CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the first chapter we have discussed the theoretical framework and the methodology of this study.

It was Simmel, Park and Stonequist who introduced the concept of "Marginal Man". Simmel termed it as the "stranger". Simmel pointed out how stranger lives in intimate association with the world about him but never so completely identifies with it. Robert E. Park observed that the marginal man is an incidental product of a process of acculturation, such as inevitably occurs when people of different cultures and different races come together to carry on a common life.

Stonequist elaborated this concept in his book "The Marginal Man". He said that the individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another, finds himself on the margin of each, but a member of neither. He is a marginal man. Further, he observed that wherever there are cultural transitions and cultural conflicts there are marginal personalities. Such a person is poised in psychological uncertainty between two or more social worlds, reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and
attractions of these worlds.

Stonequist also pointed out that such an individual possesses, as a result of his peculiar structural position, certain characteristics such as divided loyalty, ambivalent attitude, excessive self-consciousness, hypersensitivity, inferiority complex, excessive egocentrism and tendency to 'rationalize' as the compensatory reaction of inferiority complex, etc.

While discussing how a marginal man meets his problem Stonequist observed that he may take the "nationalist role" by identifying with the subordinate group, he may take the "intermediary role" or he may attempt for partial or complete incorporation into the dominant group which may sometimes take the form of "passing". According to Stonequist the "innovating role" and the revolutionary character are the two very important consequences of the structural position of the marginal man. Thorstein Veblen and George Simmel also had pointed out that marginal individuals are likely to be highly motivated to engage in innovating behaviour. The revolutionary character of the marginal man was also stressed by others like Lewis Coser. According to Coser the "Myth of Peasant Revolt" created by an ideologist like Frantz Fanon in his book, "The Wretched of the Earth", had sprung from Fanon's marginal position in his society.

Later on, taking up this issue of the marginal man,
Robert K. Merton pointed out that marginal character of a person emerges due to his "reference group" behaviour. He observed that when an individual orients himself to a non-membership group and does not find acceptance by the group to which he aspires and loses acceptance because of his out-group orientation by the group to which he belongs, he could be recognized as a marginal man poised on the edges of two groups and fully accepted by none of them.

After the discussion of the development of the concept of the "marginal man" in this chapter, we stated that we will be applying this concept as an analytical tool to understand the peculiar position of the neo-Buddhists who quitted their traditional Hindu caste fold and embraced Buddhism, which followed a new way of life. We proposed to study this group of neo-Buddhists as the "Marginal Group".

The methodology which we have used is also discussed in this first chapter. To sum up, it can be said that this study is based on the neo-Buddhists in Poona city, who belonged to the lower economic strata, and for comparison purposes a few neo-Buddhist elites too are studied. These elites were educated and had attained high positions in their fields of activity. In addition to this we also studied the views of the upper castes about the scheduled castes in general and about the neo-Buddhists in particular. To get this "upper-caste-view" two upper castes groups
Brahmin and Maratha were studied.

The second chapter presents the historical background of the neo-Buddhist movement. If one looks at the whole course of the neo-Buddhist movement, it appears, that the main motivation behind it was the emancipation of the so-called untouchables and winning for them the life of equal status which upper castes had denied to them throughout history. Ambedkar made a life-long search for it. To thrust upon the Hindu mind the equal rights of the so-called untouchables he made various efforts. However, his failure evoked in him an intensive feeling of revolt against the Hindu social order and he decided to renounce Hinduism and accept Buddhism. In Buddhism he found the hope as it pro- pounded a new set of values like egalitarianism and universalism which are quite foreign to Hinduism.

In the third chapter we have discussed the socio-economic characteristics of the neo-Buddhist respondents. Our findings about the level of education in the lower strata of neo-Buddhists show that almost half of the population was illiterate or semiliterate. It also shows that higher education was not very common among these respondents, which indicates that in spite of various incentives given to them to go for higher education, they are restricted by their urgent need to start earning as early as possible.

About their occupations we found that majority of the persons were engaged in such jobs which do not give much
higher status in society. Also the findings indicate that the economic position of the whole group was low.

About the type of family, our findings indicate that the nuclear type of family in structure was the dominant pattern, and the average size of family was slight to the higher side i.e. 6.51 persons among the Buddhists of the lower strata.

Among the neo-Buddhists of the lower strata the findings about the characteristics connected with the act of conversion to Buddhism indicate that almost all the respondents were converted to Buddhism during the years 1956-60, and all the respondents before conversion were Hindu Mahars.

The major points of findings in neo-Buddhist elites groups were as follows:

All of them were highly educated and were engaged in occupations like Medicine, Law, Engineering, Administration and Trade and Commerce. Income level of all of them was quite high than the lower strata. They lived in small family groups. Most of these elites were not formally converted to Buddhism, but they called themselves as Buddhists.

The Fourth chapter discusses the status problem of the lower strata. It shows that the conversion of the Mahars to Buddhism was mainly a status-seeking move, by embracing Buddhism the group aspired to get higher status, but even after the twenty years of conversion the group does not
feel that it has reached its reference point. Our findings indicate that the neo-Buddhist experience a large gap between their conception of themselves and the others' conception about them. This gap is revealed in the difference in their expectations and the reality about the terms of identification used for them, or the treatment given to them by others. On the basis of our findings it seems that the conversion to Buddhism intensified the aspirations for status of this 'up-started' group to a maximum level. After renouncing the Hindu caste fold they developed the feeling that they are no more untouchable Hindus. But they have been realizing that their conversion has not brought about much change in the eyes of the upper group. Such realization experienced and expressed by our respondents reveals the marginal situation they are in.

As the group has visualised the reality that the conversion is not the only way to get the higher status, and as the group is aware of the fact that education, occupation and style of life are the status giving factors in the modern world, the group has been emphasizing the need to seek improvement in their level of education, occupation and behaviour. It is their anticipatory socialization.

Such attempts at anticipatory socialization, or the efforts to create an access to the upper group, were also found in their changed food habits and their present pattern of naming the children. "Passing" was also tried by a few.
Although by the adoption of such means the neo-Buddhists were trying to reduce the differences between them and the upper group, still, it was found, that in certain types of social interactions they wanted to maintain the traditional social distance between them and the other groups. Particularly those relationships which involve personal and close contacts, the respondents preferred to have with their own group members. Their friendship also is found to be mostly confined to their own group or to their status equals. This maintenance of social distance may be due to the feeling of uncertainty of their social position and also due to the pull of the traditional social norms over them, which characterise them as the marginal group.

In the economic sphere of life too, in order to acquire a new identity and to get rid of its former identity to which stigma was attached, the group aspired to move up on the occupational and economic scale.

In the Fifth chapter we have discussed the religious beliefs and the practices of the neo-Buddhists belonging to the lower strata. After their conversion to Buddhism, the neo-Buddhists are expected to reject all aspects of Hinduism, its benefits and practices, the performance of 'samskaras', fasts and festivals, worship of gods and goddesses, visits to Hindu pilgrimage centres; and were expected to accept Buddhist religion, and its ethical
However, our study of a small group of neo-Buddhists reveals that the complete negation of the old has not been still possible for them. Our findings indicate that the present structure of the religious beliefs and practices of the neo-Buddhist group consists of the elements of both the patterns—the traditional Hindu Mahar pattern and the Buddhist pattern. The continuity with the old Hindu pattern was found in performance of certain 'Samskaras', festivals, fasts, worship of gods, visits to temples, the belief in the concept of 'karma' and 're-birth' etc. The change was found in performance of marriage and funeral ceremonies, in adoption of new festivals like the 'Buddha Jayanti', 'Ambedkar Jayanti', in observance of fasts in honour of the Buddha and Ambedkar, in worship of the Buddha and Ambedkar.

As Buddhists, they should negate the belief in the concept of God. As mentioned in this chapter, the earliest Buddhist thought was consistently agnostic, and it had omitted from its world scheme the superhuman and the Divine. However, the deification and worship of the Buddha and Ambedkar reveals their attempts to replace Hindu gods by the new gods.

On the whole, there was no complete rejection of the old and acceptance of the new. The neo-Buddhists were in the process of change. Certain points of confusion and
also of strains and stresses could be noted in their responses which may be inevitable during the transitional phase through which they were passing.

In a stable social structure people know their behavioural patterns and role expectations. But when certain change is induced and when people are in the period of transition, the former patterned behaviour becomes upset. The neo-Buddhists who have renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism, appear to be on the margin of two faiths. Their divided loyalty, uncertainty, confusion and strains and stresses can be explained on the basis of their marginal position.

The sixth chapter deals with the political movement among the neo-Buddhists and the political attitudes of our neo-Buddhist respondents belonging to the lower strata. Here our main thrust was to find out whether there exists political radicalism or political conservatism among the neo-Buddhists.

The steps taken by Ambedkar were clearly radical and separatist in nature. The Republican party, which was established after Ambedkar's death, also had promises of radical politics, but it soon succumbed to political alliances and factionalism. The various compromises made by the leadership with different political parties completely erased the separate identity of the group. This crisis of identity and the weakening of the Republican party led to
frustration among the masses and the elites. At the same time there was a growing awareness about non-effectiveness of the constitutional and legal measures and of their conversion to Buddhism and of education, etc. in bringing about a change in their social existence. The expression of this frustration took two forms. One is the militant movement called the 'Dalit Panther' and the other is the literary movement known as 'Dalit Sahitya', mostly led by the educated young neo-Buddhists. These steps are the peculiar consequences of the marginal position of the group.

However, as our findings show, majority of our respondents belonging to the lower strata were conservatives in their political attitude. We found them having a definite pro-Congress trend, and also a negative attitude or disinterest about the militant movement called Dalit Panthers mostly due to their natural concern for immediate ends like job, food, shelter, security of life, etc.

The seventh chapter discusses the position of the neo-Buddhist elites. Various researchers have pointed out that more educated and well-to-do members of the so-called untouchable castes are more frustrated in Indian society. Stonequist too has noted, while analysing various marginal situations, that it is the advanced and the educated people who are most acutely in the anomalous position of the marginal man.

In our study we have made an attempt to find out in
the case of neo-Buddhist elites whether they have gone out of the marginal stage or whether they have become more marginal.

Our findings indicate that their personal achievements in education and occupation, as well as their acceptance of Buddhism, have influenced to change their own conception of themselves. However, there exists a gap between their conception and the others' conception of their social position. Our enquiry reveals that for many of them neither conversion nor their personal achievements have helped to escape discrimination totally. The disheartening experiences of status incongruence have resulted in tendency of withdrawal in matters like friendship pattern or choice of neighbourhood, etc. In order to escape discrimination 'passing' has also been tried by a few.

As far as their occupational position is concerned, there has been considerable upward mobility among them compared to their fathers' position, and most of the respondents appeared to be contented with their achievement.

Our finding about the religious beliefs and practices of these neo-Buddhist elites show that a few have accepted the change, a few are still continuing with the old beliefs and practices, and a majority are in the midstream of change, who have neither erased the old perspective nor accepted the new totally, thus becoming the marginal man.
Politically there was a large amount of discontentment among many of the respondents. Further, almost all the respondents revealed a definite tendency to fight, and many were in favour of radical steps and even of a militant movement and justified the emergence of 'Dalit Panther'.

The findings as a whole about these neo-Buddhist elites indicate that they have become more marginal mainly due to their awareness of the discrepancy between their cultural achievements and the superior group's prejudices against them.

In the eighth chapter we have presented the "Upper Caste View". A need to bring about a change in the attitudes of the upper castes is always advocated, however, very rarely studies dealing with the problems of the scheduled castes have examined the upper-caste view. More particularly, enquiry about the upper caste attitudes regarding those so-called untouchable castes, which have renounced Hinduism and accepted some other religion as a status-seeking move, has been lacking.

In this study of the neo-Buddhists, after assessing the claim of the neo-Buddhists about their social position, we ascertained the acceptance of that claim by the upper castes. The enquiry about their attitudes towards the principle and practice of equality reveals that these upper caste respondents have accepted the ideology of equality, but when it comes to the operational level, there arises a
gap between the ideal and the real. It also reveals that the conversion to Buddhism of the untouchable caste has not brought about much change in the eyes of the upper castes. They placed the neo-Buddhists on the lowest rung of the status ladder along with the so-called untouchable castes. Also they maintained still the traditional social distance with them along with the so-called untouchable castes. Majority of them felt that conversion has not resulted in a change in neo-Buddhists' cultural pattern.

Some more significant revelations were, first, education and class position had impact on the attitudes of individuals; second, the middle range castes offer more stiff resistance than the other upper castes against the climbing up of the lowest range castes.

However, despite these slight variations in their attitudes, the upper-caste as a whole have not much changed in their attitudes towards the neo-Buddhists than the general customary views regarding the so-called untouchable castes. This information is very significant to ascertain the neo-Buddhist group's position as a marginal group in the society.

CONCLUSIONS

In this enquiry, as mentioned in the first chapter, we had proposed to explore certain points. They were:
(1) Does this group of neo-Buddhists form a marginal group?
(2) If it is a 'marginal group', what are its characteristics?
(3) If it is a 'marginal group' what are the consequences of its marginality?
(4) How do the upper-caste groups look at the neo-Buddhists? What are their views about the neo-Buddhists?

On the basis of our findings we are in a position to answer these queries.

Neo-Buddhism - a status-seeking movement

The historical background of the neo-Buddhist movement indicates that this movement is basically a status-seeking movement. The intention behind the renunciation of Hinduism and the conversion to Buddhism and the adoption of new acceptable way of life was to emancipate themselves and to win equal status.

Untouchables' search for equality, particularly in the case of Mahars of Maharashtra, started mainly since Ambedkar assumed the position of leadership of the group. Prior to that, despite of certain movements led by great social reformers, they largely accepted their lot and lived within the boundaries of their cultural traditions approved by the Hindu religion. Ambedkar created awakening among them about their downtrodden conditions and relative deprivation
in life and aroused in them the spirit of self-respect and self-confidence about the ability to fight. Ambedkar struggled to raise them from their wretched dehumanized conditions to a status of social, political and economic equality with others in Indian society.

Ambedkar made various efforts to win equal status for the so-called untouchables. His early efforts were to socialize them, or to put it in Indian sociological terms, to sanskritize them. He also tried 'satyagraha' for water rights and temple-entry in order to thrust upon the Hindu mind the equal status of the so-called untouchables. When such efforts proved ineffective, he dropped such innovations and concentrated on gaining political power. Of course, his emphasis on need to get education and to live clean and moral life always continued. Thus Ambedkar made various efforts to create an opening for his people into Hindu society on equal footings. He, in fact, thought of reshaping the Hindu social structure by the "annihilation of caste" and by establishing new social levels in it. However, when all these efforts to identify themselves with the dominant group--Hindu upper castes--became futile they decided to renounce Hinduism and to establish their separate existence in politics too by starting their political party.

After India's independence the country began to build in the minds of the so-called untouchables new hopes and
aspirations and offered new promises through propaganda, legislation and constitutional measures. However, soon it was realised that it was difficult to bring about change in India's treatment of the so-called untouchables through such measures too.

As a response to this situation Mahars of Maharashtra embraced Buddhism with the hope that at least after their conversion to Buddhism they would be able to get rid of some of the social evils they were suffering from and claim the higher status in society.

**Marginality in Social Status**

In our study we found that the group of neo-Buddhists after the conversion to Buddhism has reconstructed its conception of itself. Our respondents placed themselves equal to the upper castes group, and higher to the so-called untouchable castes group. The respondents disliked the identificatory terms used for them such as Mahar, Mahar-Boudha, Harijan, etc., as they wanted to discard their caste-linked identity and wanted to achieve the identity which would convey their higher status. They expected the treatment as non-untouchables by others. They felt that they should not be engaged in the occupations to which low status is accorded and to which the stigma is attached. Particularly regarding children's occupational career their aspirations were very high. Thus the neo-Buddhist group had redefined its place and role in society.
and aspired that its reference group should give recognition to such redefinition of its position and accept it on equal footings.

However, as we found, there is a large gap between the ideal and the real for the neo-Buddhists. They themselves have realized this gap. Even after the twenty years of conversion there has not emerged a feeling among the neo-Buddhists that they have achieved status equal to the upper-caste Hindus. By embracing Buddhism the neo-Buddhists sought and claimed higher status, but as yet they do not feel that they have reached their goal.

In fact, after India's constitutional declaration of egalitarian ideology, no caste considers itself lower or inferior to any other castes (though the feeling of superiority to some others continues). But in the case of neo-Buddhists the situation is complicated as the conversion to Buddhism intensified the aspirations for status of this up-started group to a maximum level. After renouncing the Hindu caste fold, they developed the feeling that they are no more untouchable Hindus, and they are equal to any other higher status group. They complain about the treatment given to them by others after conversion because the status of upper caste groups has become the reference point of evaluation for them. Their frustration is more because the conversion brought about a change in their conception of themselves, and in reality they found that in the eyes
of the outer world their conversion means only a change
of label, from Mahar to 'Nav-Boudha', or to 'Mahar-Boudha'.

The neo-Buddhist elites too have realized that there
is a vast gap between their conception and others' conception
of themselves. Their high education and prestigious
occupation have not helped them to get rid of the discrimi-
minating treatment at the hands of the upper caste people.
In fact their frustration is more bitter due to the fact
that they are acutely aware of the discrepancy between
their cultural achievements and their rights as an Indian
citizen on the one hand and the caste Hindu's attitude
towards them on the other. They are more acutely in the
anomalous position due to their realization of the caste
Hindu's fixed conception of what the Mahar is.

The neo-Buddhists—poor and illiterate, as well as
the well-placed and educated—who are affected by such
attitude of the caste Hindus are in a marginal situation.
They have rejected their old system while a new one is yet
to achieve. These individuals in the urban setting come
into social contacts with other groups. The Constitutional
and legal measures, their education and occupation, and
their conversion to Buddhism has brought them out of
'Ghetto', yet they are not free. In marginal situations,
according to Stonequist, the groups are in a relationship
of inequality, whether or not this is openly asserted. The
individuals of the subordinate or minority group whose
social contacts have led them to become partially assimilated and psychologically identified with the dominant group without being fully accepted, are in the marginal situation.

Marginality in Religion

Mahars, before their conversion to Buddhism, were traditionally great believers in Hindu religious and mystical beliefs and practices. Their patterned behaviour got completely upset after their conversion to Buddhism. Now they were expected to discard their Hindu beliefs and practices completely and conform to the new style of life of the Buddhists.

Some other study dealing with the neo-Buddhists suggests that for cultural identity, Buddhists and Buddhism are the reference group for the neo-Buddhists. However, in our opinion, the neo-Buddhists' efforts to shape their cultural behaviour according to Buddhist pattern is not a reference group behaviour, but they are the attempts for social conformity. Merton observes that "social conformity usually denotes conformity to the norms and expectations current in the individual's own membership group." After their conversion to Buddhism, the Buddhist religious group is obviously a membership group for the neo-Buddhists. Therefore, their positive orientation towards Buddhists for the cultural identity is an effort for social conformity.

However, in the period of transition, particularly
when there is no proper guidance in religious matters, as we found, and no proper religious leadership, the lack of unity and harmony in their system is reflected in their dual personality. We found that the neo-Buddhists were on the margin of two faiths neither completely left the old faith, nor fully adopted the new one. Their divided loyalty, ambiguity and strains and stresses can be explained on the basis of their marginal character.

The pull of the old faith over them can be explained by the reason that the religious beliefs and sentiments are too deep rooted to be brushed aside by the decision of the conscious mind. Further, the conversion to Buddhism of masses was not for spiritual ends but for social ends; therefore, destruction of the old faith is rather difficult.

Furthermore, the neo-Buddhists had to transform their faith from image-worship and celebrations of various fasts and festivals and rituals in Hinduism to more abstract concepts in Buddhism. However, the human craving for an ideal or idealised object of love and homage is too strong for the remote aloofness and somewhat cold philosophy of the doctrine. The desire is met and found its satisfaction in the deification of the Buddha and also of Ambedkar.

To-day, in the transitional phase we find the coexistence of the old Hindu beliefs and practices, also the deification of the Buddha and Ambedkar and the adoption of the new to some extent too. Stonequist says, the indi-
vidual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another and finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither is a marginal man. Viewed in this framework, the neo-Buddhist group, which has renounced Hindu faith but has not made satisfactory adjustment to the newly adopted Buddhist faith, and which finds itself on the margin of the two faiths is a marginal group.

**Marginality in the political field**

By the establishment of the Republican Party, Ambedkar wanted to give a new and separate identity to his group. However, 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 is at the core of those things which characterize the marginal man. He is torn between the two courses of action and is unable calmly to take one and leave the other. In the case of the Republican Party of the neo-Buddhists it appears, 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, which 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. Such ambiguity and crisis of identity, which are the characteristics of marginality, have led to the factionalism and the weakening of the Republican Party.

**Marginality in Economic Life**

In the economic sphere of life it appears that the neo-Buddhist elites have largely evolved out of marginality. But the neo-Buddhists belonging to lower strata are in the marginal situation. This group aspires to move up on the occupational and economic scales, but it is still far off from its ideal.

However, the significant fact to be noted is that, as our findings indicate, there exists the feeling of relative deprivation and frustration among the neo-Buddhist elites as well as poor neo-Buddhists. This is mainly due to the fact that they compare their lot with that of their upper-caste class peers. An educated neo-Buddhist elite occupying a top most rank in his field of activity experiences frustration as he can sense the difference between
his and his upper-caste colleague's social position; similarly, an illiterate neo-Buddhist engaged in skilled, semi-skilled or manual labour, feels unhappy over his lot when he finds his social status lower than that of his caste-Hindu colleagues. This indicates that neo-Buddhists—poor as well as well off—positively orient to their upper-caste class peers while evaluating their social status, and as such, the result is the feeling of relative deprivation.

The Upper Caste View

Status involves at least two persons or groups: one to claim it and the other one to accept that claim. Our study of the upper-caste group's attitude towards the neo-Buddhists reveals that the conversion of Mahars to Buddhism has not brought about much change in their attitudes towards them. The upper castes place the neo-Buddhists on the same status level as that of the so-called untouchable caste groups. They want to maintain the similar social distance between them and the neo-Buddhist as they maintain between them and the so-called untouchable castes. Further, the upper castes not only rate the neo-Buddhist as low, but also show resistance to the advancement of the neo-Buddhists, along with other so-called untouchables, by raising objections against Special Privileges. This shows their efforts to protect their interests by keeping the subordinate groups in their place.
as they are threatened by their advances. We find that these upper caste respondents agreed to the principle of equality, but at the operational level there was a gap between the ideal and the real. However, the neo-Buddhists, who are affected by it, look at this difference between professed and practised ideology as hypocrisy.

Even if one looks at the criticism of 'Dalit literature' attempted by the Hindu literary critics it too reveals the prejudiced minds of the Hindu upper caste people, who not only condemn this literature as having a mediocre or even nil literary merit but also condemn its content. According to Stonequist a similar attitude was present among the white Americans towards Negro artists, musicians, novelists, poets, etc. ⁶

Such a fixed conception of the upper castes of the neo-Buddhists, their resistance to their upward mobility and their disapproval about the fight of these people for demands of equality and justice, and their peculiar attitude about the neo-Buddhists that "they are getting out of their place", ascertains the neo-Buddhists' position as the marginal group. This reveals that after conversion to Buddhism though the neo-Buddhists claimed high status, such claims are not accepted by the upper castes.

The Neo-Buddhists--a marginal group

On the whole, our study of neo-Buddhists' attitudes and opinions as well as of the upper caste view reveals
that in Indian society even urban system of stratification is not as open and unbounded system, though some researchers observe that reference group behaviour would occur in it with perhaps no more frustration than that would be met in social class system of the urban West. Acceptance of the egalitarian ideology by the Constitution and the industrial urban way of life in cities gives the impression of openness of the system, and also have been stimulating the aspirations of the suppressed groups to climb up. However, the system is not open to the extent to avoid frustration for the 'up-started' groups and individuals. It is open only to the extent to make the partial assimilation possible. In the impersonal day-to-day life, different groups have to accommodate each other. But, in this accommodation if there is passivity and not willingness, and if the inferior 'up-started' group becomes conscious of this 'constellation of nearness and distance', in its interactions with the dominant group, some tension is bound to arise. As Stonequist observes, in such situations of partial assimilation the individuals of subordinate groups, who psychologically identify with the dominant group without being fully accepted, find themselves in marginal position. We have found in our study that conversion to Buddhism and even the cultural advancement of some sections among them have not brought about a change in their evaluation by the upper castes. This indicates
that neo-Buddhists form a marginal group. Such a situation has placed them simultaneously between two looking glasses, each presenting a sharply different image of themselves. The clash in the images has given rise to a mental conflict and dual self-consciousness. They have the split mental make-up full of contradictions. They harbour resentment against the upper castes for the real (and imagined) discrimination, yet they crave for the good things of life which the upper caste Hindus enjoy and they also try to emulate them. Similarly, on the one hand they claim their status as equal to the upper castes, on the other hand, they indicate the withdrawing tendency as far as certain social relationships are concerned, like friendship pattern, choice of neighbourhood, choice of marital mate, etc. The contradiction is also observed in their peculiar behaviour to get status. They want to maintain their Buddhist identity, while in order to get the Special Privileges they try to maintain their scheduled caste identity.

Their crisis of identity and divided loyalty is also revealed in religious matters. The co-existing pull of two faiths and the emergence of strains and stresses thereby is found in this group.

The ambiguity and crisis of identity is also found in the political attitudes of not only illiterate masses but also of the leaders.
The marginal situation of the neo-Buddhists also seems to have produced in them self-consciousness and inferiority complex. These are the characteristics of the marginal man.\textsuperscript{12} About the incidents of discrimination which the respondents cited, it is difficult to diagnose whether or not the other party had any intention of discrimination and antagonism. It is likely that due to their self-consciousness and inferiority complex they have found malice where none was intended.\textsuperscript{13}

Even their protest against the term of identification 'Nav-Boudha' (neo-Buddhist) may be out of their inferiority complex. They feel that this term is used by the upper-caste group in an effort to make them feel inferior. However, it is likely that inferiority complex is in them and not in the term. The term only evokes what is already there. Stonequist too has observed such instances in marginal situations.\textsuperscript{14}

The inferiority complex has also led to certain other consequences like tendency of withdrawal\textsuperscript{15} as we have observed earlier in their friendship pattern, choice of neighbourhood, choice of marital mates, etc.

As a compensation to the inferiority complex a superiority complex\textsuperscript{16} appears to have developed in them. Even some illiterate respondents quoted Ambedkar's explanation of who were the untouchables.\textsuperscript{17} They observed proudly that the untouchables were the Buddhists, and the
Buddhists were superior to the Hindus as Hindus were originally cow-killers, though now cow-killing and eating its meat is anti-Hindu.

Some neo-Buddhist writers and poets too try to point to their glorious past. Such efforts 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.

Out of inferiority complex one more compensatory reaction seems to have emerged i.e., a tendency to attribute a failure through personal defect to the discrimination due to caste prejudice. It is likely that while complaining about their failures in examinations, or in getting jobs or promotions, etc., they may be finding their caste background a convenient scapegoat. However, as Stonequist observes, correct diagnosis in such situations is difficult since prejudice is frequent enough to make the individual's plaints fair ones.

According to Stonequist, due to his in-between situation, the marginal man may become an acute and able critic of the dominant group. If one looks at the 'Dalit Literature' and the Dalit Panther leaders' provoking talks in certain meetings, it becomes obvious how

* e.g. at the Annual Convention of 'Marathi Sahitya Sammelan' (Conference of Marathi writers) held at Poona

continued....
these men have skillfully noted the contradictions and the hypocracies of the dominant castes. It appears that when they become conscious of the gap between the dominant group's moral pretensions and its actual achievements they become restless. The roles of the radical and revolutionary are, therefore, natural ones to take.

**The Consequences of marginality**

The peculiar structural position of the neo-Buddhist group has given rise to two kinds of consequences—the militant movement called 'Dalit Panther' and the literary movement called 'Dalit Sahitya'. In these two movements one finds the outlet of the utter frustration, discontent of the neo-Buddhists. The consciousness of their plight has given rise to radical and rebellious attitudes among these people.

The Dalit Panthers, through the revolutionary approach, want to thrust upon the dominant group the redefinition of their social position. Even their recent agitation for re-naming the Marathwada University after Dr. B. R. Ambedkar can be viewed as an attempt to raise their social position. In order to climb up, the low castes adopt certain values.

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* in 1977, Marathi writers protested against suspension of right of expression during the period of emergency declared by Indira Gandhi's Government. Dalit Panther Leaders, on the same platform raised the point and criticized them for not extending the same democratic rights to the untouchables while fighting to make India safe for democracy.
of the higher castes. Richard Lambert adds to the usual list of such values, like cleanliness, literacy, economic and political power, one more value, viz., the value of sharing in and contributing to the mainstream of cultural accomplishments. The neo-Buddhists are attempting to claim such achievement through Ambedkar as a national figure with whom they identify themselves.

The radical thoughts and the militant activities of the Dalit Panthers have their genesis in the marginal character of the neo-Buddhists. Stonequist observes that the marginality is the root cause of the revolutionary character of the marginal man. Lewis Coser too observes the revolutionary impulse as a consequence of marginal character of an ideologist like Frantz Fanon.

"Dalit Sahitya" is another consequence of the marginal situation of the neo-Buddhists. If one takes a cursory glance at the various themes in the Dalit literature, it appears that these literary men are making efforts to meet the challenging crisis situation. In their efforts to evolve the best adjustment, some through their writings, express a revolutionary approach, some advocate the importance of humanitarian values and some try to point to the situation in which they excel by eulogizing the historical past. All of them aim to get recognition to their redefined situation, but their approaches to this end differ. These different approaches indicate the
differences in their personality traits rooted in their marginal character.

Lewis Coser observes that if certain groups within a social system feel relatively deprived in power, wealth and status, and if there exists no institutionalised provisions for expression of such discontents, then the expressions of their frustration may be limited to innovations or they may take the form of complete revolution. Stonequist too has observed that the 'innovating role' may be one very important consequence of the structural position of the marginal man. Thorstein Veblen and Georg Simmel also have pointed out that marginal individuals are very likely to be motivated to engage in innovating behaviour.

In the case of neo-Buddhists, innovations of scientific nature are not found because of negligence and suppression of this group for centuries together. However, Dalit literature can be viewed as a kind of innovating activity because their literary activity is a part of the process of evolving a new socio-cultural identity for the group. These innovating means may be the instruments of these writers for the general emancipation struggle of the neo-Buddhists.

However, as the facts stand, both these movements—the militant movement and the literary movement—are led by the young educated neo-Buddhists. The poor neo-
Buddhist masses though were not in favour of withdrawal, also were not in favour of adopting radical steps in the form of a militant movement. On the contrary, we found the existence of a rather conservative political attitude, strengthening of the non-radical pre-Congress trend, among these poor neo-Buddhists. Some prominent neo-Buddhist leaders too have completely merged their political affiliation with the Congress. Even the Republican Party's alliance with Indira Congress appears to be gaining strength. Eleanor Zelliot had predicted that "thirty years of anti-Congress teaching would make it difficult for the Republican Party to co-operate closely with Congress." But the present situation, to the surprise of all, seems to be different.

The important reason, according to us, for the development of the pre-Congress tendency among the neo-Buddhists is that such marginal groups like neo-Buddhists would think of immediate advantages. The Congress Party, though not very radical, its conservatism is moderate enough to cater to the needs of the oppressed groups and minorities. It is also a dominant party in the country. Therefore, siding with such party seems to be of advantage to such marginal groups.

* eg. Bhandare, Dadasaheb Rupawate, etc.

** Gavai group of the Republican Party.
Huntington observes that marginal slum-dwellers may have conservative attitudes due to their natural concern for immediate benefits which can only be secured by working through rather than against the existing system. Therefore, as Huntington observes, marginals like slum-dwelling neo-Buddhists may sometimes erupt into riots and political violence, however, they are not the stuff out of which revolution is made.

The neo-Buddhist group has realized that conversion is not the only way to claim high status. It is also aware of the fact that education, occupation, and style of life are the status giving factors in the modern world. Therefore, the group is making efforts to seek improvement in these spheres to create an access to the higher status group. In such efforts the neo-Buddhists are emphasizing their need of the Constitutional Privileges which are given to the Scheduled Castes. Such a tendency is generally explained as "opportunism". However, according to us, their poverty, the associated lack of opportunity and the co-existence of general cultural emphasis on higher education, prestigious occupation and higher style of life have made them demand the Special Privileges. As Merton says, social structure exerts pressure upon individuals for particular mode of behaviour.

With the same intention of improving their status the neo-Buddhists have brought about certain changes in
the style of life too. Their present pattern of naming children and adoption of the food habits of the upper castes indicate such efforts on their part. 'Passing' is also tried by a few.

To some individuals the marginal situation has become a challenge. It has brought about greater mental activity as a compensation for a questionable status. Some of them have begun to produce literary works in order to prove their eminence and co-partnership in all fields of life. Some have developed aspirations to reach the topmost ranks, in spite of all the difficulties in their fields of activity. Some are busy in politics and some others show inclination to carry militant activities.

What can be the 'Best' Adjustment for the Neo-Buddhists

What is the 'best' adjustment for the marginals like neo-Buddhists? Stonequist thinks that no categorical answer can be given as it depends on the nature of the situation and the traits of the individual.33

In the situation of the neo-Buddhists it can be said that adjustment is a matter of slow evolution and it is also a two-way process. On the one hand there is a need for the spread of higher education, occupation and style of life (which includes behavioural pattern) among the majority of the neo-Buddhists, and on the other there is need on the part of the upper castes to develop democratic and humanitarian sentiments and the will to practice them.
The striving upward of this oppressed group is in fact a healthy reaction which has led to increased self-respect and which may eventually force recognition and respect from the upper group. However, till the time such recognition is achieved, during the transitional phase, due to the frustrating experiences if these individuals adopt bitter fanatical radicalism, it may not only accentuate the dominant group's resentment, but also by doing so these individuals themselves may not achieve a genuine harmony of inner attitude and sentiment, but they may merely release their hatreds on the outgroup.
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19. Ibid., p. 152.
20. Ibid., pp. 154-55.
24. Ibid., p. 31.
26. Veblen Thorstein, Quoted in Coser Lewis, op.cit., p.129.
31. The idea is borrowed from Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, op.cit., p. 201.
32. Merton, R.K., Social Theory and Social Structure, op.cit.