CHAPTER VI

THE NEO-BUDDHISTS AND POLITICAL MARGINALITY

Stonequist\(^1\) has pointed out two important consequences of the peculiar structural position of the marginal man: the revolutionary character and the innovative role. Lewis Coser\(^2\) too observes that if certain groups within a social system compare their share in power, wealth and status with that of other groups and question the legitimacy of this distribution, discontent is likely to ensue, and if there exists no institutionalised provisions for the expression of such discontents, departures from what is required by the norms of the social system may occur. These may be limited to innovations, or they may consist in the rejection of the institutionalised goals—full denunciation of previously prized values.

It appears that such discontent is more prevalent among the transitional groups, the migrants, the slum-dwellers, the lower strata of the society, who due to their feeling of relative deprivation may become the most likely source of revolt. Frantz Fanon\(^3\) in his "The Wretched of the Earth" writes, "the lumpen proletariat, that hoards of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people." However,
Oscar Lewis, based on his observation of marginal immigrant groups living in slums, has disagreed with the generalizations of Fanon. He found very little revolutionary spirit or radical ideology among them, on the contrary most of the families were conservative politically. He observes that the revolutionary potential of people with a culture of poverty will vary considerably according to the national context and particular historical circumstances.

Moreover, various studies dealing with the political situation in the politically underdeveloped or transitional societies in Latin America, Asia and Africa have revealed the fact that among urban immigrant marginals there was not only a general infrequency of political and social violence, but there was also patterns of orthodox political behaviour which often seemed strangely incongruous with their social setting. According to Samuel Huntington the conservatism among the urban migrants can be explained on the basis of four factors:

1. A "feeling of relative reward" - marginal men like slum-dwellers are mostly migrants and comparing their urban economic status with that of their past such feeling develops.

2. Attitude of indifference to politics and to the possibility of political change. Such attitude they carry mostly from their rural past.

3. Their natural concern for immediate benefits in
food, jobs and housing which can only be secured by working through rather than against the existing system. He, who is concerned about eating, is unlikely to be concerned about revolting.

(4) A high level of mutual distrust and antagonism exists among these migrants and this consequently makes difficult any sort of organized co-operation to articulate demands and engage in political actions. 6

In Huntington’s opinion, marginals like slum dwellers may sometimes erupt into riots and political violence, however, they are not the stuff out of which revolution is made. 7

In our study of neo-Buddhists we tried to find out the political attitudes of the lower strata of the neo-Buddhists, who are passing through the transitional phase. We attempted to examine whether there exists political radicalism or political conservatism, support for the existing dominant party.

Neo-Buddhist movement is not purely a religious movement. It is a religio-political movement. From 1936 onwards, since the time when Ambedkar and his followers declared their decision to renounce Hinduism, the religious aspect in the emancipation struggle had a parallel existence along with the political one. 8 In 1956, Ambedkar embraced

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8 On the one hand Ambedkar decided to leave the Hindu fold and embrace another religion, on the other hand, he established, in 1936, the Independent Labour Party.
Buddhism, along with millions of his followers, and declared his decision to establish the Republican Party of India. With conversion to Buddhism in 1956 and with the establishment of the Republican Party in 1957, the synthesis of the two movements, religious and political, took place. Mahars who embraced Buddhism also became mostly the members of the Republican party. Politics and Religion comingle in the neo-Buddhist movement.

The use of 'political means' by Mahars to achieve the aim of raising their social and economic status dates much prior to Ambedkar. Zelliot points out that among all the scheduled castes in India, the Mahars of Maharashtra have used political means most consistently and unitedly in their attempt to better their condition.

The petitions to British Government for reinstatement in the army represent the first Mahar attempt to use political means to gain their goals - at that time a modest goal of economic opportunity. However, the increased democratization of British rule in India, after the First World War, offered a chance to engage in political activity on a larger scale.

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* which was established after his death by his followers in 1957.

** As mentioned in the historical background of the neo-Buddhist movement, such petitions were made by the early Mahar leaders like Valangkar and Shivram Kamble.
Ambedkar's main plea to the British colonial rulers was for direct representation of the Depressed Classes in the Bombay legislative council in proportion to their population, through their own electorate, separate from that of caste Hindus. Ambedkar always emphasised certain points like the reality of the division between caste Hindus and depressed classes which had to be acknowledged if any justice was to be done; distrust of the Congress as a group composed of social conservatives; the representation of untouchables by untouchables, as caste Hindus, however sympathetic, could not properly represent their wants and grievances; the need for political power and political education for the Depressed Class, etc. 9

Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party in 1936 to fight the Congress in the elections to be held in 1937 and thus gave the political movement a specific focus. The Independent Labour Party developed a platform quite broad in scope, mildly socialistic, with only incidental mention of the Depressed Classes. The Party scored considerable success in 1937 elections. However, Ambedkar soon realised that caste Hindu labour was not ready for untouchable leadership. The other untouchable caste groups (non-Mahars) in Maharashtra were also moving away from Mahar leadership. Conversion announcement had further alienated the other castes. Moreover, Ambedkar's Party's position as a small minority in a Congress dominated assembly was
very week. In 1942, along with increasing pressure for separate electorate, Ambedkar reformulated his political plans and founded All India Scheduled Caste Federation, making a direct appeal to the Scheduled Castes to win power through unity. The object of this Party was the attainment by the Scheduled Castes of a status as a distinct and separate element in the national life of India and to obtain them their political, economic and social rights which they were entitled by reason of their needs, their numbers and their importance. However, this Party was utterly defeated in the 1945 elections for the Provincial Legislatures. This defeat again made his views confirmed and strong about the necessity of separate electorates for the scheduled castes.

However, Resolutions, Petitions and also the extra-parliamentary actions like large scale 'Satyagraha' at Poona, Nagpur, Kanpur and Lucknow failed to bring British recognition of what Ambedkar felt were the rights of the Scheduled Castes to a separate electorate. However, independence in 1947 brought the demands of separate electorate to an end.

Such views are reflected in his book "What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to Untouchables", first published in 1945. This book is basically a plea for a separate electorate for the Untouchables. Public statements, voting records, and numerous incidents showing the isolation and mistreatment of untouchables are presented to support the contention that political separation from the Hindus in the electoral system is necessary for the attainment of untouchables' political rights.
With Independence came the appointment of Ambedkar to the Constitution drafting committee, then to the Committee Chairmanship and to Nehru's first cabinet as Law Minister.

First few years was the era of cooperation with the Congress. But this era ended soon in 1951, when he resigned from the Cabinet. In 1952 elections Scheduled Caste Federation, along with its electoral alliance with the Socialist Party, lost badly. Even Ambedkar was defeated by the opposing Congress candidate. He was again defeated in 1954, in a by-election for a reserved seat, and entered Parliament only through the courtesy of a seat given to him in the Rajya Sabha.

In 1956, just two months before his death, Ambedkar took two actions based on his belief that separatist action on the part of untouchables was necessary for their eventual integration. He became Buddhist and led the mass conversion movement, and also announced the establishment of the Republican Party of India, which was to be an instrument of political power for all the dispossessed, including the scheduled tribes as well as the scheduled castes.

The Republican Party, though it was to encompass not only the untouchables but all the 'dispossessed', was still a separatist action, as, by this, it seems, Ambedkar wanted to create a strong opposition front against the Congress in order to fight for the so-called untouchables.
Till that time he had seldom encouraged his partymen or followers to mix with other communities. But by the end of his career, he gradually realized that the Scheduled Caste Federation has raised a barricade between them and the other classes, which ultimately would harm the interests of the untouchables. Therefore, he planned to give a broader base to the Republican Party. He wanted to form a party with the help of those who had sympathy for their grievances. His correspondence with the leaders of other political parties also gives evidence to this.

If one reviews the political movement led by Ambedkar, one clearly sees his emphasis on need of the separatist action on the part of so-called untouchables. Since 1935 onwards he started taking the clear separatist and radical steps. He wanted his followers to be independent of Hinduism and independent of Congress, and by this, he wanted them to reject the domination of the Brahmins and the other upper castes. He wanted to create a separate identity for the untouchables. His search for it culminated by 1956 in the act of embracing Buddhism and the establishment of the Republican Party of India.

Such radical and separatist steps taken by Ambedkar to find a new identification is one of the ways in which a 'marginal man', as pointed out by Stonequist, or a marginal group in the context of our study, can meet its problem. When the tendency towards identification with the dominant group is rebuffed, then a marginal man may start to dis-
associate himself from it and find a new identification. Establishment of a separate identity became necessary as it would help the untouchables to participate in national life with confidence and respect. However, the death of Ambedkar left the future of his movement in the hands of his lieutenants and the next following leaders of the group.

Republican Party was established in 1957, after his death. The manifesto of the party expressed interest in cooperating with the organisations of the Backward Classes and the Scheduled Tribes, which it considered lacking in political consciousness. It also expressed hope for the emergence of an all-India party in opposition to Congress, of which it could be a unit, but no more specific foundation for a new force was laid.

Republican Party established as an All India party was however strongest in Maharashtra. Late B.K. Gaikwad from Maharashtra, right hand man of Ambedkar, became the first president of the party. Moreover, as Ambedkar had planned and as the manifesto of the Republican Party expressed, the Party was to become an instrument of all the dispossessed. But, in reality, in Maharashtra, Republican Party members were mostly neo-Buddhists.

The Republican Party was not formally organized until October 1957, and the elections earlier in that year were fought by the Scheduled Caste Federation under its old name. The Federation made an alliance with other opposition parties in Maharashtra and campaigned in the elections under the
banner of the 'Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti' (United Maharashtra Committee). It profited from this alliance and won four Parliamentary seats and 12 Assembly seats in Maharashtra. 16

Elections in 1962 proved disappointing to the Republican Party. The basis on which it had won sufficient caste Hindu votes for victory in 1957 had disappeared with the creation of Maharashtra State. 17 The election results made it clear that Republicans cannot get into power on their own strength. Gaikwad, the then President, thought it wise to form an alliance with the ruling party of the country—then the Congress.

However, the Republican Party did not profit by this alliance in getting their members elected to the legislative bodies. It continued to do poorly in 1967 election. 18 The worst consequence from the point of view of the party organization was that it got split up into three factions. A group led by Mr. Bhandare merged with the Congress. Gaikwad group continued to make alliances with various other parties. The third faction led by Mr. B.C. Kamble was completely against the alliances with Congress and wanted to include other depressed classes who are neither Buddhists nor untouchables in its movement.

The Republican Party has been losing its strength because of this politics of alliances and factionalism.

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※ This party pressed the issue of the formation of linguistic State of Maharashtra.
The situation thereafter developed into a crisis situation as the party factions were further breaking up into splinter groups. B.D. Khobragade, who was the general secretary of the All India Republican Party for 18 years, leads a group which has been opposing alliance with the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee. They are afraid that regional alliance may end into an all India alliance and would prove detrimental to independent existence of the Republican Party. In recent elections of 1978 for State Assemblies and of 1979 for the Parliament they made alliance with the Janata Party. R.S. Gavai, who was Deputy Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, is opposed to Khobragade, and has joined hands with the Congress and has fought all recent elections by making alliance with the Congress (I). A group led by B.C. Kamble has become pro-Janata.

Such developments indicate the weakening of the political movement. At the time of the establishment of the Republican party it had given a promise of radical politics. The manifesto of the party, as mentioned earlier, expressed hope for the emergence of an all-India party in opposition to Congress, of which it could be a unit. However, at present, it seems that initial promise of radical politics soon succumbed to political alliances and factionalism.

Janata Party came into existence as a National Party, as many parties in opposition to the Congress made a common front and named it as Janata Party.
Such developments in the political movement appear to us to be indicative of the marginal position of the group. By the establishment of the Republican Party, Ambedkar wanted to give a new and separate political identity to his group. But it seems that the clarity of vision of the founder of the movement had no parallel even with those of his lieutenants, and it may be one of the reasons why they would not successfully perpetuate the separate political identity of the group. As Stonequist observes, new identification cannot be formed by the mere willing of it. It must grow with time and experience. In the interval of transition the individual (or a group) suffers from a divided loyalty—an ambivalent attitude. This ambivalence of attitude and sentiment is at the core of those things which characterise the marginal man. He is torn between the two courses of action and is unable calmly to take one and leave the other.²⁹ It seems that the radical promises given at the time of establishment of the Republican Party could not be fulfilled due to the ambivalent attitudes of the leaders. In the absence of powerful leadership of Ambedkar, the next following leaders of the group found themselves in a complex situation and could not grasp which course of action to take. A group led by Mr. Bhandare merged with the Congress. This indicates complete withdrawal on their part. The groups which have been making alliances with other political parties—either Congress or any other—seem to be trying for some form of
accommodation, perhaps only temporary and incomplete, between the two groups. They seem to be oscillating forward and backward. Thus, it appears that due to this ambiguity of attitudes of the leaders, there has developed a crisis of identity and weakening of the political movement. Furthermore, the merging of certain groups or individuals with Congress, or making alliances with either Congress or Janata Party indicate, what Huntington\textsuperscript{20} calls, their natural concern for immediate benefits. But the ways which different leaders have chosen to seek the immediate ends are different and opposit to each other. Consequently, RPI has been losing its strength.

By providing a background of such developments in the political movement, we would be in a position to analyse our findings about the Neo-Buddhists we studied. The questionnaire attempted to elicit the information on the points like the political affiliation of the respondents; their actual voting pattern; their views about the political parties like Congress, Republican Party, Jan Sangh, etc.

**Political Affiliation**

The respondents were asked to name the political party they support.\textsuperscript{*} The findings are seen in Table 1.

The table as a whole indicates that there is no definite affiliation of the whole group to any one particular party. Moreover, 20 respondents out of 100 said that they

\* Not at the time of any particular election, but in general, which we thought would indicate their affiliation to a particular party.
Table 1. Political parties they support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress (Mrs. Gandhi's)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress (Organisation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party of India (RPI)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI - Kamble Group</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI - Gaikwad Group</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI - Khobragade Group</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI - Gavai Group</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (Mrs. Gandhi's) and Republican</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No affiliation to any party</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

did not feel affiliated to any political party. Both these trends are quite suggestive of the kind of feeling of uncertainty to support any party.

Among the parties which the respondents have mentioned, Republican Party of India seems to be the most prominent one - 34 per cent. If the number of respondents opted for all the factional groups of RPI are combined together along with the number of respondents opted for parental group, Republican Party of India, the number comes to 44
out of 100. This shows that even half of the respondents did not feel affiliated to RPI. This may be indicative of the weakening position of RPI among the Neo-Buddhists, on whose support the party is supposed to thrive. It was observed by the investigator, that these people have been losing confidence in their leaders whom they had expected to represent their interest. The respondents, in general, expressed disgust regarding ever-increasing factionalism. When the RPI supporters were asked to state the factional group of RPI to which they felt affiliated, very few named the group and 34 respondents did not state any name.

In our informal discussion many of these 34 respondents expressed that they did not belong and did not want to belong to any such groups, as this groupism, according to them, has spoilt the whole political movement.

All the 20 respondents who supported the Congress Party, reported that they felt affiliated to Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party and none felt affiliated to Congress (Organisation). This may be due to the reason that Gandhi's Congress Party's conservatism is of moderate type and looked to the problems

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The Indian National Congress Party got split into two groups called Indian National Congress (Mrs. Gandhi's) and Indian National Congress (Organisation) towards the end of 1969. Further splits took place in the Congress Party in the period afterwards, but when we conducted this field investigation these two groups were in existence.
of backward classes more seriously. 

Generally, Ambedkarite Buddhists are expected to be anti-Congress, and it is significant to find 20 respondents showing their affiliation to the Congress Party. This trend may be due to the peculiar 'in-between' and insecure position of the neo-Buddhists. They are naturally more concerned about their immediate ends, which they expect to be served by the Congress Party.

Some of these respondents (16) did not have affiliation for any one particular party and had a divided mind. This indicates their ambiguous position.

Jan Sangh, an ultra-conservative political party, was supported by none. It was observed by the investigator that there was hatred in general for Jan Sangh and the general feeling was that the party encourages caste factionalism and is mostly Brahmin oriented.

Further, the respondents were asked to state if they had changed their affiliation from one party to another after 1956. If there was any change, they were asked to give the name of the party they have left and the new one they have joined. However, this question was not properly understood and responded to because quite a few were mixing

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\[\text{\textsuperscript{\textsection}}\] Gandhi's Congress "Twenty Point Programme" includes welfare of the scheduled castes as one of the points.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{\textsection\textsection}}\] This meant, after embracing Buddhism and after the establishment of the R.P.I.
up the two issues, one of affiliation to a party and the other the actual voting pattern. Before every election, they pointed out, a meeting was held in each locality of the Neo-Buddhists and the leaders took the decision for whom to vote. Therefore, it seems that there was nothing called permanent party affiliation as such.

**Voting Pattern**

The respondents were asked to name the parties for whom they voted in the two Parliamentary elections: 1967 and 1971. As there was no candidate of RPI from Poona constituency\(^21\) they had to choose the candidate from other political parties. In 1967 elections, the candidates were from the following parties: Indian National Congress, Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) and Independent.\(^22\) In 1971 elections the candidates were from Indian National Congress (Mrs. Gandhi's), Bharatiya Jan Sangh, SSP, Shiva Sena (SHS)\(^*\) and Independent.\(^23\)

Table 2 gives the distribution of the Respondents by the Political Parties for whom they voted in 1967 and 1971 Parliamentary Elections.

It appears from the above table that the Indian National Congress and S.S.P. were the two parties for which the respondents had voted in these elections, and the parties like Jan Sangh, Shiva Sena and Independent candidates did not get a single vote from these respondents.

\(^*\) Shiva Sena - newly emerged (that time) regional party demanding preferential treatment to Maharashtrians in Maharashtra.
In 1967 election a little more than one-third of the respondents had voted for S.S.P. candidate and in the 1971 elections this party did not get a single vote from these respondents. This was not, as observed by the investigator, due to change in their political affiliation as such. The investigator was told in the course of informal talks that at the time of 1967 elections it was decided by the leaders in certain localities, particularly in the Cantonment area, to vote for Mr. N.G. Gore, who was the S.S.P. candidate. The decision was communicated to the common people through the meetings held in these localities before the elections, and the people followed the leaders. Many of such respondents who voted for S.S.P. in 1967 elections told the investigator that they voted for Mr. N.G. Gore as a person and not as a S.S.P. candidate. No wonder then, that the S.S.P. did not get a single vote from our respondents in 1971 elections.

Table 2. Distribution of the Respondents by the Political Parties for whom they voted in 1967 and 1971 Parliamentary Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Parliamentary Elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharatiya Jansangh</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiva Sena (SHS)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* At the time of 1967 elections Indian National Congress was undivided, while at the time of 1971 elections the Congress was divided and the candidate in Poona constituency was from Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party.
Indian National Congress received the majority of the votes from the respondents in both the elections. In 1967 elections 63.33 per cent and in 1971 elections 100.00 per cent. This may indicate a tendency to side with the dominant party in the country to safeguard one's own interests. If the RPI candidates were there, the picture might have been different. But, in the absence of that, the tendency seems to be pro-Congress as they are more concerned with their immediate benefits which they hope to be served by siding with the dominant group.

Views regarding Certain Political Parties

The respondents were asked to state the name of the party which according to them would help the neo-Buddhists. The responses are seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The Distribution of the Respondents by the Parties which they thought would help the neo-Buddhists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress (Mrs. Gandhi's)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (Gandhi's) and Republican</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No party will help the Neo-Buddhists</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Before 1977 General Elections, Congress Party was the dominant party in the country.
This table shows that more than half of the respondents (48 + 11) expressed confidence in the Congress Party; more than a quarter confided in the Republican Party; and a few respondents were not ready to trust any political party in the betterment of the neo-Buddhists.

More than half of the respondents' confidence in the Congress Party seems to be consistent with the findings in the previous table, where it shows that majority of the respondents voted for the Congress candidate in 1967 and 1971 elections.

They confided less in the Republican Party because of the selfish and factionalistic politics played by its present leaders.

Some respondents looked so disgusted with the activities of the different political parties and the whole political situation in the country, that they said that no party would help the Neo-Buddhists.

Views regarding the Congress Party

The respondents were asked to state whether, in their opinion, Congress Party has done anything good for the neo-Buddhist community. If their answer was affirmative, they were asked to specify it. It was found that 67 respondents gave an affirmative answer.

Table 4 shows what the Congress did for them. It can be seen that majority of our respondents stated that the Congress Party did something good for the neo-Buddhists like giving them special privileges in education and occupation.
Table 4. Distribution of the Respondents by their specification about what Congress Party did for the neo-Buddhists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Specification</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gave special privileges to the neo-Buddhists, and gave land to the landless, among whom neo-Buddhists are in majority</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have done better than others</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They did nothing good for us</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This response has specific reference to the ruling Congress Government’s extension (in 1968) of the special privileges given to the scheduled castes to the neo-Buddhists which they had lost on conversion. The Government of Maharashtra had taken this line of action in accordance with the social background of the neo-Buddhists, who share, even after conversion, the economic and other social disabilities suffered by the other scheduled castes of the region. More than half of our respondents gave credit to the Congress Government for taking such action in favour of the neo-Buddhists.

The respondents also mentioned that the ruling Congress Government gave land to the landless people and the neo-Buddhists who were in large number among such landless people were benefitted by the action taken by the Government.
This was positive response of the Congress Government to the struggles of the landless labourers in some parts of Maharashtra like Khandesh, Vidarbha, etc. The movement was led by late Dadasaheb Gaikwad, the first President of the Republican Party, in 1959.

They acknowledged openly and were pleased with certain decisions and actions favourable to the neo-Buddhists taken by the Congress Government in Maharashtra. This finding explains, to some extent, the voting pattern of this group, as seen earlier.

**Views regarding the Republican Party of India**

The respondents were asked to state their opinion about whether the Republican Party has done anything good for the neo-Buddhists and, if yes, what it is. Thirty-eight respondents specified that the Republican Party was instrumental in pressing the Government to continue the constitutional privileges of the scheduled castes for Buddhists even after conversion. Some of these respondents further expressed that the Congress Government, which was in power, did not willingly take this decision, but was forced to take the decision due to the pressure brought by the Republican leaders on this point. They observed that the Republican party has fought for this, as the refusal of the privileges was the injustice to the neo-Buddhists.

Further, we asked those respondents who had given negative answer to the above query to state their expectations from the Republican Party. Their responses are seen in the
following table.

**Table 5. Distribution of the Respondents according to the Expectations from the Republican Party**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Expectations</th>
<th>No. of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissolve the splits and unite and work honestly for us</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for the educational and economic progress of the poor neo-Buddhists like us</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Thirty-eight respondents had given affirmative answer when asked whether the Republican Party has done any good to the neo-Buddhists.

About the Republican Party, the respondents feel that the splits of the party should be dissolved and unity be achieved, and honest work should be done for the community. There was a feeling that the economic and educational development of the poor masses had been neglected by the politicians and the party should pay attention to it. All respondents wanted its leaders to forget the personal differences and the selfish ends and work unitedly and honestly for the educational and economic development of the whole community.

In the course of informal discussions a majority of the respondents made known to the Investigator their utter disappointment with the present situation of the Republican
party. As one respondent expressed, "Now we have no saviour. Ambedkar's death has made us orphans. Every leader claims that no one else than himself has understood Ambedkar."

Views about the Janasangha Party

We attempted to know the views of the neo-Buddhist respondents about the Janasangha, a party of Hindu communalism, traditionalism and social conservatism. Its main source of strength in Maharashtra lies in the Brahmin middle class in urban localities. The neo-Buddhists had experienced sufferings at the hands of Brahmins. Therefore, it was necessary to know their views about Janasangha. The views of the neo-Buddhist respondents are seen in the following table:

Table 6. Respondents' views about Janasangha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Views</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is Brahmins' Party and will not help us</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janasanghists are opportunists, they approach us only when they need votes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a Brahmins' Party and will always make us suffer</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table it appears that a majority
identified Janasangha with the Brahmin group and felt that it would never work for their betterment. A few respondents (12) went one step further and expressed their fear that Janasangha would not only not help them but also would harm them and make them suffer. Some revealed that Janasanghists were opportunists and approached the neo-Buddhists only when they needed their votes.

The table as a whole clearly indicates the neo-Buddhists' negative attitude and hatred towards Janasangha. The conservative platform of the Janasangha and the ill-treatment received from the Brahmins for years together might have been responsible for the development of such an attitude of resentment towards Brahmins in the minds of neo-Buddhists.

On the whole, if the affiliation pattern, voting pattern and the views regarding certain political parties expressed by our respondents are reviewed, the following significant findings can be pointed out.

(1) Relative weakening of the strength and influence of Republican Party.

(2) Relative strengthening of pro-Congress attitude.

(3) Completely negative attitude towards Janasangha.

Discontent with all the Political Parties

After eliciting their views about certain political parties, an attempt was made to see whether there exists a feeling of discontentment with all the political parties among these neo-Buddhists. The question asked was: "Do you feel that it is better not to support any political party?"
It was found that nearly half of the respondents responded affirmatively to this query. The development of such feeling in the minds of our respondents seems to be quite significant as it reveals the utter frustration of these people with the present political parties and the loss of hope for the use of the present political means to achieve their ends.

In order to know the reasons behind the development of such feelings, these respondents were asked to state why they felt so. The reasons mentioned by them are seen in the following table.

Table 7. The Reasons for not supporting any Political Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Reasons</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Party is interested in our welfare; so we feel, no party is our party.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of electing the leaders as they do not work for us; they only struggle for power</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are too busy in our work and not interested in politics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Fiftysix respondents did not have such feeling.

The table clearly shows that except the two respondents who are not interested in politics, the rest have expressed their disappointment with all the political parties and with the leaders who have been preoccupied with
electoral politics and their resultant opportunism at the cost of real political participation and welfare of these people.

An attempt was made to see if there was any relationship between the age of the respondent and the existence or non-existence of such feeling. The findings are seen in the following table.

Table 8. Age Groups of the Respondents who had the feeling and who did not have the feeling of not to support any political party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group in years</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents who had the feeling</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents who did not have the feeling</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 to 40</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>57.70</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 55</td>
<td>43.12</td>
<td>56.90</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 and above</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that there is no such relationship between the age group of the respondents and the existence or non-existence of the feeling not to support any political party. Those who had or had not such feeling seemed to be almost equally belonging to all the three age groups. This indicates that such feeling had been developed among these respondents irrespective of their young or old age.

Tendency to fight or to withdraw

The respondents were asked to state their opinion
about which course of action they should take if the upper
caste people fail to give them proper political, economic,
social status—fight for it or just keep quiet and with-
draw the two options opened for the marginal man.

It was found that majority of our respondents (85)
expressed their wish to fight for it, only a few expressed
their opinion in favour of withdrawal and two respondents
did not give any response.

On the whole it appears that there exists the spirit
of fighting among majority of our respondents.

Such spirit to fight and general discontentment of
the group has been expressed in the form of the development
of a movement called Dalit Panther Movement.

The Militant Movement among the Neo-Buddhists

Around 1972 an extremist development occurred among
the neo-Buddhists—the Dalit (oppressed) Panther Movement, the source of inspiration for which was the Black Panther
Movement of the American Negroes.

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* The word 'Dalit' etymologically means all those who
are oppressed, economically and socially; however, the
Dalit Panther Movement is led, followed and also meant
for the neo-Buddhists mainly. Though the manifesto of the
Panther organisation does not say so, the facts reveal so.
For evidence, see Economic and Political Weekly, 9.1,
May 4, 1974; or Seminar, May, 1974.

** The Black Panther movement was the source of inspiration
is indicated by the name chosen for the movement, also by
the statement made in its manifesto, and even it was so
reported to the investigator by the Dalit Panther leaders
in Poona city in an interview with them.
This movement emerged with the formation of a group of young Buddhist writers and poets—prominent among them being Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and J.V. Pawar and called it Dalit Panthers.

The genesis of the Dalit Panthers could be traced to the centuries of oppression of these people, to the apathy of even the so-called 'progressives' at the perpetuation of the injustice against them, and to the failure of the constitutional and legislative measures to remove the injustice.

Recently, after Ambedkar's death, the Dalits found themselves leaderless. The failure of the R.P.I. leaders to take care of the interests of the common masses of neo-Buddhists, left them acutely frustrated. The leadership after about the year 1966 completely lost its militant elan. The faction-ridden leadership instead of challenging the establishment lapsed into the politics of dissension and compromises. It failed to pay any attention to the growing aspirations and the frustration of the increasing number of educated youths among the neo-Buddhists. It seemed to be contented with the few rewards given by the ruling party. It was also observed by the politically conscious leaders that all other political parties have been either indifferent to their problems or have adopted an opportunist posture in order to capture their votes. Even the

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* Before that, the R.P.I. had fought for landless labourers.
Left Parties in India never cared to break social
castism. Due to the inability of other political par-
ties as well as of the Republican Party to deal with the
problem adequately, the neo-Buddhists have not been able
to articulate their many problems on the political plane.

It also appears that a realization came upon many
among the neo-Buddhists that mere change of religion will
not bring about change in the economic and social status
of the neo-Buddhists, and for that a fundamental change in
the whole social system was necessary. This realization
was revealed in certain statements made by the prominent
leaders of the Dalit Panther, and it is also indicated by
the fact that the manifesto of the Dalit Panther organiza-
tion does not prescribe Buddhism as panacea for the ills
of the oppressed.

Of course, the immediate provocation for launching
the movement was the spate of atrocities committed on the
so-called untouchables, including neo-Buddhists, in Maha-
rashtra's rural areas. The atrocities ranged from the
denial of the use of public wells and other public places
to the assaults on the neo-Buddhist women and boycott of the
neo-Buddhists in villages. It was also experienced by many
that even in urban areas the neo-Buddhists, along with other
scheduled castes, had to face discrimination in various
spheres of life from getting residential accommodation to
getting jobs. Moreover, the educated among the neo-
Buddhists were also watchful of the facts, which were brought
to notice by the various governmental and non-governmental statistical reports,\(^2\) that the incidence of violence and atrocities directed at the scheduled castes throughout the country has been on increase, and also, that the constitutional provisions for educational development and the reservations in employment largely remain on paper.\(^3\)

Such facts seemed to reflect the social intolerance of the upper caste people and their determination to maintain their hegemony in all the spheres of life.

Further it was sensed by many that as the political and economic power was monopolised by the caste Hindus, neither police nor administration came to their rescue and help, not only in villages but also in metropolitan cities like Bombay.\(^4\) Moreover, it was also observed by the educated among the neo-Buddhists that while the atrocities on their people evoke mild reactions from the intelligentsia and evasive replies from the authorities, any single incident of mishap in the case of caste Hindus throws them into a frenzy.\(^5\) This biased view of the society was enough to convince the whole generation of frustrated and bitter young men that they have no future in this society.

Under such circumstances, when peaceful and reformatory movement of their elders to tackle their problems became less effective, a new movement called the Dalit Panthers

\(^{\text{**}}\) This was reported to the investigator by the Dalit Panther leaders in Poona city in one of the special interview with them.
have raised the issues with a revolutionary approach. The Panthers feel that what is needed is not reform but basic structural change. They believe that what the oppressed in India need are not concessions, facilities and reservations, but the establishment of 'Dalit Raj' (a kingdom of the oppressed). They have declared in their manifesto, that they stand for total emancipation and political domination, they want to rule the entire country, and they aim not at individuals but at the system. Total revolution has become their objective. They are convinced that the traditional Hindu social structure cannot be reformed; it needs to be destroyed. One of the founding leaders of the movement, Dhasal, observed that ultimately revolution only would solve the problems of the Dalits.32

Such revolutionary approach brought many discontented, frustrated and disillusioned young neo-Buddhists to the fold of Dalit Panther. They started looking up at the Panther movement as their only hope for salvation.

A look at the development of such revolutionary tendency among the young neo-Buddhists show that such tendency may be a consequence of their peculiar structural position as a marginal group. It seems that when their attempt to redefine their social position failed, a realization came upon them, particularly upon the young educated, that the new identity cannot be achieved unless the outer world, consisting of caste-Hindus, gives recognition to this new identity. They have been realizing that the conversion
movement of Ambedkar by itself could bring about only the formal end of their Hindu-untouchable identity. Their substantive identity remained the same. Therefore, there emerged the crisis of identity among these neo-Buddhists, and it became more acute in the case of educated young men. The failure of the R.P.I. leadership to reach their expectations added to the frustration of the young men. They lost confidence in the whole parliamentary system,33 and also lost faith in the effectiveness of the constitutional guarantees too. The increase in the incidence of violence directed against them and against the scheduled castes, in general, the government's failure to deal with the problem adequately, made them to lose their confidence in the government and the people. They lost their patience to wait any longer for their emancipation and wanted to revolt against the whole system as such. They felt the need of a revolutionary approach to raise the issues which have remained unresolved so far.

The language they use and the literary works they produce become indicative of their radicalism. Their violent attacks on Hindu deities and popular heroes of Maharashtra like Shivaji, the abusive language they use while speaking about Hindu deities and Hindu religion, burning of 'Manu-smriti' (a revered religious book of Hindus) in public, and the slogans on the banners and placards carried by them in processions, as well as in the violent activities they are

* One such slogan asked the 'Dalit' to rise and take up arms.
engaged in reveal the bitter feelings of the new generation of the educated neo-Buddhists. They went as far as to show disrespect to the national flag by trampling it. They asked the question, "Is a national emblem like the flag more valuable than human beings? In a society ridden with discrimination and divisions as the Indian society is, what is the significance of a common national emblem?" They characterised the anniversary of Indian Independence as 'Black Day' anniversary. Such extremist statements made by the Panthers reveal the fact that these angry men have noted the contradictions in the existing system. They could see the gap between its moral pretensions and its actual achievements. Such acute criticism of the dominant culture on their part seems to us to be due to their marginal character. As Stonequist observes, the marginal man, because he combines the knowledge and insight of the insider with the critical attitude of the outsider, can become acute critic of the dominant group; his analysis is not necessarily objective, but he is skillful in noting the 'hypocrisies' in the dominant culture. According to Stonequist such radical and revolutionary sentiments are therefore natural ones to take. In the case of neo-Buddhists, it seems, such radical and extremist sentiments can be understood in the context of their crisis of identity, and their revolutionary approach can be understood as the means they have adopted to force upon the outer world their social position.

Even their recent agitation which started since 1977 and
has been continued till 1980 for the re-naming of Marathwada University after the name of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar can be viewed as an attempt to raise their social position. If one tries to see the basic intention behind re-naming the University after Ambedkar's name, one finds that the fundamental idea is to place their position as higher as possible in the eyes of the outer world. It is generally observed that in the hope of raising one's status low castes adopt certain values which are established by the advanced castes. Richard Lambert adds one more such value to the usual list of such other values like cleanliness, literacy, economic and political power—the value of sharing in and contributing to the mainstream of cultural accomplishment.37

In the case of neo-Buddhists, Ambedkar, their leader, had achieved the highest political and educational status. The neo-Buddhists take great pride in all his personal accomplish-

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37 In 1977, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Vasantdada Patil gave promise to the Dalit Panther leaders to re-name the University after Ambedkar's name, as they had demanded for it. In fulfilment of this promise, both the Houses of Maharashtra Legislature passed a resolution to this effect in July 1978. This decision let loose a reign of terror on the Dalits in Marathwada. The riots continued about a fortnight. As a result of violence the Dalits kept quiet about their demand for sometime, but after a few months the issue was revived. The then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Sharad Pawar, kept on postponing the matter by giving this or that excuse. As a result, the 'Long March' was planned by Dalit leaders on December 6, 1979. Thousands of participants and the prominent leaders were arrested. This issue of re-naming the University has remained undecided even up to the middle of 1980.
ments and his contributions to the nation, as he was 'their' man. He has become not only a model for them but also a symbol of identification. Now, while making efforts to raise the status of their group, they want to show to the outer world that they too have shared in and contributed to the mainstream of the culture, and it is largely through Ambedkar, who became a national figure afterwards, neo-Buddhists claim this achievement. By re-naming the University after the name of Dr. Ambedkar, it seems, the neo-Buddhist group wants to raise its social position in the eyes of others, and to achieve this, the group is ready to face, and have been facing, extreme violence in Maharashtra. 38

The Dalit Panther leaders in Poona city told the present investigator in the course of an interview that the renaming of the University after Ambedkar's name is a matter of honour for them, and they, and even the illiterate poor neo-Buddhists masses, want to achieve it at any cost.

Thus, by all such means and with the revolutionary approach the Dalit Panthers wanted to thrust upon the dominant group the re-definition of their social position. Their movement is for recognition of their status.

Furthermore, this Marathwada incidence indicates one more significant fact, that is, the unwillingness on the part of the upper castes, to give recognition to the 'Dalits', mainly to the neo-Buddhists' aspirations to claim for higher status. This opposition is indicated by certain incidents like the large-scale riots in Marathwada in the middle of
1978 against the decision taken by Maharashtra Legislature to rename the University after Ambedkar's name. The tremendous atrocities on the Dalits during this period displayed the caste hatred of the upper castes. In face of all this, when Dalits decided to press the issue further, and planned the 'Long March', the upper caste group organized a 'Namantar Virodhi' group (a group opposing the renaming) and mobilized support against the 'Long March'. The dominant group is still not ready to recognize the claim of the neo-Buddhists for higher status. This, it seems to us, provides further evidence of the marginal character of the neo-Buddhist group.

In this country there are universities which are named after eminent personalities like Nehru, Tilak, etc., and the decisions to name these universities after such names did not raise any such opposition; but when the Dalits or neo-Buddhists demanded to rename the University after the name of Ambedkar, an equally eminent personality, had to pay a heavy price of loss of lives and property and honour of many neo-Buddhist men and women for making such a demand.

The Literary Movement Among the Neo-Buddhists

The 'Dalit Sahitya' (the literature of the oppressed) is another form of expression of the frustration of the

*Though, etymologically the term Dalit means all those who are oppressed, economically and socially, Dalit Sahitya is mainly written by Neo-Buddhists.*
young generation of the neo-Buddhist. Basically, the
genesis of this literary movement and that of the militant
movement called Dalit-Panther, can be found in the cen-
turies of cruel and inhuman treatment experienced by these
people, and the perpetuation of that treatment even in
the present society which cherishes the values of equality.
It is also the increased consciousness of the present-day
educated men and women that in spite of their efforts to
change their identity by conversion, education, self-
 improvement, etc., there is not much recognition given to
their redefined social position.

The literary movement has been initiated and carried
forward vigorously by the educated young neo-Buddhists.
They have come from the different walks of life. They are
college teachers, lawyers, journalists, etc. These intel-
lectual elites identify their interests with those of
'Dalit' masses. By adopting various literary forms like
novels, short stories, drama, essays, poetry, autobiogra-
phical narrations of personal experiences, they try to arti-
culate the feelings of the whole group. The oppressive
attitude of the upper castes has stimulated creative minds
of these marginal men and they have found artistic expression
as an outlet to express their feelings through it.39

'Dalit' literature tries to project to the general
public the problem of the group. The short stories, poetry,
drama, etc. depict the hard realities of their life. For
instance, a prominent neo-Buddhist writer in his short story
called 'Doundi' (town-crier's call) portrays a Mahar in the village, who, despite his many contributions to the community, has not become 'part' of the village. He is still separated and alone. Or, a leading poet in his poem expresses a feeling of a 'dalit' woman, who works as a labourer on a dam construction site which is being built to provide water, but, even when the dam is built, she has to walk miles together in search of water. The theme suggests that the fruits of their hard labour are enjoyed by others, while they themselves are not in a position to satisfy their basic requirements. Such expressions may be indicative of their feeling of relative deprivation. They feel that they are not getting their share they deserve to get, and others are getting more than they deserve. They are made to feel that they do not really belong.

The feeling of confusion and loss of direction of this group also finds expression in the dalit literature. For example, a prominent 'dalit' poet reflects the crisis situation of this group after Ambedkar's death in his poem where he asks a question which is addressed to Ambedkar, that 'where have you (Ambedkar) left that needle and thread with which you had stitched our torn out lives.'

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A poem presented by Daya Pawar at the 'Dalit Kavi Sammelan' (Conference of oppressed poets) at Poona on 15th April, 1979.

The poem presented by Yashwant Manohar at the Dalit Kavi Sammelan (Conference of Oppressed Poets) at Poona on April 15, 1979.
another poet expresses the crisis symbolically in his poem saying, "as yet our language does not have a script." Such expressions indicate their directionless and uncertain position. They have developed a feeling that now they lack powerful leadership to deal with the hostile outer world.

Their literature largely projects their feeling of frustration for not getting the recognition in the present social system and also their disappointment with their present leadership. For instance, a prominent poet expresses his disgust with the mess of affairs created by the present leadership of their group in the words: "Oh! This was not his (Ambedkar's) dream." Or, another leading poet expresses the frustration of a wounded Mahar soldier, who had fought for his country, and, who now is wondering why he fought and suffered for the country.

The frustration and their disappointment have given rise to the radical and rebellious attitudes of these people. The short stories like 'Vidroh' (protest) or 'Udrek' (Anger) or poems like 'Surya' (the sun) reflect such revolutionary attitudes. They have expressed their protest

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* The poem presented by Prakash Kharat at the 'Dalit Kavi Sammelan' at Pune on April 15, 1979.
** Kashav Meshram, the poem presented at the 'Dalit Kavi Sammelan', April 15, 1979, Pune.
*** A story by Baburao Bagul.
**** A story by Yogiraj Waghmare.
***** A poem by Namdeo Dhasal.
against the Hindu religion, Hindu ethics, Hindu literary tradition, and, as a matter of fact against the whole social system which is dominated by the orthodox element. Through their writings they want to ventilate their anger, they want to bitterly criticise the social system, and also to point out the gap between the moral pretensions of the society and the actual achievements. Similarly their feelings are expressed sometimes in most vulgar language. For instance, a prominent poet wrote in one of his poem\textsuperscript{42}: "The greatest height of your ancient culture is no higher than that of a pimp on the Foras Road."\textsuperscript{\textit{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}} The same poet in another of his poems asks\textsuperscript{43}: "Liberty is the name of which ass?"

This literature is the reflection of the sentiments of the group, which aspires to find recognition of their re-defined social position, but, which in reality is scarred and humiliated and frustrated. The hatred it breathes is a reactive hatred. Just as Lewis Coser observes while commenting on Fanon's book, The Wretched of the Earth, that one must never forget that the book was written in anguish and heartbreak, the hatred and violence it breathes on every page is reactive violence;\textsuperscript{44} similarly, the hatred and rebellion expressed in this literature seem to be the reactive tendencies. In Coser's opinion the "Myth of Peasant Revolt" created by an ideologist like Fanon has sprung from his marginal character.\textsuperscript{45} In the same way, the literature

\textsuperscript{\textbullet} Foras Road is a residential quarter of the prostitutes in Bombay.
of these neo-Buddhist writers can be understood in the framework of their structural position of marginality.

Moreover, along with this theme of conflict and confusion which many of the Dalit writers have portrayed, universal humanism is also another theme which attracts the attention of some of these writers and poets. They praise the humanitarian and modern values like equality, liberty and rationalism in their writings. They try to interpret Ambedkar and Buddha, and emphasise the point that the acceptance of such values as taught by Ambedkar and the Buddha is the real need of the moment. Such tendency of giving importance to humanitarianism and modernism in their writings, also can be explained as the reflection of peculiar personality traits of marginal members. The society of which they feel to be an integral part has been discriminating them, has been compelling them to live the life of a 'stranger' in the same world in which they have been living. Such treatment has made them the individuals with wider horizon and more detached and rational viewpoint. Robert Park observes, the marginal man is always a relatively more civilized human being. It seems that in order to solve their own problem they are taking interest in the larger problem of human values.

Some of these writers and poets have also shown keen interest in the past history of this group. In their literature they have described the glorious history of their

\[ \text{e.g. writings of Bhausaheb Adsul, Ranpise, etc.} \]
group. Such efforts to praise their past may be the outcome of their sensitiveness of their inferior caste connections, which are often called in question, the consequence of which is that they constantly strive to find a situation in which they can excel. Such type of effort to find a situation in which one can claim his excellence is also noted by Stonequist in the case of a marginal man. In the case of neo-Buddhists it seems, by trying to point to their glorious past they try to substantiate their claim to their redefined social position.

Thus, even if one has a cursory glance at the various themes in the Dalit literature—the themes reflecting their feeling of relative deprivation, of confusion, of frustration, of hatred, of rebellion, or the themes expressing their attraction for humanitarian values or their efforts to eulogize the historical part—they basically reflect the peculiar personality traits of these people forming a marginal group. These personality traits reflect the general situation their group is facing and their experience with that situation. The group is making efforts to meet the challenging crisis situation. It also appears that by engaging in such activities these men are motivated to find recognition for their equal eminence and co-partnership on equal footing in all the spheres of social life.

However, as facts stand today, these activities as yet have not proved to be very effective in reaching their goal. Opposite to this there is a very large class of caste Hindu
literary critics and readers who bitterly criticise this literature. The main emphasis of these critics is on
the evaluation of this literature from purely literary
formalistic point of view. By using the traditional lite-
rary criteria, they evaluate it, and condemn it as having
a mediocre or even nil, literary merit. The content of
this literature is also criticized on certain grounds like:
(1) The picture of 'Dalit' man which this literature depicts
is not a true life picture of these people after independence
of this country;\(^50\) (2) this literature rouses segrega-
tionist tendencies among the Dalits;\(^51\); (3) this literature
is propagandist; etc.

Such criticism seems to indicate the unwillingness on
the part of the dominant group, consisting of upper caste
Hindus, to give recognition to the equal status of this
group. Even if we leave aside the issue of its literary
evaluation, as it is out of the scope of this study, the
tendency to condemn its content too, definitely reveals how
prejudiced the critics are. This also indicates the marginal
character of non-Buddhists. In fact, some of the neo-Buddhist
writers have started questioning the value of the "Brahmani"\(^x\)
literature.\(^52\) This may be a reactive hatred of these
marginal men.

Thus, on the whole, it seems to us that the crisis
situation which this marginal group of neo-Buddhist is

\(^x\) Literature written by Brahmins.
facing, has given rise to (1) a bloody militant movement and (2) a literary movement of innovative nature. The ultimate aim of both the movements is to get an equal status.

However, both these movements have not been successful in protecting themselves from the fragmentation of the group. Both have been suffering from splits. From our point of view the cause for such splits is the crisis of identity. Whether to maintain a separate identity of Ambedkarite Buddhists, or to join hands with, the 'manifesto friends' seems to be the basic issue facing the leaders of Dalit Panther organization. Among the neo-Buddhist writers too, who are leading the literary movement, the same issue of identity crisis has led to factionalism. One group of writers with Marxist orientation wants to address itself to the cause of wider category of 'dalits' including industrial workers, landless labourers, etc. The other group wants to maintain the distinct social existence of the neo-Buddhists. They fear that by including themselves in the wider category of Dalits, they would lose their identity.

Such basic differences of opinion among the leaders have proved to be harmful to the solidarity of both the movements. A sense of collective identity and solidarity

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* The manifesto of the Dalit Panther organisation had declared that the Left Parties and all those forces which fight against caste and class oppression are their friends.
is a pre-requisite for the effective steering of the movement. Of course, efforts are being made to dissolve the differences, but such efforts have as yet failed.

We had made an attempt to elicit information about the views of our respondents regarding Dalit Panther—the militant movement.

In order to get some idea of the extent of our respondents' knowledge about the Dalit Panther movement, we tried to find out whether they knew the names of the persons who are active in this movement. It was found that 47 respondents out of 100 could state the names, 31 respondents said that they did not know and 22 said that they were not interested in such matters. We could observe that those who stated as 'not interested' and 'do not know' were afraid of police arrests, as there were some arrests of these Panthers by the police.

The respondents were also requested to state the aim of this movement. The aims stated by them are seen in Table 9. (See page 312).

It seems from the table that nearly half of the respondents were either not interested or did not know the aims and those who knew were clear that the movement was against discrimination. However our statistical findings do not correctly reveal the extent of their information about the movement, but there is some evidence to show that there is not enough and strong support from our respondents to the movement.
Views about the Dalit Panther

The respondents were asked to state whether, in their opinion, the movement would succeed or fail. The findings show that 43 respondents out of 100 said that it would fail, 24 respondents said that it would succeed and 33 respondents said that they were not interested in the matter. Many of those, who thought that it would fail, explained that they have developed such a view due to increasing splits and the fights among the leaders of the movement. Some respondents expressed that by such violent activities they would achieve nothing but creation of more problems.

An attempt was also made to find out the views of the respondents about the necessity of the Panther movement, and those who opined that it is necessary, they were further requested to state, what, according to them, Dalit Panther would achieve for the neo-Buddhists. The findings show that 54 respondents out of 100 felt that the Dalit Panther is not necessary. Many of these, in their informal discussion, told the investigator that the Panthers by their violent activities have spoilt the image of the neo-Buddhists and have made their way more harder, and now due to the splits the movement has lost its earlier vigour; so it cannot be very effective too.

Thirty-four respondents expressed the need of the movement to fight against the injustice done to them and to protect the neo-Buddhists or to establish social equality. Twelve respondents out of 100 did not answer the query.
These responses as a whole indicate that there is not enough support from our respondents to the Dalit Panther movement. The negative attitude about the Dalit Panther expressed by more than half of the respondents, and signs of disinterest or lack of knowledge about Panthers shown by more than a quarter of the respondents reveal what Huntington says: "He who is concerned about eating is unlikely to be concerned about revolting."

But our further findings show that though the neo-Buddhist group has lost confidence in the ability of the Republican Party and also that of the Dalit Panther movement, the spirit to fight is still alive among many of them. The respondents were asked to state that if equality of status is not achieved, what should be done in future? The responses are seen in Table 10.

The table clearly shows that majority of the respondents still have the spirit to fight. They hope that by fighting only they would reach their aim. However, many respondents expressed that the fight is necessary but it should be nonviolent and for fighting unity is necessary.

On the whole these and other findings indicate that the neo-Buddhists are aware of the fact that the equality is not achieved as yet. Some are so frustrated that they either want complete separation from the dominant group, or they want to withdraw. A few believe in the way of self improvement, and the majority wants to fight for equal status, but many disapprove of militant action.
Table 9. The aims of Dalit Panther as stated by the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To fight against injustice and to protect us</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To teach the lesson to Brahmins</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not have aim, they only increase quarrels</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. The action to be taken in future for gaining equality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The action to be taken in future</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fight for equality</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self improvement, and not to fight with others</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate villages of neo-Buddhists</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give up hopes and retreat</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Ambedkar made a life-long effort to redefine the social position of the untouchables. His efforts culminated in the act of embracing Buddhism and in the establishment of the Republican Party of India (RPI). By this he wanted to create a new and separate identity for the untouchables. However, the initial promise of radical politics given by the R.P.I. soon succumbed to political alliances and factionalism. The whole group suffered from a divided loyalty, ambivalent attitude, which are characteristics of a marginal group. The various compromises made by the different leaders of the group indicate that some of them completely withdrew in their struggle by merging with the dominant political group; some made temporary accommodations. These reactions led to the development of a crisis of identity and weakening of the political movement of the group. Such developments made the masses, as well as the increasing number of educated aspirant youths, acutely frustrated. They lost the confidence in the whole Parliamentary system as they felt that RPI leadership has not been representing their real interests and also other political parties have not been interested in their cause.

At the same time, there is a feeling in the minds of the neo-Buddhists, that neither their own efforts through conversion, education, etc., nor the constitutional, legal guarantees have been effective enough to bring about a
change in their social existence. They found that they have no future in this system where they are made to feel that they do not really belong.

A reaction to such discontent and frustration is the birth of a militant movement called 'Dalit Panther', and a literary movement known as 'Dalit Sahitya'. Both the movements were led by educated young neo-Buddhists.

The adoption of these revolutionary and innovative roles by the neo-Buddhists, seems to us, to be the peculiar consequences of the marginal character of this group. The outer world is not accepting the redefinition of their social position. They themselves have been suffering from the problem of divided loyalty.

However, many of our neo-Buddhist respondents belonging to the lower strata showed no signs of agreement with the militant movement, but were rather conservative in the political attitudes. They were concerned in accruing the immediate benefits—food, jobs, housing, by working through rather than against the existing system.
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18. Ibid., p. 200.


22. Ibid.

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29. For the statistical details see Moin Shakir, in Economic and Political Weekly, 9-1, April 20, 1974.
30. e.g. B.D.D. Chawl incident in Bombay reported in Economic and Political Weekly, 9-2, April 20, 1974.
31. For details see Sadhu Arun, in Seminar, May, 1974.
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40. Kharat Shankarrao, "Doundi" (Marathi collection of Short Stories); also see Miller Robert, the "Burden on the Head is Always There", in The Untouchables in Contemporary India, Mahar, M., ed., op.cit., pp. 317-359.


44. Coser Lewis, *Continuities in the study of social conflict*, op. cit., p. 222.

45. Ibid.


47. Ibid.


49. Ibid., pp. 139-183.


