The revolt of man against dominance has been a continuing factor in history. It is marked by his march from fear to fearlessness, but in between the two, multiple forms of protests have emerged. If the sociology of sumnum bonum in Christianity can be challenged by Enlightenment, there is no reason that in a developing society like India, socio-cultural discrimination and atrocities be accepted perpetually. The rise of Buddhism and the emergence and popularization of the Bhakti movement were significant steps in this direction in the ancient and medieval periods, respectively. However, the ontologic status of equality provided to the downtrodden by these philosophies in Vedantic language neither could not be subdued for long through Puranic interventions. The protest of the untouchables could be seen in the embracing of Islam or Buddhism. It was also visible in their attitudinal affinity with the Bhakti movement, culminating in the origin of Sikhism.

However, with the coming of the Britishers, certain forces of enlightenment were also introduced, and this time education through the print medium had a major role to play. This continued in the post-Independence phase as well, the notion of power became an attractive and potent weapon for identity formation and assertion. A different cultural platform was carved out to negate the existing Brahminical dominance and this new upsurge was visible in the 1980s and 1990s and is continuing till date. However, the mode of protests as expressed and articulated through the written word were not similar in form or content. The literature of protest in western India was based more on constitutionalism and other western paradigms of the negation of hegemony. Unlike western India, the tradition of protest in the Hindi speaking belt of mainly U.P. and Bihar derived its ideological roots from other sources, especially from the literature of the Bhakti movement, to create an alternative ontologic
paradigm of liberation. This stream, although not so covertly visible, was found to wield tremendous influence in the formation of attitudinal angularities challenging the past. The present anthology is a modest attempt at compiling, on a selective basis, some of the significant writing which may help in understanding the subterranean stream of the continuing political culture of society.

The Hindu Nazis in their propaganda against Bahujan unity and caste consolidation have even used the famous book, Annihilation of Caste by Babasaheb to convince our people that Babasaheb too advocated the destruction of our castes. Our people, without applying their mind to the historical events, blindly believed the upper caste propaganda that Babasaheb too advocated the destruction of our castes. These Marxist-oriented Dalits simply failed to note that the enemy's interest will not be the same as our interest. Had they understood this simple logic, this confusion would not have arisen.¹

To add to their confusion, the Hindus tried to convince them by citing the example of Babasaheb's second marriage to a Brahmin woman. Our Dalit-Bahujans are such simple-hearted, innocent people that they fail to note that Babasaheb's famous book, Annihilation of Caste was written exclusively for Hindus. Babasaheb all along maintained that Untouchables and Tribals were not Hindus. In fact, this argument was the very basis of his struggle against the Hindus. Had he believed that the Untouchables were also Hindus, there would have been no need for him to demand a separate electorate. In his book, what Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables Babasaheb has written a separate chapter to prove that Untouchables are not Hindus.²

Apart from this evidence, we can give one more evidence, but this would probably be my last address to a Hindu audience on a subject vitally concerning the Hindus. I would, therefore, like, before I close, to place
before the Hindus, if they allow me, some questions that I regard as vital and invite them seriously to consider the same.'

Babasaheb has thus made it amply clear in this book that his speech on the annihilation of caste was intended only for Hindus as the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal, Lahore, was a Hindu organisation which invited Babasaheb to deliver the speech, but finally withdrew the invitation. However, many brainwashed Bahujans think that this book was intended for them also. In our foreword to the book: Annihilation of Caste, also, we had made this point clear.³

In spite of all these clear indications, the Bahujans keep quoting this book and insist that Babasaheb demanded the annihilation of caste. What he demanded was the annihilation of the Hindu caste system. All those who read this book invariably quote the following passage: You cannot build anything on the foundations of castes.

But Babasaheb's argument does not end there. How to bring about the reform of the Hindu Social Order? How to abolish caste? People are not wrong in observing caste. In my view, what is wrong in their religion, which inculcated this notion of caste, then obviously the enemy is not the people who observe caste, but the Shastras, which teach them this religion of caste.⁴ Criticising and ridiculing people for not inter-dining or intern anything or occasionally holding inter-caste dinners and celebrating inter-caste marriages, is a futile method of achieving the desired end. You must not only discard the Shastras, you must (also) deny their authority, as did Buddha and Nanak. You must have the courage to tell the Hindus, which what is wrong with them is their religion the religion that has produced in them this notion of sacredness of Caste.⁵

This paragraph clearly proves that Babasaheb was not against 'caste' but against the 'religion' that inculcated the notion of the sacredness of caste. Babasaheb was not against 'caste' as an identity but 'casteism', the
pernicious concept of high and low. Caste is an identity but casteism is
racism sanctified by Hindu religion.

Babasaheb and almost all historians and social scientists have said that Aryans brought Hinduism (Santana Dharma, Vaidik Dharma) to India, which created feelings of high and low, the quintessence of the Arya Dharma. Hindus only have the castes and non-Hindu SC/ST/BCs are outcastes, meaning outside the caste. How will Babasaheb give a call to annihilate the castes of those who have no castes? Only the four varnas of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudras have castes. Only Hindus have castes and the caste system. Those outside this fourfold Varna society are not Hindus. Even after making this point crystal clear, some Bahujans still suffer from the confusion that Babasaheb demanded the annihilation of castes.6

One more point: if Babasaheb was for 'annihilation of castes', which was also the programme of 'Socialist Brahmins' in the Congress Party, why was he criticised by the same Congress people as 'casteist, sectarian, anti-national, etc.'? It is we that Babasaheb wanted the 'destruction of castes'. But it was a theoretical goal set by him. To achieve that goal, he had to use the same caste. He wanted to kill caste by using caste. The principle is to use a thorn to remove a thorn.

Role of Religious Mutts:

Brahminical forces can dominate us only because of their caste strength promoted through their religious mutts that are centres of caste consolidation. We, the victims of their casteism, can end their domination only by consolidating our castes and by setting up our caste mutts. Brahmins, like all other castes, are not a single homogeneous caste. There are hundreds of sub-castes (gotras) among a client, and each sub-caste has its religious mutt through which each sub-caste (fats) consolidates its jati identity. Each religious mutt, like the Shankarachari mutts, is presided over
by a male, unmarried swami (religious head). The Brahmins, to whichever mutt they belong, adore this swami. Through the power of their Brahminical monopoly over the media, they frighten even non-Brahmin leaders to publicly prostrate before that Swami.

There used to be clashes and conflicts between one jati mutt and the other, but the Brahmin leader met and decided not to quarrel in public in the interest of fighting their common enemy the Bahujans. The Brahmin mutts are the sole strength of Brahmins making them the ruling class. The Bahujan jobs have not only no mutts (barring a few) because of which they quarrel in public. The Brahmins can manipulate one jati against the other only because of the absence of such religious mutts among the Bahujan castes.

Babasaheb has shown us the way to Buddhism. Dalits, in particular, can have their own religious (Buddhist) mutts presided over by a swami or monk. It is not possible to have one single mutt for the whole Dalit community that is also not a homogenous community. Each caste and sub-caste can have its mutt presided over by a respected leader of that jati that is well-versed in Buddhism. Local variations to suit the needs of the area and local customs and manners are permissible without compromising on the basic philosophy of Babasaheb as outlined in his book, Buddha and His Dhamma.

The task of launching religious mutts must get top priority as it is only such a religious revival that can lead the Dalit community the single largest in India to political power. Women are attracted to religious and cultural movements only if they are led by a respected swami that will ultimately lead to a revival and political power.

**Three Separations from Hindus:**

Brahminical caste consolidation aims at maintaining its imperialism over us, whereas our caste consolidation is to undo this domination. The
process of consolidation at both ends may be the same, but the intentions are exactly the opposite. This is exactly the method that was followed by Babasaheb to liberate the Dalits. Babasaheb's demand for a 'separate electorate' for Dalits and 'separate settlement and later 'separate religion' are the political programmes based on this 'caste consolidation' method.' If these 'Three Separations' are not the programmes to strengthen the Untouchable caste identity.\(^9\)

If it is true that the Bahujan castes are the victims of casteism, then the surest and simplest step to combat it is strengthening the victims of such castes. When the Lankan Twills be victimised by the Sinhalas (because they were Tamils), it was natural for the Tamils to organise as Tamils only.\(^10\) The basis of the unity of the oppressed will he determined by the mode of oppression of the enemy. This is one of the important laws of contradictions which have been applied in social movements.\(^11\)

Babasaheb had recognised the importance of each and every caste and community in this sociological wonder that is India and assigned a definite role to individual castes like each building brick in the construction of a 'nation'. Hence, whenever Babasaheb was accused of being anti-national by the Brahmin-Bania combine, he simply brushed aside these charges and their 'national scheme' by declaring that it was worse than a 'communal scheme' and claimed that his approach was more national in spirit's He also exposed that the 'national movement' of the Congress, the original Brahminical party of India, was a movement to establish Hindu Raj in which the governing class would be the Brahmin and the Bania with 'low-class Hindus' as their policemen.\(^12\)

Defending his caste-based movement of Untouchables, Babasaheb said: First of all there is no nation of Indians in the real sense of the word. The nation does not exist, it is to be created, and I think it will be admitted that the suppression of a distinct and a separate community is not the
method of creating a nation." At every stage, Babasaheb insisted that the identity of a caste and community should be well preserved. Babasaheb's following comment was a slap on the face of the 'nationalists' of the Congress Party: The Congress is only fighting for national liberty and is not interested in political democracy. The party in India, who is fighting for political democracy, is the party of Untouchables. Caste organisations and caste-based parties are fully justified historically and philosophically in their struggle for genuine political democracy, which will ultimately pave the way for the overthrow of imperialist-racist rule by the Hindu Nazis. India can be called an independent country only when Brahminism is killed and buried. This is possible only when all the indigenous castes and communities get their due share in power, property and privilege.

**Muslim Sects:**

Once the SC/ST/BCs strengthen their respective jatis, they will, broadly resemble the existing Muslim sects. Among Muslims, there are numerous sects such as Moplah, Labbe, Nadaf, Pinjara, Ansari, Bohra, Byari, Sait, Turk, Navayath, Sait, Momin, Khoja and Ismaili, etc. These are not castes but sects. Castes have hierarchical gradations, inferior-superior status, racism, etc. However, among the Muslim sects, there is nothing like a 'higher' Muslim sector a 'lower' Muslim sect. They are separate but equal. Each Muslim sect has its sect association (Jamat), Masjid and welfare activities. They may all be separate, but when the question of the Shah Banu Case came up, threatening their Muslim Personal Law, they all stood as one. Again, on the issue of Babri Masjid, they were all united. This is the advantage of castes graduating into sects.

V Nadkarni says, Caste and jati distinctions may not disappear in India in spite of the broad basing are economic growth, but the feelings of caste/jati hierarchy are bound to weaken very much. They have already weakened considerably in urban areas. Communities organised on caste
basis have in the past played a useful role by stimulating collective action for their betterment, for looking after the poorer members of their communities, helping them with scholarships and hostel facilities for higher education and health insurance, providing them with old age security. This has improved community welfare that otherwise may not have been possible. Community organisations have also created training facilities including preparing them for competitive examinations. They also take on the role of helping their members to get jobs, institutional credit or other government benefits with their influence. The more enterprising even help their community members to get into the business. This is promoting broad basing within communities and castes. However; most of such community efforts am in evidence among non-Dalit communities. In the case of Dalits, the government has taken over such roles, which cannot be as serious, as committed by community organisations. The Hadar Mahajan Sangham is a conspicuous example of how a caste substantially improved its lot with community efforts. Dalit leaders also have to play the role of improving the capabilities and fighting wasteful habits like drinking among the members of their communities."

**Multidimensional Risk and Vulnerability Contexts:**

For the most marginalised people, the nature of their poverty and vulnerability is complex, multidimensional and highly contextual, manifested in a denial of rights and equality often in many areas of life. Social protection whether provided formally by the state or informally through community and family networks is a potentially powerful means of tackling the underlying drivers of social exclusion. But it is increasingly clear that a nuanced understanding of the differential experiences of poverty and vulnerability is vital in order to design effective social protection and complementary programmes that support pathways out of poverty.
The vulnerability can be understood as a product of being exposed to risk, and an individual, household or community’s resilience to that risk. In other words, people have divergent capacities to cope with the same risk and this, in turn, links to people’s experience of chronic versus transitory forms of poverty. Poor households face a range of highly interconnected risks across macro, metro and micro levels, including economic, socio-political, and environmental and health-related shocks and stresses.\textsuperscript{13}

To date, social protection programming has largely been a response to shocks and chronic income poverty. While still limited, attention is increasingly being paid to addressing the underlying socio-political drivers of poverty and vulnerability, including discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender inequalities, ethnic minority or refugee status.\textsuperscript{14} Proponents of a social exclusion perspective see structural inequalities of opportunity and outcome as stemming\textsuperscript{15} from two sources:

**Group-Based disadvantages:**

Social hierarchies and relations that define certain groups as Inferior to others on the basis of their identity are a key source of disadvantage, denying them full participation in the economic, social and political life of their society.\textsuperscript{16}

Lifelong discrimination: Chronic poverty results not only from having fewer assets to fall back on in times of crisis but also from the cumulative impact of discrimination, risk, vulnerability and exclusion across an individual’s life cycle and between generations.\textsuperscript{17} Reflecting this, social transfer programming is increasingly not only targeting specific groups, e.g. disadvantaged ethnic minorities or people living with disabilities, but also specific lifecycle vulnerabilities to stem the inter-generational transmission of poverty and inequality, although important gaps remain, as highlighted in the chapter.
Nonetheless, it is important to balance a consideration of vulnerability and risk among marginalised groups with their potential for positive change, resilience, and broader capabilities. Sen’s capability approach (1999) was pivotal in moving discussions of human well-being beyond material deprivation to a focus on people’s capabilities and how they relate to others to promote collective agency. Change-inducing shocks, therefore, are not solely related to negative life-cycle events. They can also encompass positive external influences, such as girls’ education stipend programmes, which help to delay marriage and motherhood and promote young women’s longer-term economic empowerment.

In this regard, Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler’s emphasis (2004) on ‘transformative’ social protection and programming are critical, highlighting the need to go beyond protective, preventive and promotive interventions and include measures aimed at transforming broader structural discriminatory influences. Such transformation may be promoted through the design of core social protection programmes (e.g. cash transfer programmes where beneficiaries receive help to obtain birth registration certificates essential for accessing other social services, as in Ghana’s Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) programme). Or they may entail explicit linkages to complementary interventions, including rights awareness campaigns and behavioural change communication efforts (e.g. to promote a more equitable intra-household division of labour in the case of Peru’s Juntos cash transfer programme), legal aid (e.g. to support land inheritance rights in the case of Viet Nam’s targeted subsidy and fee waiver National Programme for Poverty Reduction), and/or social equity measures (such as the introduction of non-discrimination legislation).

**Gender Identity:**

The millennium development goal laid down the need for gender equality and empowerment of women. The absence of gender sensitization
amongst the males may be attributed to the gender equality to a large extent. The standard norm has been to debate about the eroding value system in the present society for the violence against women. The issue of violence, subordination and inequality based on gender, needs to be addressed by significant institutions like family, educational institutions and workplaces, which play a vital role in formulating ideas and values on gender perspectives and relations.

In a country like India, which is governed by the male patriarchal order, women suffer from multiple disadvantages. Some of the reasons for the prevailing unequal gender relations are attributed to the lack of gender sensitization, degradation of value and morals, as a result of the inherent conditioning of minds of the youth. In other words, the role of the family, peer groups and educational institutions merits attention, in terms of the creation of a socio-cultural environment.

In India, gender as a social construct continues to play an important role in translating the power relations between men and women based on masculinity and femininity; India practices power distance too which is reflected in relations between men and women at the family as well as at a societal level. As Simone de Beauvoir had stated that, “One is not born a woman, but becomes one” it is imperative that educational institutions and the civil society intervene and contributes towards an egalitarian system that promotes gender relations and dignity, based on equality, justice and fairness.

**Caste and Gender in India:**

There are still traces of discrimination against race and gender, but it's a lot different than when I started out. It just comes quietly, slowly, sometimes so quietly that you don't realize it until you start looking back. The following has been quoted by Eddie Bernice Johnson. Indian society has consisted of thousands of endogamous clans and groups called Jatis.
The caste system in India is a social hierarchy distinguishing India’s social structure. It is divided into four main categories and is traditionally arranged in hierarchical order and fit into one of the four basic Varna’s which means colour in English. The Varna of Brahmins commonly identified with priests and the learned class. The Varna of Kshatriyas, associated with rulers and warriors including property owners.

The Varna of Vaishyas, associated with commercial livelihoods (i.e. traders) and the Varna of Shudras, the servile labourers. The Brahmins were considered to be the most pristine and most desired of all the classes. “The Brahmin was his mouth, his two arms were made the Rajanya (Kshatriya, king and warrior), his two thighs (loins) the Vaishyas, from his feet the Sudra was born.” quoted in Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age by Susan Bayly. Traditionally it was believed that the Brahmins emerged from Brahma’s mouth, Kshatriyas emerged from Brahma’s arms, Vaishyas emerged from Brahma’s thighs, and the Shudras emerged from Brahma’s feet.

India has a population of 1.1 billion people one-sixth of the planet’s human population. Of these, some 23% fall prey to the caste system that shapes India today. The outcasts are designated as ‘schedule castes’ and ‘scheduled tribes’. They are relegated to the rank of those who should not be touched. They are the lowest of the low; the bottom of the pile. As a resultant, the Dalits are among the poorest and the most oppressed groups in the world. Dalits have been subjected to discrimination for thousands of years and, needless to say, the discrimination prevails till date. It is not just caste system that prevails in India. It is also gender discrimination that has its roots in the Indian history. It will be discussing the early grounds of discrimination through Bhimayana. Bhimayana (2011) is a graphic account of Ambedkar’s
crusade to eradicate untouchability. Bhim being the protagonist encounters the harsh reality of his being untouchable in this unruly world.

**Gender and Caste:**

The decline of the female-male ratio in India has not been at all even between different castes and religious communities. Specifically, the decline appears to have been significantly more pronounced among disadvantaged castes. 'Many census reports of the pre-independence period have noted that female-male ratio tends to be considerably higher among the lower' castes than in the population as a whole?' This is no longer the case: in 1991, the female-male ratio among scheduled castes was 922 per 1,000, compared with 927 in the population as a whole. As far as the female-male ratio is concerned, the scheduled castes are now much like the rest of the population, in contrast with the earlier pattern.

A detailed examination of this development is complicated by the fact that pre-independence and post-independence census reports use different caste classifications. Pre-independence census reports give caste-specific population totals (for males and females), but post-independence reports do not provide a caste breakdown, except among the scheduled castes. A further difficulty is that the names under which particular castes are often recorded change over time.20

To keep things reasonably simple, we shall restrict our discussion of the relationship between female-male ratios' and caste to the state of Uttar Pradesh (as we saw earlier, Uttar Pradesh accounts for a large part of the all-India decline in the female-male ratio since 1901). For this state, the 1981 census lists 66 'scheduled castes', of which 47 can be readily identified in the 1901 census volumes. Assuming that these 47 castes are more or less representative of the whole group of scheduled castes, we can reconstruct the 1901 female-male ratio for this group.
Chamars, for instance, who are by far the largest scheduled caste in Uttar Pradesh, had a female-male ratio of 986 in 1901, compared with 937 for the state population as a whole. By 1981, however, the female-male ratio among scheduled castes was very close to the Uttar Pradesh average. This is one indication that, as far as gender relations are concerned, the scheduled castes in Uttar Pradesh are now more like the 'higher' castes than they used to be.

The contrast between the scheduled castes and the martial castes (Kshatriya) is particularly interesting. The martial castes, which have a high rank in the caste hierarchy, and an important place in the history and culture of large parts of north India, have a long tradition of fierce patriarchy. In fact, the martial castes in North India have played a leading role in the history of female infanticide, child marriage, seclusion, dowry, say, johar, levirate, polygamy and related patriarchal practices." Among these castes, in Uttar Pradesh, the female-male ratio was already very low at the beginning of the period under consideration. Further, it has changed little over the years, at least during the pre-independence period (the relevant caste-specific figures are not available for the post-independence period). This is an important indication, suggesting that whatever factors led to a decline in the female-male ratio among other castes did not operate among the martial castes over this period or had already operated earlier.

This pattern is consistent with the hypothesis, widely discussed in the literature on social anthropology that the patriarchal norms of the higher castes are gradually spreading to other castes. The most common interpretation of this phenomenon is that it reflects a process of emulation of the higher castes by, the lower castes, with the lifestyles of women playing a central role in this process as a symbol of social status. This process is likely to be particularly strong when the disadvantaged castes experience upward economic mobility. That the norms of the martial castes
should often have been taken as the 'model' in Uttar Pradesh is not surprising, given the dominant position that these castes have occupied in that region for a long time.\textsuperscript{21}

The observed convergence of female-male ratios among scheduled castes and higher castes may have causes other than this process of emulation. It has often been suggested, for instance, that gender inequality in India tends to be relatively low among poorer households? In the cross-section analysis of district female-male ratios discussed further in this thesis, it is also found that higher levels of poverty tend to go with higher female-male ratios, for a given composition of the population in terms of the proportion of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It is, in fact, plausible that the partnership aspect of gender relations is stronger in poorer households, where survival depends on effective cooperation than among privileged households, where women tend to have a more dependent and symbolic position. And this future of gender relations within the household, in turn, may affect the general status of women in different classes. If there is a causal association of this kind between poverty and gender inequality, then economic growth and poverty reduction may, in some respects at least, be a source of intensified female disadvantage. The sharp decline of female-male ratios among scheduled castes may be a manifestation of this economic process, rather than being related to caste as such.\textsuperscript{22}

**Widowhood and Gender Relations:**

One consequence of the low participation of Indian women in public life and political activity is that many social issues relating to women and gender relations receive far too little attention. In recent years, there has been improved awareness of some specific aspects of gender inequality and female deprivation, such as the problem of low female-male ratio and the anti-female bias in child survival. But many other issues continue to get
low social recognition; they apparently haven't yet caught the attention of the male-dominated society. Examples include the problem of reproductive health and maternal mortality (severely neglected in health research and policy), the widespread violation of women's legal property rights (aside from the persistence of continued anti-female bias in the law itself), and the general acceptance of endemic violence against women.\textsuperscript{23}

Another striking example of the low social visibility of some important aspects of the condition of women concerns the well-being of widows.\textsuperscript{"} There are about 33 million widows in India, representing 8 percent of the female population a proportion similar to that of agricultural labourers in the male population.\textsuperscript{"} Further, there is a good deal of evidence of the deprived condition of many widows in India. A recent demographic study, for instance, concludes that mortality rates are, on average, 86 percent higher among elderly widows than among married women of the same age. Similarly, economic surveys indicate that the loss of one's husband often leads to a sharp decline in household income. Anthropological studies have also highlighted the fact that many widows suffer from social marginalization and psychological hardship, in addition to being particularly vulnerable to poverty.

It should be added that the prospect of widowhood reduces the quality of life of most Indian women, even if only a minority of them are widowed at any particular point in time. The proportion of widows in the female population rises sharply with age, reaching 63 per cent among women aged 60 and above, and close to 80 percent among women aged 70 and above. In other words, an Indian woman who survives to old age is most likely to become a widow. The prospect of losing their husband at some stage cannot but affect the lives of Indian women even before that event. For instance, there is a close relationship between widowhood, old age insecurity and fertility decisions in the early stages of married life.\textsuperscript{24}
In spite of their magnitude and significance, the deprivations of widows rarely feature in public debates, in the media, or even in social science research, except when in a small number of cases they take a sensational form, such as sati. This fact relates to the general point, made in, that endemic but quiet deprivations are often much harder to bring to public attention than sensational events such as a famine or natural disaster. A similar point can be made about other aspects of women's deprivation. The frequent media focus on rape, for instance, contrasts with the quiet acceptance of widespread domestic violence against women.25

**Regional Identity:**

‘Regional identity’ is, in a way, an interpretation of the process through which a region becomes institutionalized, a process consisting of the production of territorial boundaries, symbolism and institutions. This process concomitantly gives rise to and is conditioned by, the discourses/practices/rituals that draw on boundaries, symbols and institutional practices. While practice and discourse are the media by which the structural and experiential dimensions of the process are brought together, it is useful to distinguish analytically between the identity of a region, and the regional identity (or regional consciousness) of the people living in it or outside of it.26

The question of regional identification implies two intertwined contexts: cultural-historical and political-economic. Political ideologies and regionalism/nationalism do not themselves produce identification, for the latter comes, and here culture and history enter the stage only if ‘it interprets and provides an appropriate attitude for an experienced reality’ One basis for (regional) identities is that they exist as forms of social and cultural practice, discourse and action, not as abstract slogans. Regional identity as the ‘identity of a region’ or as a supposed combination of this
identity and ‘regional consciousness’ has become a very popular, clearly international topic in cultural, political and economic geography.  

**Social Justice and Inequality:**

The Problem of social justice and inequality were interrogated by scholars like John Rawls during the post-Civil Rights Act in the USA. He came out with some solutions to the problem of justice with concepts like difference principle and primary goods. Primary goods, as defined by Rawls, constitute ‘all social values, liberty and opportunity, income and wealth and the bases of “self-respect”’. These primary goods are distinguished from health and vigour, intelligence and imagination, which are natural goods. It is on the basis of this monumental philosophical work of Rawls that Amartya Sen re-examined the question of inequality. These two works need to be articulated through the works of B.R. Ambedkar to find out solutions to the reservation problem. The question of justice is to be examined from the point of view of Dalits and the circumstances in which they live. Rawls opines that ‘justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. If we evaluate the compensatory policy of the government towards Dalits and Bahujans during the last 60 years within the framework of the graded iniquitous Hindu society, we will come to the conclusion that it did not give enough benefit to the least advantaged.

Can the compensatory principle be examined in the frame-work of Amartya Sen’s entitlements? As India has chosen the path of the market economy, these entitlements should work. An entitlement refers to the set of alternative commodity bundles that the person can command in society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he/she faces in a market economy. These entitlements will provide claims over primary goods to the individuals. It is assumed that these ultimately create capabilities in people. However, these entitlements alone may not generate the declared capability
to ensure justice. It is found that the elaboration of the principle of ‘justice as fairness’ by Rawls (1971) or its extension by Sen and others is done within the framework of liberal capitalism. India being a liberal capitalist state is expected to ensure these capabilities in the form of reservations or quotas in education and employment. This is possible within the framework of democracy.

**Caste and Economic Inequalities:**

Caste has been considered an economic asset of a group of individuals in the Indian context. It is property. The value of the property is raised or reduced directly in proportion to the ritual status in the social order of Hindu society. W.H. Wiser, a Christian missionary attempted to measure the economic relations between different castes considering the Jajamani system in a village in 1935. No one has ever bothered to examine why the upper castes, particularly the Dvija castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya have always remained in the higher echelons of economic power and the Dalits on the lower rung. What is found in the English system of kinship relations is inherently naturalized in the Indian caste system.

The development of the elite class from among the Dvijas and particularly among the Brahmins took place during the 1960s. In fact, the criteria used by M.N.Srinivas (1987) to label a caste ‘dominant’ is not appropriate to capture all castes in a village or region because landholdings are no longer an important base for economic mobility. It is now subsidized higher education, access to banks and credit institutions, contracts, public sector sales outlets, etc. that make a caste dominant. The opportunities created by the public sector of the Nehruvian era where system critically grabbed by the educated dvijas. That is why Periyar E.V.R. referred to bank nationalization as ‘bank Brahminisation’. There was nothing wrong in it because Brahmins were the only group eminently
qualified at that time to enter the public sector. For the first time in the history of India, Brahmins as a group started ploughing the money into private coffers. They used their positions for contacts with multinationals to establish units in India either in their name or with a byname to start with. They left the public sector unit after extracting as much as they could from it. In fact, one should not forget the fact that more money and bricks for the Ram temple in Ayodhya poured into India from the US and other developed countries. This would not have been possible without systematic networking. Some of them who have worked for liberalization of the economy became billionaires in a short period using their caste capital.

**Ambedkarite Objections to `Caste Identity`**:

'Caste Identity' Prevents Conversion to Buddhism: Some Ambedkarites believe that Babasaheb's conversion to Buddhism was to give up 'caste identity'. They do not know that their Buddhist conversion has further strengthened their 'caste identity'. In Maharashtra today, if anyone introduces himself as a 'Buddhist', it invariably means that he is an Untouchable Mahar (a sub-caste among Maharashtrian Untouchables and Babasaheb was a Mahar). Non-Dalit Buddhists have coined a mischievous new name, 'neo-Buddhist', to identify Untouchables. Anyway, our people cherish the belief that they are no more Holeyas, Mahars, Mangs or Chamars after their conversion. But what did Babasaheb think of it?  

Referring to the Untouchable Christians, Babasaheb says, in other words, conversion has not brought about any change in the social status of the Untouchable convert. To the general mass of the Hindus, the Untouchable remains an Untouchable even though he becomes a Christian. To understand and appreciate what I am going to say, I must begin by pointing out that a change in the social status of the convert can be the result of a two-fold change. There must be a change in the attitude of the Hindus. Secondly, there must be a change in the mentality of the convert.
Status is a dual matter; matters inter see between two persons and unless both move from their old positions there can be no change.’

What is true of Christianity is also true of Buddhism. We have moved out of Hinduism to Buddhism and declared, 'We are no more Untouchables because we are no more Hindus'. But the Aryans have not moved from their original position of considering us as 'Untouchables'. They may also convert us to Buddhism and yet continue to consider us as Untouchables. That is why they coined the term 'neo-Buddhist' to differentiate us from them.²⁹

Religion being an outer dress, it cannot change one's caste that is like the skin, bone and flesh. In other words, conversion to Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism or even Islam is only superficial and does not change our caste. Babasaheb advocated conversion not to change the minds of Aryans and please them so that they would embrace us, making us 'untouchables' after the conversion, and treat us as equals. The conversion was not aimed at Hindus. It was directed primarily to 'convert' our people. It was mainly to change our attitude towards ourselves. Conversion should help us feel that we are second to none. Babasaheb never begged for equality but fought for it. Conversion was our instrument to accelerate this Babasaheb knew very well that the castes would continue even after the religious conversion.³⁰

Babasaheb said, the caste system in the Hindus has the foundation of religion. The castes in other religions have no sanction in their religions... Hindus cannot destroy their castes without destroying their religion. Muslims and Christians need not destroy their religions for an eradication of their castes. Rather their religion will support such movements to a great extent.
Dalit Christian Plight:

Dalit converts to Christianity have long been agitating for Scheduled Caste status to get constitutional reservations. But the Hindu rulers have been consistently denying their just demands. This is because of a big mistake on the part of the white Western Christians who convened them and the upper caste Christians both now control the church. The mistake is that the Dalit Christians destroyed their caste identity. The Dalits, by becoming Christians, did not become a religious group. They merely got new gods. Dalit Christians continue to be Untouchables even after becoming Christians and in the process lose their Dalit identity. This loss of identity alienated them from their blood brothers and sisters. If the Dalit Christians had not forgotten their identity and continued to struggle along with their non-converted Dalits, they would have gained their human rights (reservations) long ago like the Dalit Buddhists did. Loss of caste identity is the sole cause for Dalit Christian deprivation. The Tribals who became Christians, however, did not commit this mistake. Mizo tribals retained their Mizo identity even after they became Christians. The religion of Christianity in the cause of tribals helped modernise them.31

Caste among Muslims:

Non-Hindu religions may not sanction castes within them, but the fact is that they too have castes. Islam perhaps is the only religion that can be called an exception to this rule. Christianity has castes. The Untouchable converts to Christianity have remained Untouchables within their church. Pins and Buddhists have castes. Sikhism is nothing but caste.

But Islam to a great extent succeeded in eliminating this racism. All Muslims have one common God (Allah), one common scripture (Koran), a common Masjid. They also eat together and sometimes share a meal from a common plate. The only caste-like feature they have been the absence of inter-sect marriages. These sects remain separate and yet equal. Barring
this one feature of caste, Muslims may be considered free from caste. However, this one aberration has played enough havoc to divide the Muslim society. The 'Backward Muslim Movement' of the 'low caste Muslims', who say they are neglected and remain where they were before conversion, has threatened to introduce caste among Muslims too.³²

It is this historical hostility and racial enmity that handles the Aryan antagonism against our people. Just by becoming Buddhists, they cannot escape this Aryan racial hatred. Please note, the Adishankara, who killed thousands of Buddhists and caused the destruction of Buddhism in Nagarjuna Konda (Andhra Pradesh) was also a Buddhist. His teacher was also a Buddhist. Why did one Buddhist kill the other Buddhists? It was not a war among the Buddhists. It was racial genocide carried on by the Aryans (Buddhists) against the indigenous Nagas (Buddhists). The same hatred and racial genocide is continuing even to this day and will continue as long as this racial divide continues. 'Caste identity' alone can provide us the strength to face this genocide. Babasaheb was clear about it. That is why Babasaheb gave us a separate religious book, Buddha and His Dhamma, exclusively for Untouchables to follow after becoming Buddhists.

Caste as an Identity:

Caste is a tribal identity and religion is an acquired identity. Religion is like a dress. Anybody can change it at any time. Even if our enemy wants to wear our dress we cannot stop him. Afro-Americans (Blacks) are giving up their religious dress of Christianity because that is also the dress of their oppressors white American Christians. Babasaheb gave Bahujans a Buddhist dress, which was not only different from the Hindu one, but was also totally different from other Buddhist dresses. That is why the Hindu Nazis are angry, not with Buddha, but with Babasaheb. This new dress of Bhimyan Buddhism should be used to strengthen our original tribal identity caste and not destroy it. Babasaheb had elaborately explained the need for
religious conversion on 15 October 1956 at Nagpur, a day after the Deeksha ceremony: Mind is the source of energy for a person to progress, said Babasaheb. Man's spirit is created in the mind. Hinduism has curbed the minds of the Dalits and the other Bahujans and deprived them of their tremendous spirit and energy. It has snatched away our imagination to rise high. If a man is made hopeless and then at the most he will have no more ambition than to fill his stomach with a minor job. As long as such conditions prevail, it is not possible to create ambition to progress. We have not been able to do anything about it by staying in the Hindu religion. Progress can come only in the Buddhist religion.33

Babasaheb wanted all the victims of Brahminism to be ambitious and reach the 'pinnacle of palace' political power so that they can survey everything from the top. But how can these victims be so ambitious when they are so frustrated by Hinduism? According to Hinduism, everything is predetermined and hence it is a sin on the part of 'lower castes' to even dream of a career they are not born into.

**Conspiracy behind Sidelining Humanities:**

Apart from shaking the very foundations of India's tradition-bound agricultural sector and the large-scale unemployment that will hit the working class, the most serious effect of globalisation will be on our already poor education system. The Dalit boys and girls, reeling under the impact of the upper caste-manufactured merit-mantra, have been shut out of 'technical courses' like engineering, medicine, Information Technology (IT), management, etc., where English is the medium of instruction. These 'meatless' Dalit students have taken refuge in the humanities, enjoying paltry SC/ST scholarships and stipends.

The Humanities (politics, history, social science, economics, law, literature, etc., are already neglected subjects and conducted in the local languages. It is only SC/ST/BC boys and girls who opt for these subjects
while upper caste students fed no attraction in them. The first impact of globalisation will be on India's caste-ridden universities, particularly in their humanities departments. Bahujan education has hardly made any progress, whatever progress has been made in the humanities which have been taught in the mother tongue. The Bahujans have been denied access to English and frequently have lost the first race in 'independent' India.

Globalisation will now totally deprive them of even this little education because the government is already starved for funds and will refuse to spend on education, leaving it to the corporate sector the preserve of the upper castes. In other words, the SC/ST/BCs, in the name of privatisation and liberalisation, will be the worst hit. At least they had a chance to become clerks and petty government servants till now. Thanks to globalisation, even this will be closed to them.

**Caste as Nation:**

So, having come to the conclusion that caste is the real 'Nation' in India and that the Aryan upper castes became rulers of India by only strengthening their jail identity, we call upon the jails among our Bahujans (SC/ST/BCs) to strengthen their identity. To re-state our point, in India fad comes closest to a 'Nation' (cultural identity). That does not mean that India too will break up into different 'Nations'. This will not happen to India because here caste is not exactly a Nation but comes closest to the concept of a Nation. How did a handful of Aryans, in the new garb of a 'Hindu Nation', unite themselves? How did the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra communities become leaders of the 'Hindu Nation'? 

**Subalternity:**

Arun Prabha Mukherjee, who translated Omprakash Valmiki's novel Jootan (2010) into English, poses a counter-question to Gayatri Spivak's famous question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in the preface to the Hindi
edition of the novel. He asks, "can dominant society make space for the subaltern to speak?"

Alok Mukherjee, in the preliminary chapter of his translation of Sharan Kumar Limbale's Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature (2004) tries to situate the issue of representation of subalterns into Indian social set up. He believes that the Dalit writers theorizing about the need, role, content, and form of Dalit literature constitutes their answer to Gayatri Spivak's famous question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak asked this question regarding the colonizer-colonized framework within which much of the theorizing about post-coloniality and subalterns drawn from Indian and metropolitan intellectual circles.34

Limbale uses the term 'reformist liberalism' to describe the politics of Dalit's inclusion in the Brahmanical literature that seeks to confine Dalit literature within the discourse of 'sympathy' and 'compassion'. Dalits were still not speaking subjects; they were not people with 'self-pride' but as an object of pity. These representations do not show Dalits as they are but as helpless and childlike people who are unable to make their decisions or take actions. The portrayals of the Dalit protagonists in the novels of high-caste Indian writers are characterized by inaction, irresolution and fatalism. Limbale establishes the Dalit Subalternity not in the colonial structure, but the caste-based social, cultural and economic structure of Hindu society where "village becomes metropolis and Dalits exist literally on periphery".35

The main concern in Dalit literature is how best to represent the authentic experiences of Dalits. Authentic representation involves un-romanticized and unpitying reflection in the literature of the materiality of Dalit lives. Dalit biographical and fictional narratives do not hide or romanticize anything. The people that are made a part of these texts are not objects of pity although their lives are often shown to be miserable,
humiliating, and filled with daily reminders of their impurity and pollutedness. They are signified by the wretchedness of lives, their lawless or criminal pursuits and their internalization of oppressive ideas and habits of Hindu Caste society. And these things are presented in Dalit literature with great details without an iota of romanticization or glib defensiveness. At the same time, the representation of the Dalit life is not limited to an obsessive self-pitying narration of the misery and wretchedness of a people incapable of acting as it is much of upper-caste literature about Dalits. In their literature Dalits, lives are not depicted with its entire struggle, upward mobility, and their rebellion against the ages-old oppression.36

Upper-caste writers do not delineate Dalit protagonists as life-like, with all their human frailties. They are presented either as a superhuman or as an inactive, submissive and childish. This kind of projection of Dalit characters is the author's 'discourse of pity'. The relationship of Dalits with upper-caste Hindu society seems to be that of domination-subordination, constituted by invoking the power of religious texts. Dalit literature that emerges from this power relationship engages with Foucault's Power/Knowledge model.

The Education system in India too seems to have continuously tried to marginalize and sabotage a large section of people by branding them untouchables. There was also a systematic propaganda to distort various facts about them stating that these people are without history, literature and civilization. The term 'Dalit' itself in Sanskrit means to burst, split, broken, or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed and destroyed. A human being is not inherently Dalit or untouchable. It is a system that degrades him in this manner. Elinor Zeliot (1996) believes that the term and concept Dalit itself has a dehumanizing connotation, "inherent denial of dignity sense of pollution and an acceptance of the karma theory that justifies the caste hierarchy". The Dalits have not only been exploited socially,
politically and economically, but they have been deprived of their birth right to education for centuries. Mainstream literature has treated Dalits as subhuman. Their portrayal in mainstream literature is of drunkards, criminals, thieves, quarrelsome, etc. Even the Holy Scriptures are so systematically manipulated to justify the slavery and serfdom of the Dalits. The mythological stories also add to this justification. The slaying of Shambuka by Ram, the mutilation of Eklavya's thumb by Dronacharya, Parshurama's denial to part with the crucial knowledge to Karna reinforces the oppression of the Dalits by upper caste Hindus.\textsuperscript{37}

Power, status, values and attitude towards writing are closely interconnected. Therefore, it is very important to know who writes, what, about whom, and for whom. A detailed and careful study of literature shows that the disadvantaged are mostly written about, sometimes written for, but hardly ever are the writers.

**Subaltern Actions: Historical Tracings of the Dalit Movement:**

Among scholars, there is not a consensus on when the Dalit movement officially began.\textsuperscript{38} Luce (2007) references the Dalit Panthers as the first mass-mobilization of Dalits in 1972.\textsuperscript{39} Pai (2002) connects modern day Dalit organization to the small movements of the colonial period. Most scholars, however, consider Dr. Bhimrao Ramji (B.R.) Ambedkar to be the first person to focus on the “autonomy of the Dalit movement”\textsuperscript{40}. Although Ambedkar is the most commonly referenced Dalit leader other leaders have also significantly impacted its strength, tactics, and audience throughout the movement's history.

Jotiba Govindrao Phule (1827-1890) was a Dalit leader who began by proposing alternative religions to Hinduism that would emphasize equality. Omvedt (2006) notes, “Phule is today taken as a founding figure in Maharashtra (a Western Indian state) not simply by the anti-caste but also by the farmers, women's and rural-based environmental movements”.

He questioned the Aryan race theory that was prominent during the time and greatly influenced some of the Dalit leaders of the 1920s who framed their movement according to race/ethnicity. Phule also founded the Satya Shodhak Samaj organization in 1875 which is the first well-known Dalit organization (Omvedt). Satya Shodhak Samaj focused on uniting lower castes and Dalits. Its goals were to bring about equality and access to education for Dalits and lower-caste members (Shudras).

It is interesting that one of the efforts at 'civilizing the tribal', denied access to 'good' schools by the ferociously slanted examination systems, is now to train them in organized sports through the National Sports Authority arguably the best colonial-model training in law-and-order democracy.\(^4^1\)

To understand the early forms of the Dalit movement one must also understand what it was up against: the formation of Hindu nationalism in the early 1900s. The development of Hindu nationalism and its core ideological beliefs have already been presented; yet, this must be reiterated here because it was during the period of the late 1800s and early 1900s that Hindu nationalism becomes a concrete ideology and movement. Zavos (2000) states, "after the turn of the century, the idea of organized Hinduism began to assume an increasingly significant role in projections and counter projections of the Indian people, which were central to contemporary political discourse"\(^4^2\)

This is done so through the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Hindu Mahasabha, two organizations that promote an Indian national identity based on the Hindu caste system.

The emergence of Hindu nationalism between the late 1800s and early 1900s serves as a jumping-off point for the swell of Dalit activism that takes place in the 1920s. It may also justify the change in tactics of the Dalit movement to promoting itself as an identity-based coalition. Omvedt
states, regarding the differences between Phule and the activism of the 1920s, “a whole period of the construction of Hinduism had intervened, with the formulation of an increasingly sophisticated ideology of Hindu Nationalism.”

Movements in the 1920s continued to promote equality for Dalits. They, however, changed one major aspect of the movement unlike in previous times, they began to claim an “original Indian” identity or “adi”. Omvedt points to the popular Aryan race theories of the time that influenced the Hindu nationalist movements as a pertinent reason the “adi” movements took hold. She writes, “the adi ideologies were pervasive ideas that won a popular base, as census reports show, and expressed the powerful emotional resistance to Brahmanism and caste hierarchy that was embodied in Dalit organizations everywhere in the colonial period”.

Instead of allowing Hindu nationalist claims to resonate, Dalits, taking lessons from Phule, found a way to highlight their differences to upper-caste Brahmans and their colonizers. They did so by founding various Dalit organizations, including the Adi-Dharma in the North-western Indian state of Punjab, Adi-Hindu in the central northern state of Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad, a city in the South-eastern state of Andhra Pradesh, Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhra and Adi-Karnataka in the southern region of India. Each of these organizations might be regarded as social movement organizations (SMOs), as defined by contemporary scholars of social movements, in that they were created for the “collective pursuit of social change as a primary goal”.

A few notable leaders of this period include Kisan Faguji Bansode (1870-1946), Bhagyareddy Varma (1888-1939), and Mangoo Ram (1886-1980). Bansode worked primarily in Maharashtra while Ram mostly organized in Punjab. Mangoo Ram organized in 1926 a separatist organization, the Ad-Dharm, which sought to form a separate Dalit
community in a Punjab village. It was not met with much success. Bhagyareddy Varma was a leader who had been organizing Dalits since the early 1900s, especially Adi-Hindu conferences. He was connected to the “petty bourgeois Dalit group” and therefore, had access to more resources than most Dalits during the time. He formed the Adi-Andhra Mahajana Sabha in 1917, which was an open conference of Dalits, meant to foster relationships and collaborate on necessary actions, goals, and tactics. This, however, did not lead to a national level umbrella organization. That level of mobilization did not happen until Ambedkar became involved in the movement.

The framing strategy of “human rights” over “civil rights” was also taken from Malcolm X. While the Dalit Panthers still exist they have taken on a softer role, seeking “to promote better understanding between castes...a democratic movement which gives voice to the people at the bottom rung of society”. There are now several smaller camps of the movement each with various platforms, some still relying on militancy while others promote political organization and lobbying. Today, the Panthers are most popular in the south-eastern state of Tamil Nadu with a national party, the Liberation Panther's Party, which seeks to promote a regional identity over any cohesive nationalistic Indian identity. They still, however, maintain the claim that they are guided by Ambedkar.45

Despite the variety of political parties that have emerged out of the Dalit movement, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) remains the most potentially successful at achieving movement goals. As stated earlier, the BSP was founded in 1984 by Kanshi Ram (1934-2006). Ram created various other organizations throughout the 1970s before forming the BSP, including the Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF). Ram was well aware of the more radical Panthers but instead chose to follow the political middle-road of Ambedkar. Like Ambedkar's
Independent Labour Party, Ram set the goal of Dalit equality and policy reform. Movement activity stagnated from the early 1980s until about the mid-1990s. Very little information can be found about the movement during this period. Various fractions still existed although the radical militancy of the Dalit Panthers lost its momentum. Instead, this period serves as a transition period, moving away from radicalism to more mainstream tactics. Rajkhowa (2008) states, the 1990s are defined “by caste politics.” This is in part due to the increasing presence of the BSP in state and national elections. Other scholars (Satyanarayana 2003) argue that this period served as a culminating point for the influence of Ambedkar, noting, “the statue of Ambedkar” grew “with the emergence of the movement in the 1980s and 1990s”.

The contemporary Dalit movement consists of various social movement organizations each sharing in the belief of Dalit equality. Many of these organizations overlap, working with other like-minded organizations. The Dalit movement today is multi-faceted. It includes various and sometimes oppositional groups focusing on radicalism and violence, separatism, non-violence, and religious conversion. These groups, however, are linked if by no other way than in their shared belief in Dalit equality.

**Social Problems: Concept and Approaches:**

Drug abuse, alcoholism, corruption, AIDS, child abuse, terrorism, poverty, unemployment and crime, arc not individual problems but affect the public at large. The individual problem is one which affects one individual or one group. Its resolution lies within the immediate milieu of the individual/group. Against this, a public issue is one which affects the society as a whole, or the larger part of society. The sociologists’ job is to understand how these problems crop up in the functioning of different social structures, to study the operation of varied patterns of
interrelationships in the society and how people are affected by them and observe how social systems need to be reorganized and restructured in dealing with them. Relating theory to practice provides a scientific perspective to treat the problem.  

**The Concept of Social Problem:**

A social problem has been defined as "a situation confronting a group or a section of society which inflicts injurious consequences that can be bodied only collectively". Thus, no one individual or a few individuals handle the appearance of a socially problematic situation, and the control of this situation is also beyond the ability of one person or a few persons. This responsibility is placed upon society at large. Walsh and Furfey (1961) have defined a social problem as a "deviation from the social ideal remediable by group effort". Two elements are important in this definition (i) a situation that is less than ideal, that is, which is undesirable or abnormal; and (ii) one that is remediable by collective effort. Though it is not easy to determine which situation is ideal and which is not and there is no definite standard that could be used to judge it, yet it is clear that a social ideal is not something arbitrary and the term `social problem' is applied only to that 'issue' which social ethics (which describes human conduct as right and wrong in group relations), and society (which is concerned with the promotion of the common good or the welfare of its members and the preservation of public order) consider as unfavourable.

Let us examine a few more viewpoints on the concept of 'social problem'. Fuller and Myers (1941) have defined a social problem as "a condition that is defined by a considerable number of persons as a deviation from some social norms that they cherish". Merton and Nisbet (1971) hold that a social problem is "a way of behaviour that is regarded by a substantial part of a social order as being in violation of one or more accepted or approved norms". This definition may apply to some problems
like alcoholism, corruption and communalism, but not to problems like the
population explosion. Some problems are created not by the abnormal and
deviant behaviour of the individuals but by the normal and accepted
behaviour.

A social problem, thus, involves a value judgement, a feeling that in
a detrimental and requires change. Political corruption came wed as a
social problem only in the 1970s and the 1980s of the century though it
was prevalent in our country earlier too. Issues like wife-battering and
child abuse are yet to be accepted as serious social problems. Conditions
that cannot be changed or evaded are also not accepted as social problems.
Thus, famine was not considered a social problem until recently because of
the widespread belief that the scantiness of rains was the result of the wrath
of the rain-god. Today, famine in states like Rajasthan is viewed as a social
problem and is seen to be the result of the failure to complete the Rajasthan
canal because of the scarcity of economic resources. The scarcity of
drinking water became a social problem in the states of Andhra Pradesh,
Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya
Pradesh, only when it was realized that it was not a misfortune to be
endured but "something could be done" to remove this scarcity. Thus, it is
the belief and hope in the possibility of prevention and treatment that
causes people to consider the situation as a social problem. The last portion
of the definition of Horton and Leslie is 'collective action'. A social
problem cannot be solved by an individual or a few individuals. All social
problems are social in treatment, that is, it is believed that they can be
tackled only by public concern, discussion, opinion formation and pressure.

According to Weinberg (1960), social problems are "behaviour
patterns or conditions which arise from social processes and are considered
so objectionable or undesirable by many members of a society that they
recognize that corrective policies, programmes and services are necessary
to cope with them". Weinberg gives six characteristics of social problems as under:

1. Social problems arise by being collectively defined as objectionable by many members of the community. Thus, adverse conditions not defined by the community as reprehensible are not considered as social problems. For example, if taking alcohol is not regarded as objectionable by society, it is not considered a social problem. But as society recognizes and discusses the problems inherent in alcohol consumption, studies its consequences and devises a plan of corrective action to control it, it comes to be defined as a social problem even though the original situation may not have changed.

2. Social problems change when the concerned behavioural patterns are interpreted differently. For example, till a few decades ago, Mental Illness was viewed as insanity, and it was considered a disgraceful that the families kept the member's mental illness a secret. Now the behaviour of a mentally ill person is seen only as one type of 'deviant behaviour' which requires psychiatric and social treatment. Thus, the problem of mental illness today is met more realistically and effectively.

3. Mass media (newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies) play an important role in creating awareness about the scope and urgency of social problems.

4. Social problems have to be viewed in the context of society's values and institutions, for example, the problem of racial conflict in the United States is different from the problem of untouchability in India.

5. Social problems need to be analyzed in terms of the influences upon them by group processes and social relationships.

6. Since social problems vary historically, contemporary social problems are the society's concern, that is, the problem of refugee settlement in India in 1947-48 was different from the problem of settling
refugees front Assam in 1968, or the Tamils from Sri Lanka in 1988-89, or the Indians from Kuwait and Iraq in September, 1990. Similarly, the problem of immigrants in the United Kingdom in 1988 was different than it was in 1967 or 1947.

**Social Change in India:**

Societies often face problems because of social and cultural changes. Social change is the change in the patterned roles, or a change in the network of social relations, or a change in the structures and organization of society. Social change is never complete or total; it is always partial. It can be minor or fundamental. Further, the change can be spontaneous or planned. Planned change is to achieve some set collective ideals. After independence, India also had set some collective goals to achieve.

Some of the important changes that we find in our society in the last four decades are: change from tradition to modernity in certain values and institutions, from ascribed status to achieved status, from predominance of primary groups to predominance of secondary groups, from informal means of control to formal means of control, from collectivity to individualism, from sacred values to secular values, from folklore to science and rationalism, from homogeneity to heterogeneity, and increasing processes of industrialization and urbanization, increasing awareness of rights among various sections of society due to the spread of education, weakening of the caste system, weakening of traditional sources of security, an increase in the aspirations of minority groups, occupational mobility, enactment of several social laws, and de-linking religion from politics. 49

Thus, though we have achieved many of the set collective goals, many contradictions have also set into our system. For example, aspirations of the people have become high but the legitimate means for achieving these aspirations are not either available or accessible. We /preach
nationalism but practice casteism, linguism, and parochialism. Many laws have been enacted but either these laws are full of loopholes or they are not properly implemented. We talk of egalitarianism, but we enforce discrimination. We aspire for ideational culture but what is emerging is the sensate culture. All these contradictions have increased discontentment and frustrations among people that in turn have resulted in many social problems. Youth unrest, tribal unrest, peasant unrest, industrial unrest, student unrest, minority unrest, violence against women, and so forth, have all led to agitations, riots, insurgency and terrorism.  

**Social Problems of Marginalized Groups:**

In recognition of the unique problems of the Dalits, Adivasis and other religious minorities like the Muslims, the Indian government has developed policies for their economic, social and political empowerment. Dalits and Adivasis are the two largest groups, constituting about 250 million in 2001 (about 167 million and 86 million respectively). Additionally, Muslims account for about 12% the population. The deprivation of such a vast mass of the population is closely associated with the process of exclusion and discrimination based on group identity. The government has used a two-fold strategy for the empowerment of the SC/ST (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe) communities, which includes (a) Anti-discrimination legal and protective measures, and (b) Developmental or empowering measures. Anti-discrimination measures include the enactment of the Anti-Untouchability Act of 1955, and the Schedule Caste/Tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989. Reservations in government services and political bodies also fall under the purview of protective measures. The reservation policy is confined to the public sector, and the private sector wherein more than 90% of the SC/ST workers are engaged remains unprotected. The focus of the government’s ‘general programmes’ therefore has been on the educational, social and economic
empowerment of the SC/STs and on improving the private ownership of fixed capital assets (land and non-land), human resources, and on improving access to basic services like housing, health, drinking water, electricity etc.

**Education and Human Resource Development:**

Firstly, lower literacy/level of education and the continual discrimination of SC/STs in educational institutions pose a major problem. The government should take a second look at the Education Policy and develop major programmes for strengthening the public education system in villages and cities on a much larger scale than today. There is a necessity to reallocate government resources for education and vocational training. For millions of poor students located in rural areas, the loan schemes do not work. We should develop an affordable, uniform and better quality public educational system up to the university level. Public education system is our strength and needs to be further strengthened. Promotion of such private education systems that creates inequality and hierarchy should be discouraged. In this regard, we may draw some lessons from Sweden, where only 3% of educational institutions are privately managed, but their syllabus, tuition structure and infrastructure facilities are similar to that of public education institutions. The gradation and hierarchy that we are introducing in the private sector at rapid rate should be discouraged, and public education system should be strengthened in terms of infrastructure, quality of the teacher and other facilities. Vocational training should be made part of the normal education system. In this respect, the system of vocational education developed by Germany could be tried in India.

Secondly, there is hardly any financial support to SC/ST students at higher levels of education and research. The University Grants Commission should institute a special fellowship scheme for these groups. The UGC had earlier introduced a special Fellowship for SC/ST Ph.D.
students from which many students had benefited. This scheme too should be reviewed.

**Public Health System:**

The public health system in rural areas has also been by and large neglected. Therefore, the primary health system for rural areas and public health system in urban areas must be revived, and more funds should be allocated for the same

**Food Security Programs:**

The public distribution system should also be revived and strengthened. In distributing Fair Price Shops in villages, priority should be given to the SC/ST female and male groups, as some studies have pointed out that they are discriminated upon in the Public Distribution System and Mid-day Meal schemes.

**Untouchability and Discrimination:**

The practice of untouchability and a large number of atrocities inflicted on Dalits continue even today mainly because of hidden prejudices and neglect on the part of officials responsible for the implementation of Special Legislations; i.e. the Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCRA) and the Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA). The Government should make a meaningful intervention in this regard so as to mitigate the sufferings of Dalits due to the practice of untouchability and atrocities inflicted upon them and should also treat this matter on a priority basis to ensure that the officials and the civil society at large are sensitized on this issue. The government should also establish a special department to continue the social reform process and to educate the masses on the evils of untouchability and caste discrimination on the pattern of Tamil Nadu government. The law by itself often does not help to remove the practice of untouchability, unless there is a change in the attitude and behaviour of
high castes. So there is a need to have a program of social and moral education of high caste individuals in the society.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{Suppression:}

21st century India is proud of its industrial, economic and educational progress. We enjoy enormous attention today and are regarded as a target area for global investors. We are proud of our large youth population that can turn to be a major working force to supply for outsourcing in developed nations. We stand as an epitome of largest successful democracy in the world. Albeit the tremendous transformation, 68 years after independence we continue to combat one of the oldest social evils, “Untouchability”.

The age old Varna system prescribed by the Brahmanical society had less of logic in justifying the suppression of an entire class and labelling them as ‘impure’ by attributing it as the result of their “past deeds”. It is absolutely in contradiction to the principles of religion. Which god/goddess would be happy with the inhumane treatment meted out to a section of people for involuntary factors like birth? The promise of social and economic equality made by the Constitution of India belies what lies in practice against 16\% of her population. The lowest in the social hierarchy are today’s SC/STs, also called as’ Dalits’ since the 1930s.

The sub-castes within the Dalits are two kinds varying in degree of impoverishment. The first comprises leather workers, street sweepers, agricultural and non-agricultural labour. The second are the “lowest of low” who take up most demeaning jobs like digging graves, disposing of dead animals and cleaning human excreta or manual ‘scavenging’. What would become of environment, hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation if the subalterns abandon their job all of a sudden? This categorization of caste on the basis of occupation is also a part of the old supreme declaration of Hindu aristocrats.
Though the government had passed the Prevention of Atrocities Act in 1989, has not been effective in practice. Major states in India where discrimination is high are Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat. A landlord in Punjab imposed fine for talking to Dalits. In another incident, a Dalit was tied up to a tree and beaten up. They are denied entry into temples and abandoned from all religious and social activities. They lived in the outskirts of the village and forced to travelled long distances to fetch drinking water as they are not allowed to use the common resource of the village. The upper caste takes every precaution to avoid physical contact with the Dalits, and if they happen to come into contact, they immediately sprinkle water as an ablutionary practice.

Children of the Dalits undergo a great ordeal in school. They are asked to sit separately during the lunch hour, made to sit in the last benches, have to fetch water for the teachers, sweep the school ground, etc. The result is that they drop out even without completing primary education. They face difficulty in pursuing education and employment. These children suffer malnourishment and underweight problems.

Life of Dalit women is a challenging one. They walk long distances to fetch water and are subjected to sexual violence and abuse when they go for work in fields. Most of such cases go unreported as the police refuse to file an FIR and instead violate the women for the second time in approaching them. These women are alienated from the mainstream women’s movement. The urban feminists are to be questioned if they would encourage leadership and intellectuals from among women from the Dalit groups.

The reason we have a poor rating in the Human Development Index (HDI) is the persistent problem of inequality across various social groups. There is a high level of disparity in HDI and HPI (Human Poverty Index)
across states in India. 40% are landless agricultural labourers, 45% are marginal farmers (60% own less than an acre of land). 7.5% are rural artisans and those labourers in the non-agricultural sector. A major percentage of the population living below poverty line are Dalits. Inequality only reduces when Dalits have a share of prosperity, GDP and per capita income growth and become equal with the “general” category.

Providing Human Rights to Dalits has been difficult. The courts have failed to uphold their right to live a dignified life, the right to education, basic amenities and employment. National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, a non-party based secular platform lead a rally with three objectives- to hold the state accountable for Human Rights violation, to sensitize civil society by raising the visibility of Dalit problem and to render justice to Dalit victims of discrimination and violence.

Prohibition of manual scavenging is another troubling impediment. Sometimes state agencies themselves employ them for cleaning toilets and in railways. Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993 was adopted only by 16 states, but none has enforced it. Forum Against Manual Scavenging (FAMS) lead a 2-month campaign nationwide appealing to Dalits engaged in it to quit the degrading job.

If you wake up at a different time, in a different place, could you wake up as a different person? Nature is the only agency that advocates equality for everyone. It is the time the ‘children of God’ demand their right to life, break themselves free from the social construction. An organisation called Video Volunteers runs a campaign called Article 17, a provision of the constitution which prohibits untouchability. They are moving forward to initiate a legal fight through the videos as evidence collected by Dalits themselves. That day is not far away when the subalterns wake up to a new sunrise and realize their rightful access to
education, natural resources, health facilities and an equal religious and social life.

References:

1. Car to strengthen each jar goes against Babasaheb's call, Teti Voin, 4<sup>th</sup> July 16, 1996 p.6.

2. The Real Issue: Aren't the Untouchables A Separate Element?", Chapter VIII, Writings and Speeches, Vol. IX, pp.181-198.


44. Ahuja, Ram, Female Offenders in India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut.
