuals too. Personally, he had never faced caste discrimination. He feels that, "it is not directly visible, but when an opportunity arises, caste discrimination would be there". The situation according to him was that, "caste discrimination is experienced by individuals, but it is always below the level that can be made public. It might not be individual oriented but, when it comes to the community, certainly, favouritism towards own and discrimination against the others exists". Even in the case of social relations, he feels, "interaction between two individuals is always along expected lines. Caste is invariably involved".

He has great admiration for B.R. Ambedkar as the one person who had proved to the world that, "a Dalit can attain high standards, despite the hurdles encountered". He acknowledges the contribution of other nationalist leaders to the development of the nation and Dalits in particular. In his view, the Dalit movement has been divided due

to the SC Reservations sub-categorization issue brought up by the Dalits. Despite which, he feels the Dalit movement has been able to get some benefits from the government.

He believes that all the progress the Dalits have made is mainly due to reservations, the jobs in the public sector and the evolution of Dalit representatives in political parties could be mainly attributed to reservations system. With regard to reservations, he feels society in general would only benefit if the government helped the weaker sections. In his opinion, reservations are very essential for Dalit development.

He concerns himself more with issues related to social, economic and political equality than Dalit identity/self-respect issues. His view is that for achieving real progress from the present status, the Dalits have to develop economically first. Then only, will they be in a position to address their other requirements.

Analysis and Conclusion

Narsinga Rao is a typical example of a product of reservations system. His present level of economic upward mobility would not have been possible for him without the reservations system. Though, he had ascended in employment and consequently in economic ranks, his upward mobility had been gradual and phased in manner. It limited his 'psychological mobility' to a great extent. Compared to many other Dalits in his present occupational position, he had begun his career in a low cadre and made slow progress. He had to focus a lot on his career in order to progress to the current level.

His level of engagement with Dalit politics is limited. However, he is appreciative of many Dalit leaders and interacts with many 'economically successful' Dalits, thus he gets to know all the current issues concerning the Dalits. He feels, his present location does not allow him to engage in the Dalit movement or community development activities in a direct and constant manner.

The next chapter summarizes the present study and presents its findings briefly.

Conclusion:

Towards Understanding the Dalit Middle Class

The central objective of the present study has been to understand nature of the emerging Dalit middle class in Hyderabad and to examine its ideology and identity patterns. It was attempted to identify the changes brought about by the social and economic mobility among the Scheduled Castes individuals with specific focus on those who have joined 'white collar' jobs and other independent professions such as law, medicine, journalism, etc. The research focus of the present study has been to discern the process of changing social identities of these individuals. The study uses the category 'Dalit middle class' to grasp the changing social identities of individual Dalits who have been able to enter into realms of modern life. In this context the attempt was made to look at how caste and class contexts intersect in the articulations of their self-definition and politics. The study has also been aiming to understand the role of the Dalit middle class in the construction of Dalit identity and ideology on the one hand, and on the other, to comprehend their influence on the Dalit movement and the larger Dalit social life itself.

The emergence of Dalit middle class is distinctly unique from the general middle class that is largely constituted by the 'upper castes' or the ruling classes or the traditionally propertied. It was largely based on ascription for the upper castes, which could easily translate their access to resources to form/enter middle class. Whereas, given the discriminated social status and lack of resources and opportunities, Dalits and other 'lower castes' could not enter the middle class until the enabling social environment was created by policies of the government in post-independence period. The provision of access to education and occupations in the modern spheres to the Dalits enabled them to aspire for middle class position.

The emergence of middle class in India is generally attributed to the British who created a section of educated from among the natives to be employed in middle level bureaucracy to run the administration. In that process, the literate 'upper castes' were recruited into these 'new' occupations during the initial stages itself and thereby they

continued to hold their dominance in those occupations ever since. However, the aspirations of the lower castes to get into such positions made them improve their educational level and in the process few of them have succeeded to enter.

In the direction of enabling more numbers of marginal social groups to have access to modern education and employment, in the post-independence period, the Indian State provided reservations for them. Thus, for the first time the Dalits and other marginalized sections who took the benefits of reservations entered modern occupations at all levels. As the social background and orientations of these new entrants are different compared to the 'upper castes' who dominated the middle class, the former are generally considered as 'new middle class' in India. In the case of Dalits, who traversed from 'untouchable' status to 'attaining middle class positions', seem to possess a distinctive identity and ideology that is necessitated by issues like self-respect, dignity and under development of the Dalits in general.

Theoretically middle class is a non-caste phenomenon, emerging contrary to the traditional ranking of communities. The middle class as a new phenomenon - attracts individuals from various caste groups and provides them with a privileged economic status and lifestyle, akin to the economic status and lifestyle thus far enjoyed only by the 'upper castes'.

Here, emerges the question of discontentment of upper castes towards the new recruits who are unduly enjoying the privileges of upper castes. It results in caste discrimination in a new non-caste location – the middle class. As a result, the new recruits from the lower sections revive their community in self-defense. Such continued intolerance on the part of 'upper castes' towards the upwardly mobile individuals from the lower castes, forces the latter to fall back on their own community identity. Thus, the lower castes and the Dalits articulate their traditional (community) identity in a modern context (middle class). They articulate it as a reaction to the attitudes of the upper castes. Given the caste system which is being in place, it has continued to play a discriminative role in the modern context. This has been clearly brought out by this study wherein Dalits are facing problems in-workplace, social relations, and neighbourhood.

It is in this context that the need for looking at the economic mobility as well as political ideological formations among the Dalits arises even if it is in the form and level of an individual, and which is apparently unconnected. The process of induction of individuals from non-middle class families into a class that is considered to have achieved much that is otherwise not possible for many other Dalits. In this connection it is important to understand the transformation and progress among the Dalits. It is very useful to analyze the ideology and identity formation processes among the middle class Dalits who are reportedly had been removed from the Dalit reality of suffering, subjugation and thereby also not eligible to represent the Dalit masses, as held by both Dalits and the caste-Hindus, is significant in more ways than one. While the Dalit masses observe (to some extent from their experience) that the middle class Dalits have been separated from their roots and do not feel for their community any longer, the caste Hindus, on the other hand, perceive a threat in the mobility of Dalits in general and the existence of the Dalit middle class in particular. The Dalit Middle Class, thus, faces opposition from the caste-Hindus for closely networking amongst them and growing independent, advantaged and well placed unlike the poor Dalits. This animosity gets further aggravated when the Dalit middle class organizes itself, for their own cause or for Dalits in general

As mentioned earlier, in the introductory chapter, the present researcher had earlier undertaken research titled '*Intersecting Identities: A study of the Dalit Middle Class in Hyderabad*', as part of his M.Phil programme. It would be pertinent to reproduce presently, the findings of that study. The latter had discovered that:

1. The "ex-untouchables" or members of the "Scheduled Castes" employed in middle level government jobs or modern professions are all the time aware of their dual identities.
2. While their immediate context and life style is predominantly urban and middle class, they can not easily escape their caste identity.
3. More importantly, though they are acutely aware of their past and the disabilities still experienced by the members of their caste/community, there is also a tendency among them to look for other sources of identification.
4. The fact that a good number of them chose nation over their caste as a primary identity is an indication of this fact.

5. However, it is not to suggest that they want to forget their caste identities, but for the members of the Dalit middle class, self-identity is perhaps a much more difficult question than it was for their fathers and grandfathers.
6. They have to negotiate with multiple and intersecting identities more than those from the "mainstream" middle class background have to do.
7. It was found that such mobility empowered them to form a 'new' Dalit middle class alongside of a general middle class.
8. The lifestyle, thinking process and political leanings of the upwardly mobile Dalits are different from both the Indian general middle class and Dalits in general.
9. It was also observed that middle class Dalits have a certain kind of political consciousness that facilitates formation and sustenance of Dalit ideology and identity.

This apart, studies conducted by other researchers⁹⁰ working on the same theme were explicated at length in the chapters concerned with the review of literature pertaining to Dalit middle class and its identity and ideology. The findings of these studies, which were also discussed in detail earlier, can be summarized thus:

1. The middle class Dalits are from a few scheduled castes
2. Fathers' occupation decides children's occupation
3. Social mobility into the middle class takes place over two generations (not directly from the traditional occupation to a modern/middle class occupation)
4. Neighborhood of middle class Dalits is predominantly Dalit, of the same economic group (middle class)
5. More the social and economic status, the more upper caste friends
6. Higher the economic status, more the family friendships with upper castes
7. High social status draws Dalit middle class away from their own community
8. High professional Dalit middle class do not give great importance to getting 'Sanskritised'
9. Untouchability is a psychological barrier, that depends not on own experience but on other's experiences as well. It keeps Dalit middle class away from the Hindu society.

⁹⁰ Largely, the two empirical studies on the Dalit middle class (Eckeharde Kulke, 1976, Nandu Ram, 1988).

10. Attachment towards Ambedkar among the graduates (younger generations) is decreasing
11. Untouchables continuously have to identify themselves as 'untouchables' in order to get jobs, promotions.
12. Dalit middle class status ties between partial acceptance and rejection, between integration, frustration and aggression
13. This dilemma leads them to 'we' consciousness
14. Dalit middle class has close contacts among themselves
15. Caste still is a relevant social dimension of status consciousness among middle class Dalits who otherwise attempt to overcome barriers (which means they were following Ambedkar's notion of segregation and confrontation).

It is in light of the above, that the findings of the present study ought to result in a conclusion. The rest of the chapter would be devoted to this task.

Social Background

The social background of middle class Dalits, particularly the respondents suggests that, compared to their present socio-economic status, their paternal family's socio-economic background was low. The education, occupation and income levels of the respondents were higher compared to their paternal families. There was a visible upward mobility in the case of respondents. At the same time, their paternal family's low socio-economic status had a bearing on their upward mobility.

The Dalits who experienced educational and employment upward mobility were largely concentrated in Government service, autonomous institutions, Government teaching and research institutions, public sector units, independent professions and private sector. In the present study, they are broadly classified as employees and professionals. Compared to Dalit men very few Dalit women have entered into modern professions and occupations and the same is reflected in the sample. One thirds of respondents were second generation employed, nearly half of them had come from agricultural background families, and while very few had their fathers pursuing few other modern occupations.

Education is the means for achieving social and economic mobility and middle class status in general, and which is the same for the Dalits as well. In the case of current constitution of Dalit middle class, education was a deciding factor for membership. It was evident from the sample that in certain occupations, technical educational credentials were a prerequisite to obtain/achieve it. The respondents' education profile ranges from matriculation to PhD. As part of reservations in employment in government sector, the Dalits are provided with concession in minimum qualification for eligibility. However, in all occupations and professions, the respondents of the present study possess minimum and in some cases additional educational qualifications. None of the respondents seem to have utilized such concessions.

Middle class Dalits predominantly come from few scheduled castes. In correspondence with the general pattern of Dalit population in Andhra Pradesh, the Dalit middle class in the state, especially in Hyderabad, was largely constituted of the two numerically dominant castes namely Madiga and Mala. As numerically dominant, these two major communities accessed all mobility options and formed more than 85% of the Dalit middle class.

Among these upwardly mobile Dalits, marriages were arranged with partners, not only within but also outside their community, with friends and acquaintances acting as mediators. In the case of love marriages, marriage with a partner from outside the community was the norm, despite a considerable number of love marriages occurring with partners within the community. The pattern of marriage among the respondents illustrated that while arranged marriages were the norm, love marriages too were prevalent among the upwardly mobile Dalits.

The economic status of respondents' paternal family played a major role in shaping up the future of the respondents. This was evident in many respects, their educational level, career options and current economic status. An analysis of the role of respondents' family economic status on the lives of the respondents revealed that, to a great extent the respondents have experienced economic mobility compared to their families. Majority of the respondents identified them to be in the middle class proper (i.e., middle-middle class), and their paternal and maternal families in lower middle class and poor categories.

In all instances, there was upward mobility among the respondents compared to their paternal and maternal families. The respondents noted an improvement in their own family economic status compared to their paternal and maternal families.

The educational profile of the respondents' parents and grandparents suggested that majority of the respondents were first generation educated. In few instances, wherein either the parents and/or the grandparents were educated, the respondents' had benefited in terms of resources and guidance with respect to their education and career. Second or third generation educated respondents were highly educated in comparison to the first generation educated respondents. This indicated that Dalits had access to education only in recent times. Apart from that, Dalit men had the privilege of being highly educated in comparison to Dalit women. The educational profile of the respondents' fathers, mothers and grandparents showed that the majority among all the three categories were predominantly illiterate. The pattern of occupation too corresponded with that of education, placing fathers over mothers and grandparents. Similarly, Dalit men were better placed in modern occupations compared to Dalit women.

Dependents

Middle class Dalits, being the most economically successful compared to their ancestral family, other relatives, friends and acquaintances were dependent on the respondents for various needs like shelter, economic support, career advice, recommendation, etc. An overwhelming majority of respondents from the present study reported that among other forms of help, they had given shelter to paternal family members as well as other relatives under their roof at some point of time or the other.

The dependency patterns of the respondents' paternal family showed that, while in some instances they had lived with the respondents and had been economically dependent on them as well, in other instances, they lived separately, but were nonetheless dependent upon the respondents for the satisfaction of their economic needs. In many instances, it was the paternal family members, i.e., parents as well as siblings, who were dependent on the respondents.

Siblings played a crucial role in terms of either contributing to the upward mobility of the respondents or becoming dependent on the respondents for their economic needs. There were no instances where both parents and siblings being dependent on respondents. In no instance, siblings were dependent on respondents for economic needs alone. Their dependence was in terms of shelter as well as economic needs largely by unmarried siblings, who were pursuing studies and looking out for employment. A comparison in terms of respondents' gender and dependency by their siblings showed that, both male and female respondents have siblings as dependents on them, irrespective of their own marital status and having own family.

In most cases, the dependency was not only due to the 'need factor' but also due to the relatively better economic status of the respondents compared to their parents or siblings. There were instances where respondents, who were relatively well off financially, had more than one sibling who were solely dependent on them. Higher the occupational status of respondents (read income), higher the dependency of paternal family members on them. In the case of less represented professions, like Doctors and Journalists the number of dependents was also less. On an average, 5-7 respondents from each occupation or profession reported such dependency.

There were few other dependents from among close relatives, distant relatives, acquaintances and friends from the respondents' native place for both economic needs as well as for shelter. Most of the dependents from others category were students pursuing studies, appearing for government exams, searching for employment, etc. Many respondents had provided economic assistance to relatives and friends on need basis and had sheltered some relatives in the past. However, currently there were not many relatives and friends staying with them.

The practice (out of interest and/or as responsibility towards the ancestral family) of sending part of their income to native place was found among a few respondents. However, such a practice is in decline now. Except few, majority of the respondents do not have stakes in these lands as they are the most economically well off in their families and have given up their share in them for their siblings' or parents' subsistence needs. In the absence of lands in their native place, many respondents have had to shoulder the economic dependence of their paternal family. A few others

showed interest in family-related agricultural activities by providing financial inputs sporadically but also expected returns from such investments.

Aspirations regarding children's future

Aspirations regarding children's future are reflective of their own achievements and their aspirations for future generations. Higher the occupational status and income higher are the aspirations for their children. Along with stability, high income and social prestige there are other expectations from children's career. In the case of those social groups, which achieved certain level of social and economic mobility, their children are expected to either achieve more or keep up with their own level. Thus, employment in a similar or higher occupational category was a normal expectation of children's future.

Significantly, the respondents who wanted their children to take up occupations similar to theirs were located in government or public sector jobs. Irrespective of occupation and profession, majority wanted their children to be settled in secure occupations like Government service. Among all occupational categories, the major tilt was towards Government job or an independent profession that was secure and remunerative. Other options like business or settling abroad are still a distant dream for the Dalit middle class given their relatively lower level of achievement with respect to economic and social mobility.

Reservations utilization

Without reservations in education and employment, almost none of the present members of Dalit middle class would have made it into the middle class at all. Even in the case of those respondents who had not availed reservations, their earlier generations might have utilized reservations. In the present study, almost all respondents had availed of reservations at various stages of their life viz., education and employment.

Career: Trajectory and Problems

As the average age of the respondents of the present study suggests, many of them had 6-10 years of work experience. Intriguingly, the comparison between years of

service and years of unemployment among the respondents shows that, majority of the respondents in all occupational categories had been unemployed at some point in time after completion of studies. Majority of the respondents had directly entered into the present job/profession after completing their studies. Nearly half the respondents had remained unemployed for varying periods. Overall, changes in job/profession by the respondents had occurred in the case of more than half of the respondents.

Experiences of caste Discrimination

Middle class Dalits, who hail predominantly from a rural background, have experiences of varied forms and intensity of caste discrimination. Having been removed from such a social and economic setting, the middle class Dalits may or may not perceive caste discrimination in their present setting. Those who perceive caste discrimination might be having sufficient basis for the same or it could be because of their experience that they perceive it larger than its original proportion. Thus, their present social setting prompts them to act against it or tolerate it.

Caste discrimination experienced by the respondents at the workplace and discrimination experienced in career growth (in terms of denial of promotion, career advancement, etc.) shows that some felt that they were facing caste discrimination from their superiors or from their colleagues and both superiors and colleagues. On the other hand, respondents had experienced discrimination related to their career growth in various forms like casteism, personal rivalry/jealousy non-caste reason like groupism or all of them. However, though in both these instances, majority of the respondents did not perceive caste related discrimination, of those who felt discriminated on the basis of caste, as this had a bearing on their work and personal life, thus limiting their mobility. It was observed in the case of majority of the respondents that, such experiences had led them towards collective action (through formation of SC/ST Welfare Associations to fight such problems).

Help received from others in education and career planning

Friends and other well-wishers also play a significant role in the lives of upwardly mobile Dalits along with their paternal family. Their contribution towards upward

mobility of the respondents in their student days and formative stages of their careers was very significant in more than one way. Influence of the persons who helped them, would not only influence their careers or upward mobility, but their social relations in their new location, the middle class. Nearly half of the respondents have received help from some persons (other than family members) during their studies and before start of their work careers. In all such instances, there was more than one person who provided help to the respondents. No respondent had reported benefiting only from a single individual.

The help was in various forms such as financial support during their studies, career guidance, and recommendation for a job and introduction that would facilitate their professional advancement. While persons from the same sub-caste extended financial help and persons from all communities facilitated career guidance, recommendation and introduction. Persons from similar occupational background provided financial help and recommendation, persons from high occupational status have largely provided career guidance and in the case of various occupational background persons' it was largely introducing them to newer career prospects.

Economic status

Economic status of the middle class Dalits is not in congruence with their income. Unlike the most members of the general middle class, most members of the Dalit middle class would not benefit from a comfortable economic foundation. Middle class Dalits solely dependent on the income they earn from their present occupation or profession.

Income and expenditure pattern among the respondents suggested that they were largely distributed in income groups ranging below Rs. one lakh to Rs. 2-3 lakhs per annum. Most of them were located in the former group. In most cases, respondents were the sole earning members of the family and main source of income being their occupation or profession. Their lives were organized on the incomes they earn from their occupations. Comparatively, employees have larger incomes and majority of professionals, especially, those in NGO sector, legal and journalism fields were concentrated in below Rs. one lakh income category. Among the professionals,

doctors were well placed economically owing to the importance of the profession and also due to their employment.

Considering the fact that many of the respondents were first generation of economically upward mobile in their families, they have financial and other responsibilities to support their paternal family, and their expenses exceed their income. Except very few, almost all respondents fall in the range of an annual income of Rs. 1-2 lakhs. Among them, a considerable number have income below Rs. one lakh per annum.

Major chunk of expenditure was towards household expenses, expenditure towards assets creation, on children (for their education, etc.) and other needs formed a negligible percentage. Savings and insurance for emergencies were a common phenomenon among the regular income groups. The respondents were, almost all, had some savings and/or insurance schemes subscribed. There was not much of variation in this practice among different occupational groups except that the number of schemes and amount saved/insured were more among salaried than the professionals who have irregular income. Respondents have habit of putting in a portion of their earnings in various savings schemes, shares and chit funds. With majority, opted for private savings schemes like chit funds and some in investments in shares that are flexible and more attractive compared to other institutionalized savings sources like Government savings schemes and banks. Insurance schemes, the respondents prefer, are in the public sector with large number of them subscribing to LIC followed by other health schemes with a view to meet with any medical emergency.

Residential locality / Neighbourhood

The respondents of the present study, who are having a middle class income and lifestyle, though share the common social background with the people living in poor localities, have chosen middle class localities for residential purposes. Majority living in the poor localities are from socially disadvantaged sections, largely the Dalits. The members of Dalit middle class, at least those who are locals, some had their own relatives living in poor localities. So far, it is other communities, who have

possession of the middle class and posh localities and Dalits are the new entrants into such localities, predominantly composed by other communities. In this context, their arrival at such a locality and most importantly their experiences in their neighbourhood.

All, except two respondents, lived in middle class locality. Even those two have shifted from a poor locality to a middle class locality in the last five years. This could be because majority migrated to city, for either education or employment that necessitated them to stay in a middle class locality. Unlike in the past, majority of Dalits migrated to city were illiterate and sought employment in unskilled sectors, the new migrants were educated and employable in modern occupations. In the case of predominantly second or third generation migrants, their families have migrated long back and witnessed economic mobility; therefore, they are now placed in a middle class locality.

A comparison between ownership of house and neighbourhood showed that in either cases of the respondents with an own house or those living in rented houses; they are mostly concentrated in either non-Dalit locality or a locality with mixed population compared to exclusive Dalit localities. From among their paternal families, majority of the respondents were first migrants to Hyderabad city who arrived largely due to their education or occupation. They had to find a place to live on their own in the City. Majority of them live in rented houses. Only 1/3rd of them have own houses.

Consumption pattern

Owning assets is an important cultural marker for the middle class. It also reflects their consumption patterns and life style. Consumption pattern among the respondents show that, majority of the respondents have a moderate tendency towards consumerism. Those respondents who do not have to shoulder economic responsibilities of their paternal families are comfortably living with a moderate consumption pattern, which corresponds with their income.

Landholding pattern

Non-locals or the first generation migrants to the city do not have landholdings in the city, except land acquired by some of them for housing purpose. Almost equal numbers of respondents have or do not have landholdings.

Except few, majority of the respondents do not have stakes in agricultural lands at their native place as they are the most economically well off in their families and have given up their share in them for their siblings' or parents' subsistence needs. In the absence of lands in their native place, many respondents have had to shoulder the economic dependence of their paternal family. A few others showed interest in family-related agricultural activities by providing financial inputs sporadically but also expected returns from such investments.

Lifestyle

Each social and economic class has a distinctive lifestyle. Members of a class follow the normative-material practices of that class and generally adhere to the class character. The educated Dalits, after getting into an occupation/profession that provides them with a middle class income naturally take to middle class lifestyle, until the circumstances force them towards their own community circles. Depending on the result of their initial attempts to interact with others, they either assimilate in the general middle class or get alienated and move towards forming their own Dalit Middle Class.

Few lifestyle aspects like consumption pattern (food habits and dressing); usage of a particular accent, tone in language or usage of English; religious practices; making or leaving out friends and acquaintances; family outing for cinema, eating out, etc., are analyzed with an assumption that there would be a change in their lifestyle with their entry into the middle class, especially in the case of those who come from a poor economic background. Though, most of the respondents are not alien to these lifestyle practices of middle class, even those who come from rural and poor backgrounds too experienced or witnessed them during their education, well in advance to make themselves acquainted with the middle class lifestyle. For majority

of the respondents changes in these lifestyle aspects are not sudden occurrences and have taken place over a period of time gradually.

There was a noticeable surge in terms of qualitative changes in the respondents' lifestyle after entering into their present occupation/profession; these were largely related to food habits and dressing among the respondents and language among respondents. Interestingly, these two aspects either witnessed an increase in terms of quantity and quality or remained same.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships at the workplace were mostly related to collaboration in work, forging of alliances other than friendship, camaraderie or acquaintance in various occupations and professions were generally formed on caste lines. In some instances, they were direct and openly visible and in others, they were discreet and hard to prove. .

Social Relations at workplace and neighbourhood

Social relations in terms of friendship with colleagues from different socio-economic backgrounds in everyday interactions of their attempts to rise above caste barriers. Regarding personal friendships, the Dalits exhibited no particular preference for their own community; they have friends from all castes. In the process of naming five close friends at the work place, the respondents informed that they had friends from all communities; nevertheless, their closest friends were Dalits. On everyday basis, in their work as well as personal needs, they interacted with a few colleagues whose interests were similar to their own. As part of their professional vocation, they interacted with people from all communities and thus had friends across all communities. However, proximity of such friendship varied between friends from own and other communities. In some cases in which the respondents had to work in a group or had a collective work responsibility, they seem to enjoy the partnership of persons from other communities. Having friends from other communities was not a problem for majority of the respondents, in a few instances, however, they did have difficulty in seeking out friends from other communities.

Occupational position and age seemed to pose no barriers in forming friendships across various gender, class, caste and age groups for the respondents compared to gender, caste and religion. Respondents' friends in office/workplace belonged to various occupational categories and age groups. This indicated the kind of commonality they had with middle class members from other communities. Social integration had taken place as far as friendship was concerned. However, these social interactions were individual in nature and did not involve their families and were not an indication of the assimilation of different communities. These relationships were basically secondary in nature.

On the other hand, choice of friends in the neighborhood was marked by certain limitations, compared to the office or workplace. Forming friendships on mutually agreeable terms in the neighborhood, suiting all their interests was difficult compared to office or the work place. As family level interactions involved social and religious occasions, their preferences lay towards their own community rather than other communities.

The very fact that, many of them had non-Dalit friends at the office and the work place and not as many at the family level suggests that, the middle class Dalits do not intend to pursue it in haste. Social relations are mutual, largely sustained by reciprocity from both the sides. In the case of social relations between Dalits and non-Dalits, there is a gradual progress in terms of the numbers of Dalits and non-Dalits seeking friendship and trust from each other.

Interaction with own community

The most scathing attack on middle class Dalits by various scholars has been about 'forgetting roots' and not caring for their own community after moving up in the economic ladder. It is generally felt by almost all the middle class Dalits that they were not making their best efforts to empower the Dalit masses.

Dalits' position becomes delicate when they get embedded into the middle class. They try to retain close community based connections with their Dalit colleagues on the one hand and the other acquaintances living in the city, on the other hand. Those

who have strong familial bonding in the rural areas try to retain them as well. Since their assimilation into the general middle class is uncertain, many middle class Dalits seem to be giving priority to their social relations within their own community.

Majority of the respondents visiting their native place also visited the homes of persons belonging to their community in the city, who were not related to them. Similarly, majority of the respondents whose visits to their native place were rare also made very few visits to the homes of people belonging to their community in the city.

Interaction with “successful” Dalits

Middle class Dalits, especially the respondents were successful Dalits themselves in a sense. Compared to their parents’ and grandparents’ generation, the respondents had achieved significant social and economic mobility. They are considered successful by the poor Dalits. It is interesting to note that the standards set for success by the middle class Dalits included achievement in terms of political leadership, high rank bureaucratic positions and economically successful business/enterprise ventures. Respondents named persons who had achieved such success in various fields, who were known to them personally. Majority of the respondents named a few individuals, who were known to them personally and/or with whom they interacted on a regular basis in this regard. The persons thus named were commonly those who had made it big in the fields of government service and/or as political leaders.

The successful Dalits, named by the respondents, who had achieved success in social, economic and political fields, were not their own relatives, in majority of the cases, they were not known to them since childhood. Similarly, they did not belong to their native place and/or to their present occupation. Majority of the respondents considered these individuals as having achieved a higher degree of social and economic mobility compared to their own. Most of the respondents interacted with them regularly. It indicates that such “successful” Dalits have a strong psychological influence on the respondents for emulation as role models. In case the respondents cannot aspire to achieve such “success” themselves, in all probability, their children would be encouraged to do so.

Initiatives for Development of Dalits

Individual and collective activities for development of Dalits, in which respondents had participated, show that the respondents were involved in many initiatives for the economic and educational benefit and moral encouragement of the Dalits, which had as their objectives, the development of the community.

The activities in which the respondents were involved in range from financial help in their individual capacity and demonstration of their solidarity to playing an active role as part of an existing collective body. However, not all preferred being part of already established organizations and some of them had launched new individual or small collective efforts. This is in consonance with the views expressed by some of them that, in a collective form, the Dalit middle class has not been able to accomplish much. Hence, their individual efforts were most important for the development of Dalits.

The individual/collective efforts aimed at development of Dalits, that had been initiated by the respondents or involved their contribution varied from participation in meetings to organizing them, from personally extending monetary support to mobilizing financial resources, from membership in an association to launching such organizations and heading them. It is quite interesting to note that many respondents believe that the smallest of gestures on their part in terms of responding to local issues also would contribute to the development of Dalits.

Self-description of personality type and expectations from others

Self-description of respondents in socio-psychological terms brought out their personality in individual terms as opposed to the community or group identity. In this regard, their own personal traits and the personality traits they liked in others were analysed. The respondents, in more or less similar numbers, described themselves as composed, serious or jovial personality types. Similarly, the personality traits they liked in others were related to behaviour/attitude, morals and discipline/nature. When the respondents' self-description of their personality type were contrasted with the personal qualities they appreciated in other persons, respondents who described themselves as composed and jovial types of persons accorded more importance to

morals and the respondents who described their personality type as serious rated good behaviour as being the most important quality that was appreciated by them .

Identity patterns

The identity choices of respondents as belonging to multiple social groups and performing various social roles, the analysis revealed that the highest number of them had an urge to be recognized as an individual with no specific group identity, this category included respondents who identified themselves in terms of a secular identity. Others, around respondents, preferred to identify themselves as Dalit, to identify themselves in terms of their sub-caste identity, those who identified themselves in terms of their occupation were Interestingly, *no one preferred to be identified as an individual purely belonging to middle class. For them middle class was a given identity that led them nowhere since such a clear identification with only the 'middle class' would lead to their alienation from other communities and rejection by the Dalits.* In the present context, the taking up of a middle class identity as an alternative to their community identity was not helpful to the respondents in any way. The reasons provided for ranking a particular identity over others were more in terms of reiteration of their identity preferences rather than those of an explanatory nature.

Ascribed Identity

The respondents' perceived that the identity ascribed to them by their Dalit and non-Dalit friends and acquaintances was largely dependant on the identity of the 'ascriber' (identity provider) himself/herself. While their Dalit friends and acquaintances identified the respondents in terms of being essentially Dalits, others saw them as persons belonging to the middle class. However, in both the cases, this did not imply the negation of their Dalit identity.

Such ascription of identity could be understood in two ways. Firstly, the members of the Dalit middle class were being accepted in the society by non-Dalits on an equal footing primarily due to their middle class status and secondly, the Dalit identity itself was being accepted in the society, thereby middle class Dalits were primarily identified as Dalits. However, a congruence of both the identities was also possible.

Status differentiation with others

With reference to status, the differences respondents perceived between themselves and the poor Dalits, the other middle class Dalits and the non-Dalit middle class were largely related to education, economic status and social status. In relation to poor Dalits, they perceived education and economic status as major status differentiators and in comparison to other non-Dalit middle class; they perceived social status as the sole differentiator. In the case of other middle class Dalits, there were no differences except minor variations in education levels and lifestyles, as they shared the same socio-economic location. However, their articulation of status differentiation with reference to the general middle class was in terms of the latter's cultural and social capital. As articulated by many respondents, their income and education levels and lifestyles were similar to those of the general middle class. However, in terms of commanding social respectability and also acceptability, they perceived themselves to be lagging behind compared to the general middle class, which was largely composed of caste-Hindus.

Criteria for identifying Dalits

The respondents felt that social '*castification*' had made the Dalits vulnerable on all fronts. The respondents felt that social discrimination ought to be regarded as a major criterion for identifying any of them as Dalits. However, the number of those who considered economic and political disadvantages as the main criterion was significant whereas some of them proposed that a combination of all these factors ought to be taken into consideration.

Progress made by the Dalits since independence

There are divergent positions on the issue of progress made by Dalits since independence with reference to development in social, economic and political spheres. Perceivably, there is very little progress on all these spheres in terms of uniformity, quality of progress, its effectiveness and the expectations attributed to it.

The respondents felt very strongly about the mode, process and pace of progress made by the Dalits since independence. Their views were reflective of the collective notions of the community concerning the progress or quite contrarily the lack of it.

Their views also represented the aspirations for progress in a much more systematic manner than it was being pursued currently. While some merely listed the kinds of changes that had affected Dalits in a positive or negative manner, others embarked on the task of precisely pinpointing the lacunas.

Status of Dalit women

Both male as well as female respondents unequivocally felt that when compared to Dalit men, Dalit women were in a disadvantageous position. Except one respondent, who felt that Dalit women were in an equal position compared to Dalit men and in a disadvantageous position in comparison to other women, all others felt Dalit women were undoubtedly in a disadvantageous position. Such disadvantages were expressed in terms of the additional problems they faced within the family and in the society.

Additional problems Dalit women face within family and in society

Both male and female respondents felt that Dalit women need not be simplistically categorized into either of those identities as 'Dalit women's problems'. The problem of doubly disadvantaged question, they felt, ought to be dealt with as one question than two because caste and gender were interrelated questions. The important identity for Dalit women was an exclusive neither 'Dalit' nor 'woman' identity but a composite identity of Dalit women.

Despite the existing disadvantaged position of Dalit women at various levels, there was a growing awareness about the importance of Dalit women's education, employment and role in making among the middle class. The same was reflected in the views expressed by the male as well as female respondents.

Except few, majority of respondents were in favour of equal or more importance for women in education, employment and role in decision-making. The respondents stressed on the rectification of all existing inequalities, with emphasis on equal importance to Dalit women. Among the three issues: education, employment and role in decision-making were ranked in that order.

Dalit movement

The most interesting aspects of the Dalit movement today were broadly categorized by the respondents into four aspects: two positive and two negative aspects. Among the positive and interesting aspects, most of them dwelt upon the Dalit movements' facilitation of unity among the community members and fighting for the rights of the Dalits. Similarly, the negative but interesting aspects as perceived by the respondents included and disunity among the practitioners of the movement.

Dalit Leaders' contributions towards development of Dalits

Leaders from the community heading the Dalit movement and the political sphere were identified by the respondents. A total of 31 contemporary Dalit leaders were identified by the respondents. They are spread across various fields from top-level bureaucrats in government service to leaders of mass Dalit movements to political leaders. Their contribution was assessed mainly in terms of spearheading the Dalit movement and winning various socio-economic and political rights for the Dalit community.

Greatest personalities of the 20th century

The greatest Indian personalities of the 20th century, according to the respondents, belonged to the fields of politics and social service in terms of their commitment and achievements towards the Dalit cause and in general. The greatest personalities according to the respondents were Dr. BR Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Kanshiram and Mayavati. Along with these, few other leaders from national movement, Dalit political movements, scientists and achievers in various other fields were also mentioned by the respondents.

The most important issues in the 20th century, according to the respondents, were socio-political movements in relation to Dalit rights, compared to the realm of politics and development. It is evident from their naming/identification of the greatest personalities of the 20th century that the persons who had strived for social change and Dalit rights were their favorites rather than individuals who had contributed to the

area of politics and development. However, majority of the respondents believed that the greatest personalities identified by them had contributed to both these fields.

Membership in social/political organizations

The respondents in the present study were members of Dalit organizations and Political parties working with Dalit ideology. All employees were members of SC/ST employees' associations in their concerned organizations. Most of the respondents among the independent professionals were members of more than one Dalit organization/ association. Majority of respondents from the officer cadre, were members of Dalit organizations/ political parties. Among clerk cadre, bank employees and university faculty, all belonging to Government/public sector institutions, more than half have membership in organizations. Among the professionals, only NGO professionals were members of such organizations, whereas doctors, advocates and journalists did not possess memberships in any Dalit/political organizations.

Effective model(s)/strategies for the overall development of Dalits

Six pre-identified models/ strategies that would assist the Dalits in their overall development were provided to the respondents for ranking them in the order of their preference. They were: 1) reservations, 2) socialist revolution, 3) cultural change, 4) economic development, 5) urbanization and 6) political power.

The explanation offered by the respondents for according rank 1 to a particular model or strategy was analysed. In their opinion, the most suitable model/strategy for the overall development of the Dalits should be a permanent solution than an immediate measure or gradual progress.

Reservations

All the respondents, irrespective of occupation and gender, had a common view on the first two issues in terms of continuing with reservations and further extending it to the private sector in the changing scenario of shrinking opportunities in the public sector. The division of opinions was reflected only in the case of reservations for the creamy

layer Dalits and extending them to Dalits who had converted to other religions like Islam and Christianity.

Political options before the Dalits to achieve equality

The Dalit movements and various political mobilizations of the Dalits have been in existence for a long time. On many occasions, they have worked in collaboration with other organizations and political movements. Of them, an overwhelming majority felt that it was essential to align with other likeminded communities and/or political parties in the pursuit of socio-economic and political equality. On the other hand, few felt that other communities or parties could not be relied upon completely to support the Dalits and hence, the only option left before them was to fight alone for their rights.

Issues / measures related to Dalits that are known

Except one respondent, all the other respondents had high levels of awareness on many issues related to Dalits. The overall awareness about various atrocities committed upon Dalits, the special economic measures provided to Dalits, reservations in various fields and the legal measures banning untouchability are an indication of their constant engagement with such issues. Further, many respondents also suggested a few necessary changes for the effective implementation of those measures.

Prioritization of socio-economic and political issues

Many socio-economic and political issues are a cause for concern among all Dalits in the present times. Some of these issues are articulated by the Dalit middle class in response to the problems faced by the Dalits. Such issues usually evoke a lot of interest in the members of the Dalit middle class who engage with them extensively. In that process, the middle class Dalits also prioritize these issues. In this regard, an attempt has been made to understand their priorities in relation to such issues.

For many Dalit identity / self-respect is more important than the problem of economic inequality. All those who accorded first rank to Dalit identity have given second rank to economic inequality and vice-versa. Others ranked social, economic and political equality, caste discrimination, problems like unemployment, poverty, landlessness and illiteracy among Dalits and not to issues related to conversions to Christianity, Buddhism, etc. This revealed that majority of the Dalit middle class were engaged with the question of self-respect and identity rather than other social, economic and political issues. They were indeed seriously contemplating issues concerned to identity and ideology in a much more practical way.

Opinions on general issues

Two sets of statements dealing with (1) globalization, reservations and corruption and (2) caste and Dalits were presented to the respondents for their views and comments.

Though the priorities of the government were changing in favour of privatization and thereby reducing employment opportunities for Dalits, the respondents largely felt that the principle of social justice could not be done away with at this point of time. Similarly, they contested other notions like globalization leading to the eradication of the caste system, merit being the sole criterion in job selections and the notion that the reservations system had increased the scope for corruption. An overwhelming majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with these notions. On the other hand, very few had agreed with these notions.

Perceptions on issues related to caste and Dalits

The basic idea here was to assess the respondents' perceptions about the contemporary nature of caste and its consequences for the Dalits. Issues like Brahminism, purity and pollution, casteism and communalism, achieving Dalit unity through inter-community marriages amongst the Dalits and additional burdens that the Dalit women faced in comparison to Dalit men were presented to the respondents for their opinions.

Of these statements, only the notion that Brahminism was all pervasive was agreed upon by almost all the respondents. In contrast, the other two general issues

pertaining to caste were contested by the respondents. They feel that notion of purity and pollution were still being observed in urban life and casteism and communalism are equally evil. The perceptions related to the Dalits, viz., 'Dalit unity through inter-community marriages' was agreed upon almost all and the issue of Dalit women facing additional burdens compared to the Dalit men was contested nearly half the respondents.

Summation

The very process of emergence of Dalit middle class necessitates uniqueness in its location, characteristics and politics. Unlike the general middle class, which is formed on the lines of hierarchical structure of the society with asymmetry based on ascription as its central characteristic, the Dalit middle class is constituted largely thorough competition among individuals characteristically based on achievement. In the formation of Dalit middle class a vivid upward mobility of the very best, and often more talented among the Dalits takes place.

The commonality of shared traits, similar background and a collective future propel the individual recruits of the Dalit middle class hover together. Similarly, the external environment, particularly their interaction with the caste-Hindus has a bearing on their integration into the middle class.

The very emergence of Dalit middle class is attributed to the reservations policy. It runs contrary to the expectations of the independent Indian State that prioritized the goal of achieving integration in society over quicker development of disadvantaged groups, thereby choosing reservations system over community based 'special development packages'. Thus, reservations policy was originally aimed at individual based upward mobility among the Dalits, with an intension to integrate them into the 'mainstream'. The very emergence of a Dalit middle class suggests that, it is distinctively separate from the general middle class, in its own identity and politics. Often, it is opposed to the ideals, values of the general middle class; the same is manifested in its own priorities and politics. As its social composition, formation process and shared values and beliefs indicate that the Dalit middle class is ordained to be distinct from the general middle class.

The ideals, values and goals nurtured and developed by the Dalit middle class suggest that it is developing a grand vision of achieving socio-economic and political equality for the Dalits on par with others. The very fostering of a separate identity from the general middle class is a product of a protest ideology that has been shaping up through centuries. The protest ideology that was articulated by Ambedkar is now being received by the middle class Dalits. Thus, Dalit middle class is interpreting, reshaping and developing a more comprehensive Dalit ideology. It is being shaped by the common experiences and collective beliefs as Dalits belonging to middle class.

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ANNEXURE-1 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Sl.No.

The information gathered through this Interview Schedule is used only for academic purposes.

Anonymity will be maintained.

Researcher: Gurram Srinivas, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad.

Topic: "IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF THE DALIT MIDDLE CLASS IN HYDERABAD".

Socio-Economic and Family Profile

1. Respondent Name: Occupation:

Age	Gender	Marital Status		Education	Sub-caste	Religion
	Male	Unmarried	Married			
	Female	Divorcee	Widow(er)			

2. Family profile (those who live with the Respondent in his/her residence in city)

Relation to Respondent	Age	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Monthly income

Ancestral Family details:

Relation to Respondent	Age (only if s/he is alive)	Education	Occupation (Before retirement)	If Re-employed income per month
Father				
Mother				
Paternal Grand Father				
Paternal Grand Mother				
Maternal Grand Father				
Maternal Grand Mother				

Siblings (Brothers'/Sisters') Information:

Brother/ Sister	Live		Age	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Monthly Inco
	With Respondent	Separately					

Education in the family started with: (Tick mark the applicable)

Respondent	Father	Mother	Brother	Sister	Paternal Grand father	Others (specify)
If migrated to this city, reason/s for migration:					(If migrated) who migrated first?	
Education	Employment	Other (specify)				

3. Other dependents: (other than family members; indicate number of persons)

Nature of dependency	Father's relatives	Mother's relatives	Distant relatives	Acquaintances From Village	Friends
Living/staying at your home					
Economic needs					

4. Is your spouse from a different community from yours? If yes, specify her/his community.....

5. Place of Residence (in Hyderabad city):

Present Address	Number of years living in present place of residence	Previous Places of Residence	Place of Origin (Native place)
	0-5 years 5-10 years 10+ years	1. 2. 3.	
Status of residential accommodation:			
Own	Rental	Independent House	Flat in an Apartment
Number of Rooms =		Present market value = Rs.	
Your neighborhood is predominantly: (Tick mark the applicable and give reasons)			
1) Dalit	2) Non-Dalit	3) Both	Reasons:

6. Details of assets:

Landed property, Agricultural and Non-agricultural (in acres):						
Location	Agricultural		Non-agricultural		Reasons for:	
	Present	Past	Present	Past	Dispossessing	Acquiring
Native place						
Hyderabad						
Details of the consumer goods your family possesses (Indicate number in the box)						
Car		Motor bike/Moped		Bicycle		Refrigerator
Washing machine		Dining table		T.V (CTV/BW)		VCR/ VCP
Telephone		Cell Phone		Credit Card		Other (specify)

7. Details of income and expenditure: (Tick mark the appropriate box)

Details of your family income per annum from all sources:				
Below Rs. 1,00,000		Rs. 1,00,001 to Rs. 2,00,000		
Rs. 2,00,001 to Rs. 3,00,000		Rs. 3,00,001 to Rs. 4,00,000		
Rs. 4,00,001 to 5,00,000		Rs. 5,00,001 and above		
Details of average monthly expenditure of your family: (Indicate amount in Rs.)				
Nature/type of Expenditure	Below 1,000	1,001 to 2,000	2,001 to 5,000	5,001 above
Essential Commodities				
Consumer Durables				
Children's Education				
Medical Expenses				
Money sent to parents/siblings				
Other (specify)				

8. Details of Savings and Debts: (Tick mark the applicable)

Your family Savings are in the form of						
Agriculture		House assets/Real estate		Shares		Chit Funds
Govt. saving schemes		Other (specify)				No Savings
The schemes you have subscribed to meet medical and other emergencies are:						
LIC	ICICI	Health Schemes	Chit funds	Other (specify)		
Details of Standing debts, if any (Tick mark the applicable and indicate amount)						
Source	Banks	Friends	Relatives	Money lenders	Co-operative Credit Society	Loans from office organization
Amount (in Rs.)						

9. **Employment/profession details:**

Month and year of Joining Present job/profession	Number of years remained Unemployed/without work	Previous job(s)/profession, if any (specify)
		1. 2. 3

Life trajectory and circumstance

10. Aspects of lifestyle that have undergone changes over the years

- 1) Consumption pattern (Food habits, Dressing, etc.).....
- 2) Language (Adoption of accent, English, etc)
- 3) Religion (Visiting temples, worshipping new deities)
- 4) New Friends & acquaintances
- 5) Family outing (cinema, hotel, etc.)
- 6) Other (specify)

Such life style changes can be attributed to the factors like.....

Economic status	Social status	Experience	Age	Other (specify)
-----------------	---------------	------------	-----	-----------------

11. Your marriage (if married)...
(1) Arranged by elders/friends (2) Love marriage/self chosen (3) Any other (specify)

Reasons in the cases above:

12. Have you had found problems in your children's education, if yes, what are they?

School level:.....

College level:.....

University level:.....

13. What are your aspirations for your children's future? (Tick mark the applicable)

Government service/job	Settling abroad	Independent professional
Setting up business	Any other (specify)	Not Applicable

14. Are inter-personal relations in your office/work place formed on caste lines? Yes/ No.
Elaborate.

15. Discrimination, caste and otherwise (only if experienced any) (Tick mark the applicable)

Caste discrimination at workplace, by.....					
Superiors	Colleagues	Subordinates	Visitors/Clients	All of them	None
Discrimination in career growth, is related to....					
Casteism	Personal rivalry/ jealousy	Groupism (non-caste)	Other (specify)		
Discrimination in neighborhood is in the forms of.....					
Casteism	Non-friendship	Refusal of house for rent	Untouchability	Other (specify)	
Discrimination in public places is in the forms of.....					
Refusal of entry	No interaction	Insult/derogatory comments	Other (specify)		

16. Stage(s) at which you availed reservations in getting/reaching the present job/occupation (Tick mark)

Education	Employment	Other (specify)	Not availed
In your opinion.....			
Reservations must continue for betterment of Dalits		Should be extended to private sector	
Creamy layer should be covered under reservations		Creamy layer should be kept out of reservations	
Should be extended to converted Dalits (Muslim, Christian, etc.)		Any other (specify)	

17. Community connections (Tick mark the applicable)

Visiting	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Remarks
You visit your native place				
People from your native place visit you				
You visit your community people				
Your community people visit you				

18. List your friends:

Friends in the office/workplace (according to closeness in descending order)					
Name	Occupation	Age	Gender	Caste	Religion
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
Other friends in the city with whom you interact at personal and family levels					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

19. Persons who helped you other than your family (psychologically or economically), to reach present occupational/economic position

Name	Caste	Occupational position	Help received

20. Name ten successful Dalits (in social, economic and political fields) whom you know personally

Name	Field excelled in	Name	Field excelled in
1)		6)	
2)		7)	
3)		8)	
4)		9)	
5)		10)	

21. List out the organizations/political parties (including Dalit oriented) in which you are a member.

1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

22. List few collective/individual activities (for development of the Dalits) in which you have participated.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

23. Which of the opinions given below is closest to your own opinion? (Tick mark)
- Globalization eradicates caste system in India
 - Merit should be the criterion for job recruitment
 - Economic growth with social justice is an unachievable idea
 - The policy of reservations has increased the scope for corruption in India

Self-Other Identification

24. How would you like to be identified? Rank the following and explain.

Category	Rank	Explanation
With Sub-Caste		
As a Dalit		
As a person belonging to Middle class		
With Occupation		
As an Individual (with no specific group identity)		
Any Other (specify)		

25. The identity attached to you by your Dalit & Non-Dalit friends (Tick mark the applicable)

Identity attached by	Dalit	Middle Class	Both	Other (specify)
Dalit friends & acquaintances				
Non-Dalit friends & acquaintances				

26. Going by the economic status, where do you place your (Tick mark the applicable)

(Your)	Rich	Upper Middle Class	Middle Class	Lower Middle Class	Poor
Own Family					
Paternal Family					
Maternal Family					
Sub-caste					

27. The criteria for identifying the Dalits should be: (Tick mark the applicable)

Educational backwardness	Economic exploitation	Political subordination
Social discrimination	Cultural backwardness	Other (specify)

28. With reference to status the differences you perceive between you and

Poor Dalits	Other Middle class Dalits	Other (Non-Dalit) Middle class

29. Describe the Dalit women's position/status: (Elaborate your response)

Dalit women's status in comparison to	Dalit men		Other women	
The additional problems Dalit women face within family and in society are....				
Within family			In society	
The important identity for Dalit women is ... (Tick mark the applicable and give reasons)				
Dalit	Woman	Both	Other (specify)	Reasons:

30. What best describes the type of person you are?

Composed	Serious	Jovial	Any other (specify)
What are the personal qualities you most appreciate in a person?			
1)			
2)			

31. The greatest personalities of 20th Century according to you are... (Name them)

1)	2)	3)
4)	5)	6)

32. What interests you most about the Dalit movement today?

Issues

33. What do you think of the following opinions?

- 1) Brahminism is all pervasive
- 2) Inter-community marriages amongst Dalits would achieve Dalit untiy
- 3) Casteism is not the bane of Indian politics, communalism is
- 4) Questions of purity and pollution are unobservable in urban life
- 5) Dalit women do not face additional burdens as distinct from Dalit men

34. The progress Dalits made since independence: (Please provide a brief account)

In Social status	In Economic status	In Political status

35. To achieve equality (social, economic and political) the options before Dalits are....

Struggling alone	Aligning with others	Any other (specify)		
(If alliance is needed), the possible allies for Dalits are....				
Tribals	OBCs	Left parties	All political parties	Others (Specify)

36. In your opinion, which Dalit leaders, activists are contributing towards Dalit development? Name them and detail their contribution.

37. The effective model(s)/strategy(ies) for the overall development of the Dalits: (Rank the following)

Model/Strategy	Rank	Explanation
Reservations		
Socialist revolution		
Cultural change		
Economic development		
Urbanization		
Political power		
Any Other (Specify)		

38. Tick mark the appropriate and elaborate

Compared to men's....	Equally important	More important	Less important	Can't say
Women's education				
Women's employment				
Role in decision making				

39. Tick mark the below given issues/measures related to Dalits that are known to you

Chundur/Karamchedu/Vempenta Massacres	Reservations in education, employment & political spheres	National SC/ST Commission
Special economic measures	Ban on Untouchability	Other (specify)

40. Rank the following social, economic, and political issues in order of your interest.

Issues	Rank	Issues	Rank
Dalit identity/ Self respect		Economic inequality	
Social, economic political equality		Unemployment/Poverty/Landlessness/Illiteracy	
Caste discrimination		Conversions to Christianity/Buddhism	