In this study I have analysed the relationship between ethnic identity and the consequent social mobility with reference to the Buddhists in Pune. I have specifically investigated how conversion to Buddhism and assertion of a new ethnic identity contributed to social mobility of the Buddhists. In order to get empirical evidences of the relationship between ethnic identity and social mobility of the Buddhists in Pune, research questions, mentioned in Chapter I, were explored using the concepts "Ethnic Identity" and "Social Mobility".

I sought to answer these questions in accordance with the conceptual model of relationship between ethnic identity and social mobility set out in Chapter I. I have focused attention on socio-cultural change among the Buddhists as a result of conversion to Buddhism.

In the present investigation I conclude that the maintenance of ethnic identity has become a strong basis for social mobility of the Buddhists in Pune. Assertion of a new identity contributed to lessening of the social disabilities, dis-privileges and oppression experienced by the Mahars in the Indian Social system and led to certain upward social mobility.

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To support the above conclusions, some of the important findings showing the relationship between ethnic identity and the consequent social mobility with reference to the Buddhists in Pune, are given below.

The Buddhists under study, irrespective of their level of education, occupation, income, and age, maintain their Buddhist identity very strongly. They adhere to their Buddhist culture and display their cultural identity through cultural symbols. The important way of maintaining a new identity is to adhere and propagate the doctrine of Buddhism. At the same time they have also rejected Hinduism and are alienated from Hinduism. It has created a strong sense of belonging to Buddhism among the Buddhists.

Dr. Ambedkar established a new identity for the Mahars based on a total rejection of Hinduism and culture of the oppressors. They embraced Buddhism as it is based on egalitarian values and gave the message of new identity. Similarly, in Tamilnadu, Ramaswamy Naicker, established a new identity for the Dravida Kazhagam by rejecting the Brahmanical Aryan religion, culture and language and adopting the Dravidian religion, language and culture. Patwardhan (1973), Z Elliot (1992), and Gokhale (1993), stated that the Mahars established a new identity by totally abandoning, and rejecting Hinduism, and by embracing and practicing Buddhism.
The Buddhists have a strong sense of 'we' feeling and sense of community and solidarity. They express their feelings of oneness through living together in segregated localities within Pune city and demonstrate affectionate feelings about their own community members. Many Buddhists prefer to have friends belonging to their own community. They strengthen and maintain their identity through strict rules of endogamy. Nair (1978) demonstrated that residential segregation is an important factor that contributed to maintenance of ethnic identity. Shastree (1981) stated that the Buddhists stay in a cluster and prefer friends of their own community. Patwardhan (1973) stated that the Mahars conversion to Buddhism gave them a new definite identity as a group and this new group identity, and unity, is maintained through endogamy.

The Buddhists' most important way of maintaining the new identity is to express devotion, faith, love, respect and great esteem towards Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Being loyal and faithful to Dr. Ambedkar, they strongly maintain their identity given by him. This finding is in conformity with Patwardhan (1973), Gokhale (1993), and Zelliot (1992) who stated that the Buddhists express their supreme devotion to Dr. Ambedkar by accepting, adopting, practicing, celebrating their new historical identity.

The Buddhists under study maintain their identity strongly because they feel that the new identity has given
them a number of advantages. They have gained a sense of self respect, esteem, dignity, pride, confidence, new values and approaches, humanity, equality and a new nomenclature. This has created self awareness, educational awareness, revolutionary and political consciousness among them. They feel that their levels of education, occupation, and income have increased. In group their socio-economic status has been raised. They said that they became firm about their ideas. They also learned to think scientifically, logically and rationally. According to them maintaining the new identity implies conceptual change, a change in one's mental make-up, a change in one's outlook, and was brought about by the rejection of caste and untouchability. The respondents felt that all the above discussed things contributed towards the betterment and progress of their community. Patwardhan (1973), Kamble (1983), Mathew (1986), Jogdand (1991), Zelliot (1992) and Gukhale (1993) have also observed that the new ethnic identity has instilled a sense of pride, dignity, self respect and esteem among the Mahars. It has given new socio-cultural symbols, values and approaches, and created awareness, political and revolutionary consciousness, within the Mahar Community. They experienced a sense of psychological freedom from the feeling of inferiority and being a polluted person, and felt released from the oppression and cruelty of the caste Hindus. They started writing on humiliating and debased condition of their life
and the dalit literature emerged. This again, helped to sharpen their consciousness. M.S.A. Rao (1979) stated that the Backward Class Movement, such as Izhavas movement under the leadership of Sri Narayan Guru Swamy, who gave them a new religion (Sri Narayan Dharma Paripalna, S.N.D.P) in Kerla; the Dravida Kazhagam movement under the leadership of Ramaswamy Naiker in Tamil Nadu; the Mahar movement under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar, were self respect movements. They challenged the supremacy and superiority of the upper castes in all fields, such as religious, economic, educational and political fields. They protested against Brahmanic and Hindu orthodoxy and embraced the new religion to establish a new identity, so as to gain self respect, dignity, pride, honour and esteem. Similarly among the Blacks movements, Lincoln (1961) stated that the Black Muslims movement under the leadership of Elijah Mohammad, rejected Christianity to protest against the religion of whites and their supremacy. They embraced Islam and established the new identity which gave them self respect and esteem. Similarly Barcey (1970), Cone (1970), and Allen (1970), have stated that the Blacks movement under the leadership of Marcus Garvey rejected American culture and society. He reinterpreted Christianity, created a new religion - the African Orthodox Church and established a new identity for the Negros and helped them gain self respect and dignity.

The Buddhists have established their own religious and
educational institutions, political parties and voluntary organisations to promote and maintain their ethnic identity, for inculcating importance of education among the masses and to progress in educational, economic and political fields. The Buddhists' religious institution, namely 'Trilokya Bouddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana (TBMSG), played a crucial role in spreading Buddhist ideology and establishing, promoting, maintaining and strengthening the new ethnic identity among the masses. It also conducts different social projects for the welfare of the masses. It provides educational, social, and health facilities to the poor Buddhists. The voluntary organisation, namely 'Samyak Pratisthan also played an important role in simulating the Buddhist culture and promoting and extending educational facilities to the poor Buddhists. Gokhale (1993) has also pointed out the role of Buddhist institutions among Mahars of Maharashtra. She says: On conversion to Buddhism they created their own set of institutions to change their traditional socio-cultural habits, rites, rituals and practices, in order to spread Buddhism, education and to give economic aid. Several research work in different ethnic groups all over India have highlighted the role of ethnic voluntary organizations in the upward mobility of its members. Bhat's (1984) study of the Waddar of Karnataka demonstrated that the Waddar caste associations and their activities facilitated many opportunities in employment, and in educational and political fields. This helped to promote
their ethnic identity and led to socio-cultural change and brought about social mobility of the Waddars. Kumaran (1984) observed that the ethnic associations have played an important role in bringing about upliftment of the depressed classes, strengthening, and promoting their group identity and solidarity. These associations have given a new life to the community members by providing them educational, and economic facilities, and financial help. These associations not only look after educational and economic progress of the community but also work for eradication of superstitions and blind faith. They also develop confidence among the community members. Singh (1973) stated that there is a new trend of new feeling of self identity among the lower castes which has strengthened their solidarity. Schermerhorn (1970) stated that scheduled castes formed their own political organisations to achieve group mobility through political control, power, and group political activism. It also strengthened their group identification, group authority, group commitment and acquired mobility.

The Buddhist community has contributed to the upliftment of its members. The respondents in my study said that they have some personal responsibilities to work for their community's upliftment. The Buddhists elite act as a reference model for the masses. The Buddhists fulfill their responsibilities in various ways and they contribute to group mobility.
The Buddhists do not maintain strict economic disparity in case of marriages. The emphasis while selecting a mate is on education rather than income level of the families contracting the marriage. This is in tune with the attitudinal preference towards educational upliftment of the community from which the occupational and income mobility are derived. Another reason for ignoring the income differences between the families during marriage alliances is that the economic levels of the Buddhist families were more or less at the lower level. Some who have achieved higher income through higher education are looking for mates who are educated. So that, the family income level would increase. They feel that they all are one, and there is no room for hierarchy in their community. Patwardhan (1973) stated that the Mahars have shown group mobility while chambhars have shown individual mobility.

The Buddhists under study have shown a strong and positive attitude towards education. The respondents attached great importance to education and considered education as one of the most important forces for achieving upward social mobility by building up ideology. The Buddhists have high educational aspiration for their children, and give personal attention to their children's studies. The Buddhists showed very determined, constructive, unwavering attitude towards the education of women from their community. They explained their views by saying that Dr. Ambedkar has told them that progress of the...
community depended on education of the males as well as the females. They are following the way shown by Dr. Ambedkar for the betterment of their women and in general the community.

The Buddhists have shown upward educational and occupational mobility. The rate of literacy is increasing very fast among them. Their educational ambitions are high and they are confident about their academic goals. The Buddhists under study appear to give personal attention to their children's studies and are keen on educating them. They are very hopeful and conscious about their children's career.

The Buddhists have strong, positive, approach towards reservation policy. They not only support the constitutional safeguards but are also taking maximum benefits of other government policies. The Buddhist elite have been most vocal as they have been able to grasp the key issues involved in the implementation of the policy. They feel that as long as caste discrimination prevails in the society, reservation policy is a must, to bring about and promote equality and justice for the downtrodden, depressed and oppressed classes. They feel that a large section from the depressed class is still educationally, economically and socially backward. They do not feel that reservation will bring down the quality and standards of education or employment. They are against certain illegal practices such
as capitation fees, corruption, donation and favouritism, which affects the quality and standard of education and employment. They want the reservation policy to be implemented more strictly by avoiding excuses given by the decision makers and the executives. They also feel that there is no effective implementation of this policy because of the anti-dalit views of the upper castes who control the job market. According to them the bureaucracy should be held responsible for this. There is corruption, official apathy and delay, and lack of information and guidance in implementing the policy.

However, they feel that reservation is not a permanent solution but it is a good remedy against discrimination and a safeguard to provide equal opportunity to all.

In addition to the reservation policy, the Buddhists have recommended several measures to bring about equality and eradicate casteism. They are: (i) Necessity to give importance to the individuals than to his caste (ii) Should increase industrialization (iii) To encourage hypergamy marriage (iv) To encourage Inter-caste marriages. (v) An appropriate economic policies (vi) Change the mental make up and attitudes of the upper castes.

The Buddhists hope that their motivation, education and government welfare measures will help them to reach Dr. Ambedkar's desired goal.
In addition to higher education and occupation, the Buddhists' identity also played a role in reducing the distance between the Buddhists and the upper castes. The Buddhist identity has helped them in shedding their perceived lower status in caste hierarchy, and acquired a new sense of confidence while dealing with the upper castes. They intermingle with the upper castes freely, frequently and without embarrassment. The upper caste has developed a sense of mutual acceptance and co-operation. There are some transformations taking place in the relationship between the Buddhists and the upper castes. They participate in each other's social, cultural, and religious functions. There is a trend of having friends belonging to the upper castes among the Buddhists and inter-dining takes place more frequently between them.

In the present study, majority of inter-caste marriages are hypogamous. There has been considerable changes in educational and occupational status of the Buddhist community. More young men are acquiring higher education and higher status jobs. The trend seems to be reversing towards hypogamy. The Buddhist elite are aware of that fact that hypogamy predominates over hypergamy in their community. So, they are demanding hypergamous marriages simultaneously with hypogamous marriages. It would appear as if that the Buddhists have not shed 'high caste/low caste' complex. However, view expressed by elite points
towards their concern for the social advancements of the community rather than the caste considerations.

The Buddhists seem to be empowered. They feel that they are on a par with the upper caste. At the same time, they have assessed the upper caste perceived towards them and they feel that it is not reciprocated. Such change has not really occurred in the upper castes. Only in the case of people who acquired higher education and occupation say that the Buddhists are comparable. Majority of them consider the Buddhists as educationally and economically improving community but lower as compared to the upper castes. There is inconsistency between the Buddhist's own perception of their status in the society and status perceived by the upper castes as assessed by the Buddhists.

The upper-caste use the term 'Buddhist' for the identification of the Mahars. A kind of identity is taking place among the upper castes. They say it is better to marry Buddhist than Muslims. Now, the Mahars are recognised as the Buddhist in the society.

As the Buddhists are improving educationally and economically some of the Buddhists under study showed a positive approach for spatial mobility. Their spatial mobility shows that they follow a pattern similar to other urban population. This has not led to loss of identity. They reinforced their identity through, participating in socio-cultural activities and ethnic associations.
It is demonstrated that the Buddhists are politically active. They participate in politics through participating in political meetings, election campaigns, agitations and in elections. They participate in politics to get the knowledge of political activities, for political awareness, for social and political awakening, to show their unity, firmness, strength and to put their demands in front of the government, and to have their own representatives in the government. The Buddhists also said that Dr. Ambedkar had told them that use of political means, and having political power, would lead to the development of their community. The respondents are confined only to their own political parties such as Republican Party of India. (RPI) and Bahujan Samaj Party. (BSP) In the research localities there are three corporators belonging to RPI who are working for the community. There are ex-MLAs and ex MPs of RPI and present MPs of BSP sometime visit the research localities.

There is a strong impact of urbanization and industrialization on the Buddhists under study. Most of the Buddhists staying in the research localities used important means of mass media such as newspaper, radio, and T.V. for awareness and information on national and international events. They have shown positive approach, and support, for social legislation because they say social laws are made for the people's welfare.

In addition to urbanization and industrialization,
the Buddhists identity played an important role in breaking down the traditional beliefs and values. They show their scientific temper and rational views towards their religious and social life through various ways—for instance, they said that they did not believe in destiny, rebirth, superstitions, ghost, soul and black magic/witchcraft because in Buddhism there is no Ishwar (God), soul and rebirth. Buddha has taught them that whatever perceived by the eye is the only truth. They are aware of the fact that the causes of disease are germs, dirt and not god's curse, blackmagic, or witchcraft. During sickness in the family, they take medical help. This trend can help them in achieving upward social mobility.

It appears that Dr. Ambedkar's leadership, his movement of conversion to Buddhism, maintenance of Buddhist identity, role of the Buddhist institutions, communitys' contribution, maximum use of reservation policy, educational and occupational mobility are helping the Buddhists to achieve their desired goal.