

## **CHAPTER-7**

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During the freedom struggle against the British imperialism, the object of Congress was to gain political freedom in bringing Swaraj for people of India. And in Post-independence India, the Congress Party controlled the political power whose leadership was predominantly high Castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Rajputs, Vaishyas) who had monopolized democratic institutions like Administration, Legislature, Judiciary, Bureaucracy, Ownership of land, Educational institutions and the media. From top to bottom it is controlled by the Caste Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar believes that there is no department which is not dominated by them, and that under Swaraj Government the Untouchables will have no way of escape from the destiny of degradation. Ambedkar was convinced that the Scheduled Castes cannot capture political power by joining the Congress as it is a big organisation and their entry into the Congress will be a mere drop in the ocean. Nevertheless, he was very much pragmatic and wanted his people 'to be a ruling Community' in this country with separate Political Party. For him, it is not enough to be electors only, but it is necessary to be law-maker. Hence, he strived hard to evolve untouchables into a formidable force on the political landscape of India. He located the political power in the people. Political power, to him, is the key to all social progress and the Dalits and Tribals can achieve their salvation by capturing political power and organizing themselves into a third party. However, he understood that the remedy lies in their own hands and therefore they should 'capture the political power', which was their life blood. They should develop into a ruling race and guard their rights; otherwise their rights would remain only on paper.

#### **Political Power is the Key to all Social Progress:**

He exhorted the Untouchables to capture political power, as political power is the key that can open all locks and doors in the society and government. He also warned the Depressed people to be their own guard against any verbal and rosy promises, and urged them to believe only those leaders who had experienced their woes. Dr. Ambedkar, while speaking in Minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table

Conference on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1930, said before the British about the loathsome conditions of the Untouchables... that nobody can remove our grievances as well as we can, and we cannot remove these unless we get political power in our own hands.<sup>1</sup> Addressing on the last day of two-day fifth Conference of the then United Province of Scheduled Castes Federation on April 25, 1948, in Lucknow, Dr. Ambedkar said:

political power is the key to all social progress and the Scheduled Castes can achieve their salvation if they captured this power by organizing themselves into third party and holding the balance of power between the rival political parties-Congress and Socialists. The Scheduled Castes cannot capture political power by joining the Congress.<sup>2</sup>

He further said:

We must have government in which the men in power will give their undivided allegiance to the best interest of the country. We must have the government in which men in power knowing where obedience will end and resistance will begin will no be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for. This role the British government will never be able to play. It is only the government which is of the people, for the people and by the people in other words, it is the Swaraj Government that will make it possible.<sup>3</sup>

In the end he asked them to keep before their eyes the fate of the touchable leaders like Gautam Buddha and Ramanuja who had struggled to better their condition and to remove the stain of Untouchability.<sup>4</sup> Ambedkar also pointed out that political reform must precede social reform and without political power to the Depressed Classes their status would not improve. Though his striving for the good of Depressed Classes alone might be considered selfish, it could be justified in view of the great injustice done to them by the nation hitherto.<sup>5</sup> In the views of Ambedkar, politics is nothing if not realistic. Here is very little in it that is academic. It, therefore, follows that before passing any judgments on any scheme of politics it is essential that one must consider the ground plan. And the ground plan means the social structure of a political community to which the political plane is sought to be applied. Politics in India has become a matter of numbers. It is numbers which give political advantage to one community over another.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Ambedkar remarked:

We must resolve that in a free India of the future we will be a ruling race. We refuse to continue to play a role of subservience or accept a position in which we would be treated as servants, not matters.<sup>7</sup>

Answering to the critics those who asked him to join Congress, he points out, “I regard as more important the freedom of the Scheduled Castes in India, the community which has been the victim of domination and oppression for over 2000 years”.<sup>8</sup> He said clearly “we cannot be part of the Hindu society, but we want to be partners in running the government of this country. We want partition of political rights. Our political rights must be recognised distinctly from those of the Hindus separately”.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, Dr. Ambedkar said, “if you stand by your resolve to extirpate your slavery root and branch and undergo all trials and tribulations for it, then the credit and success of my being able to discharge the onerous task will be yours”.<sup>10</sup> He asserted that the depressed classes must stand on their own feet and fight as best they can for their rights. He asked them to carry on agitation and organise their forces. Power and prestige will come through struggle.<sup>11</sup> While addressing the All India Depressed Classes Conference at Kamptee in 1932, Dr. Ambedkar further said:

It is very necessary that the political reins should come in the hands of Untouchables. For that, all of us should unite and secure a political status. Untouchability in India will not be eradicated so long as the Untouchables do not control the political strings.<sup>12</sup>

Expressing his anguish over the inactiveness of educated Dalit brethren, Babasaheb remarked:

I have not been able to fulfill my life's mission. I wanted to see my people as governing class sharing the political power in terms of equality with other communities. What ever I have been able to achieve is being enjoyed by the educated few, who with their deceitful performance, have proved to be the worthless lot, with no sympathies for their down-trodden brethren. They have surpassed my imagination; they live for themselves and their personal gains. Not one of them is prepared to do social work. They are treading the path of their ruination. I now wanted to divert my attention towards the vast illiterate masses in the villages who continue to suffer and remain almost unchanged economically.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar rightly saw the remedy of the social stigma and other disadvantages in political power. When Dr. Ambedkar got Adult Franchise (Right to vote) for the Untouchables and Bahujans, he said, "Go and write on your walls that you are going to be the rulers of this country. Let all of you bear in mind and also write it on the walls of your houses so that every day you should remember that the aspirations which we cherish, and the cause, which we are having is not a cause of a petty character. It is the biggest cause that we ever cherish in our hearts. That is to see that we are recognised as the Governing Community. If you realise that, you will recognise what tremendous effort we have to make in order to carry it into effect. Mere words will not count; mere resolutions will not count".<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Babasaheb Ambedkar had mentioned that three things are necessary for the success of a party- (a) a leader, (b) a good organisation and, (c) a clear and definite objective and Programme. He expressed that true democracy in India could be safe only in the hands of the Non-Brahmin Party. It was necessary not only for members of the particular communities but also in the interest of democracy in India that the Non-Brahmin Party should rebuild itself and become a power.<sup>15</sup>

### **Dalits, OBCs and Tribals Can Rule India:**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had given advice to the people of the Dalits, Tribals and neglected Other Backward Classes in the country to get together and form a separate political party and organization of their own so that they can protect their self-respect and take their society forward in every respect. The Scheduled Castes cannot capture political power by joining the Congress. It is a big organisation and your entry into the Congress party; we will be a mere drop in the ocean. Congressmen have great pride and we cannot raise ourselves by joining the organisation. You can only increase the strength of your enemies by joining the Congress. To Ambedkar, Congress is a burning house where you cannot be prosperous. You must Organise yourselves into a third party as the Socialists and the Congress do not command an absolute majority, they will come to your feet to beg for your votes and you can then hold the balance of power and dictate your own terms to them for giving your political support. The Scheduled Castes should give up their political aloofness and Co-operate with other Communities in strengthening their newly own freedom. Thus, Dalits, OBCs and Tribals should come forward and form a political Party together.<sup>16</sup>

The Scheduled Castes Federation would like to work in co-operation with the Backward Classes and the Scheduled Tribes. They are more or less in the same position as the Scheduled Caste. These classes have not developed that degree of political consciousness which the Scheduled Castes have by reason of political and social activity of the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) during the last twenty years. The Constitution of free India has made the Backward Classes, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes virtually the masters of the country. The Minority Caste Hindus have made themselves the rulers of the country. The fear of the Scheduled Castes Federation is the lack of political consciousness of the Backward Classes and Scheduled Tribes for which they may fall to pray to the Minority Caste Hindus and continue to be their slaves instead of becoming masters of their own.<sup>17</sup> Dr. Ambedkar urged for the unity between the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes. Though the needs of the two Classes are common but they did not join together. The reason was that the Backward Classes did not like to associate themselves with the Scheduled Castes because they were afraid that such an association will bring themselves down to the level of the Scheduled Castes. There is no point of inter-marriage and inter-dinning between the two classes. They may well remain separate social entities but they should join hands to form a political party to remove their backward condition. The Backward Classes had suffered because of their aloofness. They must forge a united front in order to wrest political power from the higher classes. Joining hands with the Scheduled Castes for a political party may improve their conditions.

As Ambedkar rightly observed, the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes form majority of the population of the country. It is deplorable that the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes are not conscious of their power with the result that higher castes were dominating in the administration. All that is necessary is to organise for the purpose of capturing political power.<sup>18</sup> The system of adult franchise had brought political power to the masses, and the population of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes constitutes more than 80 percent of the total population of the country. If they join hands together as brothers they can be the ruler of the country. Thus, organize yourself under *One Leader, One Party and One Programme*.

However, Ambedkar saw the possibility of advancement for the untouchables through the use of political means to achieve social and economic equality with the highest classes in modern society.<sup>19</sup> With this aim, Babasaheb Ambedkar organized the Independent Labour Party in 1936, on secular lines for protecting the interests of the labour classes. The party was open to labourers of castes but failed to make much impact due to the dominance of Mahars. To Eleanor Zelliot, ‘their political movement failed in its attempts to represent class or labour, and took on much of the nature of a caste association functioning in the political arena’.<sup>20</sup> Later, Dr. Ambedkar formed the Scheduled Caste Federation in 1954, to give more emphasis on the caste politics and secure the interests of the Scheduled Castes. But the poor performance of the party in the first general election 1952 compelled Ambedkar to find out a new political strategy and finally SCF was converted into the Republican Party of India (RPI) in 1956, with the aim to bring together the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes into a single political platform.

### **Post-Ambedkar political scenario and assertive role of Dalits in Indian Politics:**

A very large number of people in India were treated as Untouchables, Unapproachable, and Unseables. Finally they were called as Scheduled Castes. But they have chosen to be called as Dalits. The term “*Dalit*” is a Sanskrit word. It has been derived from the root ‘*Dal*’ which means to crack open, split, broken, scattered, crushed and destroyed. In the Hindu Varna structure the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudras* were called Outcastes, *Pariahs*, *Panchamas*, *Chandals*, *Avarnas*, *Antayajas* or *Dasas* or *Dasyus* and *NamaShudras*. The root of this word Dalit is ‘*Dal*’. The adjective of ‘*Dal*’ is *Dalit*. We find this word ‘*Dal*’ on page 471 of the Oxford Sanskrit Dictionary, new edition, 1964, edited by the world-famous Sanskrit scholar, Sir Monier Williams. Even “*Dalit*” is found in many Indian Languages and even a Dravidian language. The meaning given to “*Dalit*” in the dictionary is: burst, spilt, scattered, dispersed, broken, destroyed, and crushed. All these English words sum up the exact position of the Indian Untouchables and also Tribes.<sup>21</sup> In an 1831 Dictionary the word is defined as ‘ground’ or broken or reduced to pieces generally (Molesworth’s Marathi-English dictionary). It was seemingly first used in the context of Caste oppression by the great nineteenth century Social reformer Jyotiba Phule. It is also said that the term ‘*Dalit*’ was first coined by Dr. Ambedkar to describe the

Scheduled Caste community in an explicitly Caste context. This term became applicable only to members of the Mahar community in Maharashtra. But later it was used to the Scheduled Castes as a whole.<sup>22</sup> Dr. Ambedkar in the beginning referred to describe them as Non-Caste Hindus, the Protestant Hindus, Non-Conformist Hindus, Excluded Castes and Exterior Castes. After 1935, the Government of India grouped them under the names as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In recent times, the term 'Dalit' was used and popularized by the Dalit Panthers—a militant organisation of Untouchable Youths of the early 1970s in Maharashtra. They defined the term with broader connotations and used it for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Neo-Buddhists working class landless poor peasants, women and all those economically exploited.<sup>23</sup> To Dalit leaders, the term 'Dalit' provides a sense of pride and self-assertion. It is essentially a label to help the Dalits to achieve a sense of cultural identity. To be a Dalit, they believe, is no more a shameful thing. "Dalitness" is a source of confrontation and is a matter of appreciating the probability of one's total being.<sup>24</sup>

Though the term Dalit represents a broader social category of poor and downtrodden people, mainly the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes but in day-to-day usage in political discourse, the term is so far mainly confined to Scheduled Castes. Even it has been used obliquely for certain Untouchable Castes like Mahars in Maharashtra, Chamars in Uttar Pradesh etc. But in recent years, the term Dalit has become a nation wide phenomenon and is largely used by all Untouchables irrespective of traditional and parochial caste distinction. It has also become a symbol of their social identity. But contrary to the holistic understanding, the term Dalit is currently used for and by Untouchable Castes all over the country. Even social scientists have started referring to the Dalits and Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes interchangeably.<sup>25</sup> Around 1930s some British officers call Dalits as 'Depressed Classes', 'exterior castes' etc. In 1930, the Indian Statutory Commission defined that in origin, these castes seem to be partly functional comprising those who followed occupations held to be unclean or degrading, such as scavenging, leather working and partly tribal i.e., aboriginal tribes absorbed into Hindu fold and transformed into an imposed caste.<sup>26</sup> In 1928, under the chairmanship of Lord Lythian a committee was constituted for drafting a 'Schedule' for the Depressed classes (Ati Shudras and Shudras) to give them legal rights in every walks of their

life. In this committee Dr. Ambedkar was a member and also represented the depressed classes. Finally all those untouchables groups were listed (i.e., Scheduled) as per the Government of India Act, 1935.<sup>27</sup> However, the 'Depressed Classes' were being called 'Harijan' (Son of God) by Mahatma Gandhi. Actually, Gandhi has borrowed this concept from a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Gujarati Bhakti poet Narsinhia Mehta who coined this term. In fact, the term initially was used only to refer to the children of *Devadasis*, the female temple dancers. The children born out of the union of Devadasis and the priests of the temple are regarded as the son of God. But when Gandhi used the term *harijan* for the people of Depressed Classes it became very popular and wide spread as well.<sup>28</sup> But later the Scheduled Caste elected members of Parliament objected to the term harijan. When the Bahujan Samaj party came to power in UP, Behen Kumari Mayawati strongly attacked the upper caste people for using the term harijan in print and electronics media. Due to severe protest from different quarters of Dalit organisations the Scheduled Castes are being called Dalit.

### **Dalit Panthers and Dalit Literature:**

During 1972 a group of educated Buddhist Ambedkarite Marathi youths initiated Dalit movements and they formed an organisation called '*Dalit Panthers*'. With a lot of fanfare, fiery speeches and overt militancy the Panthers came to the forefront of the Ambedkarite public and almost won their hearts. The majority leaders of this organisation were writers and they are considered to be the backbone of present *Dalit Sahitya* (Literatures of the oppressed) in Maharashtra. The Panthers offered a challenge to unite to the politicians in Ambedkar's movement and attempted to counter violence against Untouchables in the village. In the late 1980s, the united power of the Dalit Panthers is much reduced by splits, but local efforts continue and the literary movement which accompanied the rise of the Panthers is still blooming. Ramdas Athvale of Bombay and Gangadhar Gade of Aurangbad lead an important faction of the Panthers. Jogendra Kavade of Nagpur speaks for unity among Dalits and Muslims. Arun Kamble of Bombay, a professor of Marathi, a dynamic speaker, and a critic of the Ramayan as an anti-Dalit and anti-women narrative, has brought his following into alliance with the Socialists (now in the Janata Party). Bhai Sangari leads a faction of the Dalit Panthers in Bombay in alliance with one of the founders, Namdeo Dhasal, still a formidable force as a recognized innovative poet. Raja Dhale, co-founder with Dhasal of the Panthers, has established a group called Mass

Movement, and continues his artistic efforts and his translation of the Buddhist text, the Dhammapada.<sup>29</sup> However, the Panthers condemn and discard the dominant culture and tried to build an alternative socio-cultural identity for the oppressed classes. The Dalit Panthers through their original literature such as poems, stories, and plays protested against the Hindu religion and ethics. Initially Dalit Panthers activities were confined mainly in the urban areas of Maharashtra and later it has spread to Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and UP.

Dalit literature reveals about the anxieties and uneasiness of socio-economic life space of Dalits, their cultural landscape and the contradictions they face at every step.<sup>30</sup> Dalit literature mainly highlights the importance of justice, equality, self-respect and dignity among common men. It enlightens the exploited and depressed masses against values and practices of inhumanity and degradation, of indignity and caste-based hierarchies in the society. Dalit literature stands for change and socio-cultural transformation, a change that will enrich the life of ordinary Dalits socially, economically and culturally. They value and plead for good education, responsive parenthood, a helpful neighborhood, sensitive leadership, and a relatively non-hierarchical community life.<sup>31</sup> Dalit literature not only strives to encompass the life of Dalits as a particular caste groups like Mahar, Chama, Mang, Dhor, Berad, Kaikadi, etc. but also include all the socio- culturally marginalised and suppressed Tribes, Backward Classes and Minorities.<sup>32</sup> Analyzing Ambedkar and cultural movement in Maharashtra Gopal Guru observes, 'the cultural literary activities derived their intellectual inputs from Ambedkar when they borrowed their forms from similar emancipatory traditions of Kabir and Bhakti, particularly Warkari tradition... the Dalit cultural initiative before 1970 had the promise and potential to move away from the familiar to the universal.'<sup>33</sup> Undeniably, the awareness writings on social, political and cultural issues by the Dalit writers such as Gaikward, Daya Pawar, Laxman Mane, Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle, S.K.Limbale, Babuao Bagul, Keshav Meshram, Raosaheb Kasbe, Annabhu Sathe, Bandhu Madhav, Yeshwant Manoha, and Narayan Surve etc in the form of poetry, essays, drama, biography, autobiography, and short stories have played a significant role in bring assertiveness among Dalits.<sup>34</sup>

With the spread of Dalit movement and awareness a host of Dalit literature has emerged in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka,

Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and in more recently in Orissa and West Bengal. In Bhubaneswar of Orissa NISWASS translating the original writings and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar into Oriya language and also through its Oriya paper spread the messages of Ambedkar. From Bhubaneswar another Oriya monthly, "Times of Mulnivasi" has been published by Abhiram Mallik which exposes the atrocities, humiliation and torture committed against Dalits. In Kolkata the 'Banlga Dalit Sahitya Sanstha', also published collective literary works called 'Chaturtha Duniya'.

### **The Republican Party of India:**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, to save his people from the quagmire of *Poona Pact* politics, dissolved the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) and prepared a Constitution for a new mass-based Political Party which he intended to name as Republican Party of India which would serve as a potential opposition in the democratic politics of this country. In this regard he had consulted with leaders of different Castes and communities, but unfortunately he breathed his last, on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1956, before the declaration of the Party. Hence the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar formed the Republican Party of India (RPI) in September 1957, and the party gained little success by winning 11 Lok Sabha seats. There were no spectacular achievements of RPI except the huge agitation of Landless labour under the leadership of Dadasaheb Gaikwad in 1964 in Maharashtra. But instead of getting political mileage out of it, the downfall of RPI was fast accelerated by its leaders.<sup>35</sup>

After the formation of the RPI, the first major leader of the party to join Congress, in 1965, was R.D. Bandhare, the leader of the party's Bombay branch, who ignored Gaekwad's leadership and had long suggested that the RPI should merge with Congress. In Uttar Pradesh, B.P. Maurya, the main leader of the RPI in the region, crossed over to Congress after the collapse of the RPI in the state elections of 1969. In exchange, he was rewarded with a ministerial post in the government of Indira Gandhi.

This was only the first of many such splits. Another occurred in 1969 when Khobragade formed his own party after R.S. Gavai had been chosen over Khobragade as RPI (Gaekwad) candidate for the Upper House of Maharashtra. Gavai succeeded Gaekwad a short while later. Finally, Ambedkar's son, Bhaiyyasaheb, anxious to cash in on his name despite his lack of organizational skills,

created his own party. Thus by the early 1970s there were four RPI factions, led by Gavai, Kamble, Khobragade and Bhaiyyasaheb Ambedkar respectively. Their competition largely explains the party's electoral decline. In 1967 the two RPI won only 2.48 per cent of valid votes at the national level and only 5 MLA seats, all located in Maharashtra. In 1971, the four RPI factions regained one seat in the Lok Sabha but managed to get elected only three MLAs in Maharashtra.<sup>36</sup> From 1980 till the mid-1990s, no offshoot or faction of the RPI gain a single seat; Dalit party politics seemed to be dying. However, the grandson of Dr. Ambedkar, Prakash Ambedkar, who took over from his father, who died in 1978, tried hard to reunite the various political heirs of the RPI, the number of which continued to increase. For instance Ramdas Athavale had seceded from the RPI (Ambedkar) and eventually joined Congress. In February 1996, different groups converged under the aegis of Prakash Ambedkar and opted for a loose organizational structure with a collective leadership. During the general elections organized three months later, the party joined hands with the Janata Dal in order to form a third force in Maharashtra-between Congress and the Hindu nationalists (the Shiv Sena and the BJP)-but it did not gain a single seat. Two years later, however, the efforts of Prakash began to bear fruit: at the 12th General election, the RPI gained four seats-all in non-reserved Constituencies-due to its alliance with Congress and the Samajwadi Party, an organisation born of the split in the Janata Dal. In this manner the strategy of alliance with socialist forces which Bheem Rao Ambedkar had initiated forty-five years earlier had at last found its reward. The RPI, however, remained a regional force, confined to Maharashtra. In 1999 political recidivism drew it back to its past mistakes, to faction fighting. Soon, there were there Dalit parties again. One was led by Athavale, who allied with Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party; another one was led by Prakash Ambedkar, who remained associated with Congress (I); and a third, with R.S. Gavai at the helm, remained a separate group.<sup>37</sup> Thus in 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election 1999, the factions emanating from the RPI retained no more than a single seat. The same result was repeated in the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election 2004, when the RPI (A) of Athavale, a component of the Congress-led alliance, could only win one seat.

Undeniably, the RPI that BabaSaheb Ambedkar mooted finally became the party of only Mahars in Maharashtra. In Ambedkar's vision, the RPI was to become a national party representing depressed Classes of this country. But Mahars in

Maharashtra looked inwards to their caste and sub-castes. As the years went by the splits in RPI became a regular phenomenon. It was senseless ego and selfishness of politician that split the party. Even the strong leadership of RPI was reduced to petty politicians on sub- castes lines. With faction the party not only lost its seats but also lost elephant as Party symbol. After Elephant they got the rising son. They lost that also. BabaSaheb's Mahar followers have not given up Caste identity; they even not allow other Untouchables like Mangas, Dhors and Chamars to be with their side virtually causing the downfall of RPI in Maharashtra.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, after the untimely demise of Dr.Ambedkar his followers split the party on the ground of personal ego. Ambedkar's dream to make it a national political party to liberate the depressed classes remains unfulfilled as the party remains confined within different sub-castes of Mahar Community of Maharashtra. However, under the leadership of Dr.Ambedkar the Pan- Indian Dalit movement was widened from protection of civil rights to become the governing class. In Post-Independent India, the assertive Dalit movement at the national level was flourished only under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. His teaching: Educate, Agitate, Organise, gave a new impetus to Dalit assertion. It was Ambedkar who single handedly faced the Hindus and challenged Mr. M.K. Gandhi and the strong Congress Party. He augmented the thirst for political power among powerless Dalits, Backward Classes and the Religious Minorities at the national level. And to empower these oppressed, depressed and exploited sections of the Indian society he formed political parties.

### **Emergence of Bahujan Samajwadi Party:**

Kanshi Ram was born in 1932 as the eldest son of a small farmer of a Sikh (Chamar) Ramdasia family of Khwaspur village in Roper district of Punjab. He was brilliant in his studies and after completing his B.Sc. from Punjab, he joined Survey of India in Dehradun. Later he came to Pune in Maharashtra and joined as a "scientist" with the Explosives Research Development Laboratory as a Class-1 officer. His life took some strange turns after a few yeas and he left his job. His life was perhaps not meant for inventing explosives that would kill innocent human beings. Destiny had handpicked him for a far greater responsibility of "exploding the age old edifice of the inhuman and discriminatory Brahminical social order". A 'mere' scientist at the Explosives Research factory at Kirkee in Poona soon "graduated" to become a

“socio-political scientist” who invented the formidable explosive called “*Bahujan Power*” that was soon to shake the foundations of the Brahminical superstructure of the Indian Society.

While he was serving in that laboratory at Pune, he came to know about the importance of Ambedkar from the Maharashtra leader Mr. Baji Rao Kamble. He read Ambedkar’s great works, ‘*Annihilation of Caste*’ which was published in 1936. It was a speech to be delivered by BabaSaheb at the Annual Conference of Jatpat Todak Mandal of Lahore, Punjab. Similarly, BabaSaheb’s another book, ‘*What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables?*’ These two books of BabaSaheb Ambedkar had a great impact on him and changed his outlook. In addition to that an incident occurred in the work place when a Dalit colleague was terminated from his job over the protest for the cancellation of his leave application to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti. Thus, Kanshi Ram tendered his resignation in 1964 and determined to lay down his life for the service of the Dalit Shoshit Samaj. He took three vows that he would (1) have no family of his own, (2) have no property and (3) shall henceforth have no emotional bond with his parents, relatives until he fulfils the dreams of BabaSaheb Dr. Ambedkar and secure power for the Dalit Bahujans.<sup>39</sup>

Influenced by the ideology of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj, Narayan Guru, and BabaSaheb Dr. Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram determined to carry forward the CARAVAN left behind by Dr. Ambedkar for the well-being of the Dalit Bahujans. He regarded Phule-Ambedkarite movement as a mission having a noble objective of emancipating the suppressed, oppressed, exploited and deprived 85% Bahujans from the thralldom of just 15% Upper Caste megalomaniacs. When Kanshi Ram started the Dalit movement, the Post-Ambedkarite movement was in complete disarray. The existing Ambedkarite movement was misnomers. The Republican Party of India was fractionalized and its leaders are under the control of upper caste party. Kanshi Ram with his keen analytical eye studied closely the malady of the Ambedkarite movement and influenced by the ideology and mission of Ambedkar, he got himself ready to build the new India of BabaSaheb’s dream. Later the miracle of Kanshi Ram gave India to its most powerful Dalit Party (BSP).

In 1971 Kanshi Ram launched the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Minority Communities Employees’ Association’ by applying the strategy initiated by Ambedkar to aggregate all castes and tribes who were victims

of discrimination relating to their social status. His idea of joining hands with the BCs (Backward Classes) and forming a Bahujan Samaj drew inspiration from Ambedkar's conception of an autonomous Dalit movement with a constantly attempted alliance of Dalit and Shudra.<sup>40</sup> But Kanshi Ram added to this social coalition with other inscriptive groups, namely religious minorities (Muslims and Christians). He appointed at the head of the organisation five Vice-Presidents representing each of these five communities. According to him they formed what he termed the *Bahujan Samaj* (society of majority people), a coalition intent to oppose the Alpjan or Savarna, the upper castes. Like Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram considered that Dalits were the most politically aware component of this social coalition-also because he regarded them, as did Ambedkar, as an ethnic group, India's original Autochthons.<sup>41</sup>

As early as 1973 Kanshi Ram and other leaders established All India Backward and Minority Employees Federation (BAMCEF) and a functioning office was established in Delhi in 1976. BAMCEF was re-launched with greater fanfare on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1978, the Anniversary of Ambedkar's death, with claims of two thousands delegates joining a procession to the Boat Club lawns in New Delhi. Kanshi Ram had given clarions call to the educated employees of SC/ ST/ OBC and Minority groups to be self-reliant to achieve the goal through the non-political organisation BAMCEF. Through BAMCEF, Kanshi Ram established a new work of the Dalit educated employees, first in Maharashtra and adjoining areas i.e. Nagpur, Poona, Jabalpur, Bhopal etc. like a maverick he traveled through the nook and corner of the country educating employees to create among them a sense of dedication and devotion for the organisation. He had given slogan, "Pay back to the society in which you are born". And he also exhorted them to contribute the three major factors required for the success of a movement, "*Time, Talent and Money*" which the employees possessed more than any other section of Dalit Bahujan Samaj. Kanshi Ram was a perfect strategist, a perfect organizer and a task master, who worked non-stop and spread the message of BAMCEF and organized approximately 20,000 educated employees throughout the country. The programmes were in the form of conventions, conferences, seminars, Symposia, workshops and cadre-camps. The other programmes including, opening of new BAMCEF offices, formation of brotherhood centers for city slum dwellers, medical aid and Advice Centers, Legal aid and Advice Centers and BAMCEF publications in different languages. For organizing common

masses, slide shows were shown on the life and works of Bahujan icons such as Phule, Shahu, Periyar and Ambedkar. One of the most important programmes organized by the BAMCEF during this period was “Ambedkar Mela on Wheels”. By June 1980 his show was taken to thirty-four destinations of nine states of the North India. Dalits and Backwards were moved by watching and listening to the extent of exploitation and oppression of the Dalits. This programme helped BAMCEF to mobilize other sections of the society, different from the employees.<sup>42</sup>

The objectives of BAMCEF were:-

- (1) To provide hope and help to ones own downtrodden society which has been made to feel as hopeless and helpless through the centuries old tyrannies committed on it by he exploits and oppressors in India.
- (2) To build, lay and strengthen the non-political roots of the oppressed and exploited society in the fields of social, economic, educational, cultural, scientific, trade, commerce and industry which have been completely destroyed by the tyrant class.
- (3) To become a perennial source of inspiration for the oppressed and exploited society by way of developing moral values for self and by exhibiting those values to the society as a model.
- (4) To create capable, committed and genuine leadership.
- (5) To generate, develop and operate direction centers to guide the oppressed and exploited society.
- (6) To develop and provide resources and skills to the society for is amelioration.<sup>43</sup>

Employees of BAMCEF, bound by their Government service rules, could not participate in the agitations needed to awaken the Bahujan masses. Therefore, as a prelude to the formation of a political party, to prepare mass-base for Bahujan political activity, Kanshi Ram began a social organisation and called it Ds-4 (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti-DSSSS or Committee for the struggle of he society of Dalits and the oppressed). The agitational organisation Ds-4(appearing like a chemical formula) was lunched in 1981. Its slogan in Hindi was: *Brahmins, Baniyas and Thakurs chod, baaki sab Ds4* (Leaving aside Brahmins, Baniyas and Thakurs

(Landlords) the rest of the society is Ds-4). The slogan was to tell the common masses about 15% upper castes (*Alpajan*) versus 85% Bahujans (Majority people). It was under this banner that leaders organized many significant programmes to conscientize the Dalit masses about their plight. “Poona Pact Denunciation Programme”, “Miracle of Two Feet and Two Wheels”, “Peoples Parliament”, “Social Action for Equality and self-respect”. Apart from the above, the programme of limited political action was undertaken under the banner of Ds4. Activists were asked to launch agitations on local issues such as removal of wine shops from the slums, protests against atrocities by upper castes and other local issues. Ds4 was to prepare Bahujan Samaj for a planned political action and as such participation of Ds4 in the assembly and municipal elections of Hariyana and Delhi respectively marked the beginning.<sup>44</sup>

Kanshi Ram under the programme of “Miracle of Two Feet and Two Wheels”, started a cycle march on 15h March 1983 despite of his growing age from Delhi to Kashmir and covered a distance of 3000kms within a period of 40 days. During this period the members of the march passed through 53 important centers of the country in seven states telling the masses about their programmes and listening to their grievances. He exhorts them by saying, “remember that Bahujan Samaj is short of means as it is kept poor by Manuvadhis. We don’ have our fast means of traveling so why should we brood over that? We have the cheapest means of traveling at our disposal: the cycle, which we can make a maximum use of.” After covering 3000 kilometers by cycle the rally covered 300 kms, on foot around Delhi.<sup>45</sup> The ground works done by Kanshi Ram through BAMCEF, DS-4 and Media, *The Oppressed Indian*, *Bahujan Times*, *Bahujan Sangathak* (Hindi), *Bahujan Nayak* (Marathi), *Bahujan Sandesh* (Gujarat) etc. gave him ample mass base to launch a full fledged political party. In 1983 Ds4 was used by Kanshi Ram to pave the way for the formation of Bahujan Samaj Party. Generally, the word ‘*Bahujan Samaj*’ traced in Buddhist literature and Lord Buddha used the terminology extensively while advising the monks of his robe to roam about countryside preaching the welfare and good of the ‘*Bahujan*’ (the majority people). Obviously, the message of the Lord was meant for the class of the people who had been subjected to lead a dejected life of gloom inflicted upon them by the Brahminical laws of graded inequality and insult. The word ‘*Bahujan Samaj*’ was also used by Mahatma Jotirao Phule in Maharashtra, and became more popular after the great work of Phule being hailed by Gail Omvedt in

her book, 'Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: the Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India' (from 1873 to 1930). It was only a decade back that the word 'Bahujan Samaj' gained countrywide popularity through the Platform of BAMCEF.<sup>46</sup> As Kanshi Ram was running the Bahujan movement on the ideology of Jotiba Phule, Shahu Maharaj and Baba Saheb Ambedkar he chooses the terminology of his party. Finally, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1984 on Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary. With the formation of BSP, a new chapter in the history of the Bahujan revolution began. In BSP, the historically oppressed and exploited sections of the Indian society got a "political platform" of their own. Kanshi Ram Saheb selected the Party flag and symbol as 'Elephant' and 'Blue Flag'. The election symbol of BSP, the 'Elephant' carries very significant inherent meaning. The BSP symbol represents the large and giant population of the "Bahujan Samaj" like the Elephant. And the "Blue Flag" of the Party represents the soothing blue sky. It shows that the sky does not discriminate anybody on the basis of Caste, creed, rich, poor and treat people with full equality. It also signifies peace and tranquility, which is certainly not available to mankind on his earth planet. That is why the BSP wants to create an atmosphere of justice and peace here on this earth, like the sky. The BSP thereby means that it wants to see a just, humanistic and equality-based social and economic order, which would serve the interest of all the sections of the Society. Considering all these, the BSP had chosen the "Elephant" as its election symbol and "Blue" colour of its Flag.<sup>47</sup> Then the slogan echo 'BSP Ki Kiya Pahchan! Neela Jhanda, Haathi Nishan' (what does this slogan really mean? It is by 'Blue Flag' and 'Elephant' symbol). 'Babasaheb Tera Mission Adhura Kanshi Ram Kareng Pura' (Baba Saheb Ambedkar, your mission remains unfulfilled, Kanshi Ram will complete it). Gradually the people of Bahujan Samaj in general and the activists in particular greet each other with 'Jai Bheem' (victory to Baba Saheb Bheem rao Ambedkar), also very popular saying in Bahujan Samaj. Wherever he goes his followers shouted the slogan: 'Kanshi Ram Saheb Aage Badho Hum Thumare Saath Hain' (Kanshi Ram Saheb march ahead we are (Bahujan Samaj) with you).

However, Gail Omvedt has described its formation as deliberate and not reactive. With this Kanshi Ram gave Dalits, OBCs and Minorities a new nomenclature "Bahujan". This helped in creation of a new identity for these sections, especially for Dalits.<sup>48</sup>

The Bahujan Samaj Party is the only representative party of the Dalits, exploited, and neglected, Backwards and poor people of other communities in the country. The opportunity came handy in 1985 when Parliamentary By- election was to take place at Bijnour Constituency in UP. BSP was just one year old in 1985 and no candidate was available to field him in the election. Kanshi Ram realised that only with the political power the Dalit Shoshit Samaj won't be able to change the existing power structure. Ultimately he asked Mayawati, who was groomed by Kanshi Ram to contest in that election. Mayawati had been working as a teacher in Delhi education department from 1977-1984. During this period she came in contact with Kanshi Ram and his BAMCEF. Her father wanted her to be an I.A.S. officer. But Kanshi Ram convinced her that even after becoming an effective leader such as Chief Minister she would be able to appoint thousands I.A.S officers. For sometime she lived in Delhi BAMCEF office. Later she began to live in a rented room. After the inception of BSP in 1984, Mayawati resigned her job, took a pledge to remain a bachelor for the Bahujan Mission. Kanshi Ram, looking at her leadership qualities constantly gave her encouragement to steer ahead.

When the results of Bijnour by-election were declared Mayawati had polled a whopping 65,000 votes and presto the Manuvadi media was swung into action to find out who the voters were, which caste they belong to and how Mayawati could bag so many votes the very first time. Their Manuwadi analysts found that Chamars, Muslims and OBCs had voted for BSP. Since then there was no looking back for Kanshi Ram. The party's slogan '*Vote Haamara Raj Tumhara, Nahi Chalega Nahi Chalega*' (our vote, your rule will never work, will never work). The slogan of the party worked perfectly. The formula of 15% versus 85% had begun working properly. In 1985 itself; BSP fielded more than 500 candidates in Assembly elections in six states. To counter the anti-reservation stance of the Manuvadis, BSP launched 5 seminars in the mentors and 500 symposia in different parts of the country. In 1985 he had been building pro-reservation front. He said that *Poona Pact* created '*Stooges*' in Backward Classes politics. On the contrary, Reservation for Kanshi Ram was a matter of participation in the deliberations of the country and participation should take place as per the percentage of each Caste group in the population.

Upper-castes (Manuvadis) anti-Mandal stances against the reservation really strengthen his strategy. Kanshi Ram realised that the policy of reservation was the

only means to get social justice to every Caste and Community and therefore he wanted it to be extended to all Castes in the Indian society according to the percentage of their population. BSP gave a slogan: '*jiski jitni sankhya bharati utni uski bagidari*', meaning (participation as per the population percentage) in the entire power structure of the country. Out of nearly 6000 castes in India, Mandal had grouped 3747 Castes as other Backward Castes (OBCs).

In 1986, BSP decided to participate in Haryana Assembly election and Lok Sabha by-elections in two constituencies. The total Assembly seats were 90 and BSP decided to contest them all. Kumari Mayawati, who had become very popular since the Bijnour by election in UP, was the in charge of Haryana State and she had worked untiringly to bring Haryana Backward Class society under the umbrella of BSP. The two years- 1987, 1988 saw a very hectic activity on the BSP front. In the second phase on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1988, on the auspicious occasion of Periyar E.V Ramaswamy's birth anniversary, Social Transformation Movement was launched and to make Bahujan Samaj aware of it five Bicycle Marches were arranged from:-

(1) Kanyakumari to Delhi, 2) Kohima (Nagaland) to Delhi, 3) Kargil (Kashmir) to Delhi, 4) Puri (Orissa) to Delhi, 5) Porbunder (Gujarat) to Delhi. Explaining the significance of the movement Kanshi Ram said that BSP has decided to build massive movement on the Social Transformation and Economic Transformation. Thus, the party undertook five-fold Social Transformation Programmes such as :

- 1) Struggle for Self-respect
- (2) Struggle for Liberation
- (3) Struggle for Equality
- (4) Struggle for Annihilation of Caste and building bridges of Brotherhood (*Bhaichara*) in the broken Society.
- (5) Struggle against Untouchability, injustice, atrocities and terror.

Apart from the above, in 1988 BSP took another agitation for the slum dwellers in the metropolitan cities of India known as: *Bharatiya Sarnarhi Andolan* (Struggle of the Indian Refugees).<sup>49</sup>

But during 1986-1987, the suicidal tendency of splitting the non-political organization BAMCEF was displayed. When the Bahujan movement was trying to reach its pinnacle, these wise men threw a poser and asked, "How can Kanshi Ram lead employees' organization BAMCEF when he is not an employee?" Breaking away from BAMCEF rather he concentrated much more on BSP for its strong foundation and wider spread. The 1989 elections proved very vital for BSP as it emerged 'a challenging power' particularly to the Congress, the old Brahminical party of the country. The perfect strategy and diplomacy of Kanshi Ram made the congress bite the dust in 1989 Parliamentary and Assembly elections. After working hard, he had built 'Bahujan vote bank' for BSP which began yielding results in the 1989 general elections. In this election BSP won three seats of parliament from Phillour (Punjab), Bijnour (UP) and Azamgadh (UP). This apart, 13 Assembly seats were bagged by BSP candidates in Uttar Pradesh. The total votes polled by BSP in this election were 35 lakh and fifteen thousand and the percentage was 9.86%.

Devi Lal of Haryana, the Deputy Prime Minister in V.P Singh government was eager to take credit of Mandal report implementation. Devi Lal contacted Kanshi Ram in this connection. Kanshi Ram pressurized Devi Lal to hold a rally in Delhi and demand for the implementation of the Mandal Commission report immediately. Apprehending the intention of Devi Lal who was trying to become Mandal Hero, V.P Singh hastily declared implementation of Mandal Commission in the Parliament. As a result the V.P Singh government was pulled down by its own ally the BJP.

For the first time in 1991 Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram got elected to the parliament from Itawa Constituency in UP. The BSP tally in 1991 election was two MPs; one from UP and the other from MP, 12 MLAs from UP, one from Madhya Pradesh and one from Haryana. But the Congress could not stop BSP from winning nine Assembly seats and one Parliamentary seat. Consequently, BSP also emerged as an opposition party in Punjab. UP voters had elected BJP to power in UP to build Ram Mandir by demolishing Babri Masjid. On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1992 Babri Masjid was demolished. A highly Unconstitutional and barbarous act was accomplished by the BJP on the day of death of anniversary of the constitution maker Dr. BabaSaheb Ambedkar. It was a huge blow to Ambedkar's secular credential.

In 1993, UP goes to poll but the mandate was against the BJP but UP was heading toward coalition political scenario. Kanshi Ram as a political strategist

realized the changing political scenario of UP, therefore he preferred to go alliance with SP to widen the political base as well as to capture political power. Both SP and BSP entered into alliance to form the government together. BSP bagged 67 seats and its candidates stood second in nearly 50 segments. Mulayam Singh became the Chief Minister and BSP shared power for the first time in 1993. However, the SP-BSP alliance created a vote bank of Dalits, Backwards and Muslims which was very much beneficial to BSP to strengthen its base. In 1993 Assembly election both Janata Dal and BJP received blows of BSP and SP and helplessly Congress and JD had to support BSP-SP government in UP. That time Madhya Pradesh also witnessed positive results for BSP. Mr. Dau Ram Ratnakar, the State President of BSP had done very hard ground works with the help of Kanshi Ram Saheb. As a result 11 MLAs of the party were returned to the Assembly. Gradually BSP spread to Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab. In north India BSP emerged as a strong opponent party with its base Dalit Votes. By 1994 the party had already made inroads into South India. Bidar district of Karnataka was the first in South India to produce an MAL from BSP in 1994.

Kanshi Ram with a great expectation to make Dr. Masood -a Muslim leader, a BSP legislator, had brought him from Aligarh Muslim University and got him elected as MLA on BSP ticket. Here were other Muslim MLAs of BSP who kept complaining about how Masood was playing in the hands of Mulayam Singh; who encouraged corruption and defection of BSP legislators to Samajwadi Party. There appeared a big crack in BSP-SP relationship which worsened within two years. When Kanshi Ram, ultimately asked Mayawati to withdraw support, Mulayam Singh resorted to violent activities and tried to kill Mayawati in the government guest house.

Both the parties, ultimately brought the fall of Mulayam Singh government in UP in June 1995. Kanshi Ram was campaigning all over India to make the BSP a National Party by 1996. His hectic travel deteriorates his health condition and he was hospitalized. Mayawati after receiving the relevant papers went to Lucknow and handed over these papers to the Governor of UP. So on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1995 Mayawati was sworn in as the Chief Minister of UP-the first Dalit lady in India to adorn the post in the biggest state in the country. It opened a new era in Dalit politics of India. Very shortly Kumari Mayawati became a house hold name across India. Among the Bahujan Samaj and political scenario she is very popular as *Behenji*.

Now, Behen Kumari Mayawati was the Chief Minister on the support of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) in Uttar Pradesh, the largest, but one of the most backward states in India. Once again the diplomacy of Kanshi Ram was revealed when he, with the help of just 67 MLAs of BSP, was successful in installing BSP government, though BJP strength was far greater in the Assembly.

Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram often said, “I do not want a Brahminical majority government. I want a crippled government, crippled by coalition because in such conditions only the Bahujan movement could grow.”<sup>50</sup> His straight forward formula was, coalition weakened Brahmanism and strengthened Bahujanism. However, Mayawati ruled UP as per BSP ideology and manifesto. But BJP tried his best to control her as puppet but failed in their hidden agenda. Both Kanshi Ram and Mayawati knew that BJP would pull the BSP government if Mayawati did not obey them. There was no ideological understanding between the two political parties. BSP calls BJP as “Manuvadi Party”. As per the assumption BJP gave her just four and a half months to work as a chief minister. Kanshi Ram always said in different party rallies that he has built the Bahujan Samaj Party with a hope and determination to make it a number one party of India before the end of twentieth century. In his words:

I want to make BSP, the party which is trying to carry ahead the mission of BabaSaheb Ambedkar, the number one party of India, if not a ruling party. This is my dream which I want to realise before the end of twentieth century.<sup>51</sup>

However, Kanshi Ram’s call was ‘*Jatitodo Samajgadho*’. In fact, he learnt it from the past that to annihilate the caste practices and to create a equalitarian society means to unite the numerous castes of Bahujan Samaj on the line of brotherhood what he calls ‘Bhaichara’. Thus, his mission was to unify 6000 castes which are victims by the Brahminical social order. He convinced if all these castes are weld together then BSP would be number one party and the Bahujan Samaj will rule this country on their own strength. Finally, BSP became a national political party in 1996, at that time it was in the eighth rank. After fourteen months, BSP rose from eight places to fourth place. Kanshi Ram addressing to party workers said, “Only Congress, BJP and CPI (M) were ahead of the party. CPI (M) was marginally ahead of us. They got 1 crore 80 lakh votes we got I crore 70 lakh votes. Now we have left behind CPI (M) also”.<sup>52</sup> On 21 March, 1997 Behen Mayawati became Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for the

second time. This time also the fractured mandate in UP compelled the BJP to support Mayawati. This time Mayawati's stint was of six months. Within a very short period Mayawati government started several welfare measures for the Bahujan Samaj. Mayawati's main political focus was to appoint Dalit administrators in different sectors and create 'Ambedkar Villages' for the overall advancement of Dalit community. Her government started a state University in the name of Babasaheb Ambedkar at Agra. She opened another University in the name of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, the father of Indian social revolution, at Bareilly and acquired 200 acres of land for that purpose. Yet another University was started in Kanpur in the name of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, who initiated reservation for the down trodden in service on July 26, 1902 and acquired 200 acres for that University. Finally, BSP government opened Gautam Buddha University at Gautam Buddha Nagar near Delhi and acquired 200 acres of land.<sup>53</sup> Mayawati's popularity across India has become a symbol of Dalit assertion. In 1997 when the country celebrate the 50 years of Independence as Golden Jubilee, but the BSP decided to go to the people of Bahujan Samaj with the objective that how Bahujan Samaj is dependent in independent India? Even after 50 years of independence, our people still work on others lands as landless Labourers. More than ten corer people are living in slums. The people of Bahujan Samaj have no educational, health, electricity and water facilities. Thus Golden jubilee years should be a year of looking back and assessing what we have done to strengthen our freedom and democracy. Therefore, the BSP under the leadership of Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram lunched Jeep rallies from five different corners of India and final meeting was held in Delhi. By organizing rallies and meeting BSP highlighted its achievements for the Bahujan Samaj. In 2002 UP Assembly elections held and Behen Mayawati (*iron lady*) registered herself of Chief Ministership for third time on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2002 with the support of BJP. This time the BJP was a participant in the coalition government. Kanshi Ram told BJP that it would lend support to Mayawati as long as the government was in power. This happened despite the fact that there was BJP government with 21 coalition partners at the centre. Behen Mayawatiji reiterated, "My government has come to power on the slogan of creating a society free of fear, crime and exploitation".<sup>54</sup> She gave justice to the icons of Bahujan Samaj who fought for socio-cultural transformation of the society. She created Parivartan (Transformation) Chowk in the hear of Lucknow where she installed life size statues

of Mahatma Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Periyar Ramaswamy and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The next big leap by Behen Kumari Mayawati was the formation and development of '*Ambedkar Park*' by acquiring 500 acres of land. '*Ambedkar Park*' is a remarkable spot decorated with the statues of the Buddha, Phule, and Ambedkar along with the statues of great Bahujan saints such as Sant Kabir, Ravidas, Narayan Guru and Sant Gadge Maharaj. In the Ambedkar Park Memorial the statues of Bahujan rulers such as Ahilyabai Holkar and Maharaj Passi were also erected. For the educational development of the Bahujan Samaj new educational institutions such as schools, colleges, Universities and academies in the name of great Bahujan personalities such as Buddha, Phule, Ambedkar, Shahu, Savitribai and others were established during the rule of Behen Mayawati. During her rule she also focused the economic change of Bahujans. She initiated '*Dr. Ambedkar Gram Vikas Yojna*' for rural development and brought 1200 villages under this scheme. Her government also distributed agricultural land to the landless people belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In the first phase of this programme 89 thousand landless were selected for distribution.

In the drive to give possession to such people, 28084 beneficiaries were included. Again in a special drive, those rural areas having 1.87 lakh population ownership rights were given to SC/ST population over such areas. Financial help by the government to SC/ST students was taken up seriously and these scholarships were given through banks to 82, 31,347 lakh boys and girls. The target was 87, 23000 lakh. Those SC/ST people, who were below poverty line and who were unable to get proper treatment for serious diseases, 14000 such people were provided an aid of 807.58 lakh rupees. For Muslim pilgrims '*Haj House*' was constructed by Mayawati government at Noida. And 30 lakh minority students were granted scholarships amounting to 1.4 crore rupees. Through the minority development corporation, with the government financial help, 650 occupational units were established. Under the modernization scheme of Arabic/Farsi Madrassas for 2002-03, an amount of 264, 60 lakh was granted. The unaided Madrassas were given a development (nourishment) grant of rupees 5 lakh per annum. For the development of Muslim Waqf Boards a grant of rupees 3 crore was made available during the financial years 2002-03, particularly the

Haj pilgrims were taken special care by providing them all kinds of assistance on behalf of Mayawati government.<sup>55</sup>

Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram traveled the nook and corner of the country to build up BAMCEF and then BSP in different states ; and despite creation of road blocks in BAMCEF mission by the upper caste agents since 1987, the BSP's cart moved successfully particularly in North Indian states such as Jammu Kashmir, Punjab, Hariyana, UP, Uttaranchal, MP and Chattisgarh as well.

The BSP's rise to power in UP can be explained by the implementation of a programme and strategy broadly inspired by Ambedkar's political legacy. Kanshi Ram advocates a pragmatic approach to politics which recall's Ambedkar's. Indeed the BSP's collaboration with the BJP's reminiscent of Ambedkar's collaboration with the British and the Congress. In both cases, the aim of Dalit leaders was to allow scheduled castes to have access to power in order to implement Dalit-oriented politics. Moreover, Kanshi Ram's effort to transform Bahujan Samaj into a political force was parallel with Ambedkar's policy. He also put into practice the same desire (as that of Ambedkar) to widen the base of the party to communities other than Dalits. Kanshi Ram thus tried to defend the interests of OBCs, whom he considered, for example, to be under-represented in the administration and took the necessary measures.<sup>56</sup> The BSP also tried to cater to the needs of the Tribals and Muslims. During the state election of 1996 in Uttar Pradesh, more than 30% of its candidates came from OBC castes, which therefore were better represented than Dalits (29 per cent). In addition 18 per cent of the candidates were Muslims and 17 per cents from the upper castes.<sup>57</sup>

Undeniably, Kumari Mayawati has become the Chief Minister of Utter Pradesh in the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the state. She is the "only women Chief Minister in the country who formed government for three consecutive terms".<sup>58</sup> Due to her able and strong leadership quality she headed three coalition governments without losing the Dalit Bahujan 'Base Votes'. Despite of BSP's inconsistent performance in elections the party has emerged as a strong National political party in the era of coalition political scenario of Indian polity. However, the Party under the leadership of Kanshi Ram and Kumari Mayawati marched ahead with new vigour and vibrancy in UP, Delhi, MP, Chattisghar, Bihar, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal.

## **Post-Kanshi Ram BSP: Bahujan to Sarvajans:**

The founder of Bahujan Samaj Party, the torch-bearer of self-respect and humanitarian movement of the BSP, “Bahujan Nayak” Manyavar Shri Kanshi Ram Ji’s untimely and sad demise on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 brought a huge shock to the people of Bahujan Samaj. Later Behen Kumari Mayawati expressing her concern said that ‘neither the ruling Congress Government of the Centre and Punjab nor the then ruling Samajwadi Party (SP) government of Utter Pradesh declared even a day’s “*National Mourning*”. And the BJP and other parties did not even raise their voice against this despicable act resulting from casteism and prejudices of the Congress and the SP. The people of the Dalit Communities can never forget this’.<sup>59</sup>

During his life time Kanshi Ram ji had declared Kumari Mayawati as his ‘political heir and successor’. That is why on September 18, 2003 she has been given the position of the National President of BSP. However, the social alliance was built up with the basic objective of strengthening the party in the 2007 election. The BSP dramatically altered its traditional and trenchant anti-Brahmin, anti-upper caste political position over the past two years. Behen Mayawati, the President of the party and Satish Chandra Mishra (Brahmin), now the National General Secretary of the party worked hard in bringing the upper caste people to BSP fold and also set up Dalit-Brahmin *Bhaichara* (Dalit-Brahmin brotherhood) Committee across the state. When Mayawati was Chief Minister for third time in 2003, Mr. Satish Chandra Mishra was made Advocate General and given Cabinet minister status. After the government Mr. Mishra was made National General Secretary of the party due to his interest and hard work for the promotion of the party.<sup>60</sup> For the upcoming UP Assembly election BSP chief Behen Kumari Mayawati on March 13, 2007 released the list of party candidates favouring Brahmin-Dalit combination. Of the 403 seats, 139 have been given to upper castes. Brahmins have been field in 86 seats, Thakurs in 38 and Vaishyas in 14 while one seat has been allotted to a Kayasth. OBCs get 110, Dalits 93 and Muslims 61.<sup>61</sup> Finally BSP sweep in the UP Assembly election with the votes of the Brahmins, Banias and Muslims.

In 2007 Assembly election verdict BSP found its own government. On 13<sup>th</sup> May, Mayawati (*Behenji*) sworn in as the Chief Minister of UP for the fourth time; on the principle of ‘*Bahujan to Sarvajan*’. The Dalit-Brahmin *Bhaichara* (Brotherhood) worked perfectly in her favour and BSP emerged to form a single party government in

the State in 17 years with absolute majority of 206 out of the 403 seats of the UP Assembly. In terms of vote share BSP become the first party since 1996 to gain more than 30 per cent (30.46 %) of the vote polled which means a 7.4 per cent swing in Mayawati's favour. In 2002 election BSP polled 23.6 per cent. More BSP Muslims were elected than Brahmins. Only 24 Brahmin BSP candidates won as against 29 Muslims. Brahmins got 86 Assembly tickets (of the 126 upper caste candidates) of which 24 got elected. The success rate worked out of 34%. On the other hand, BSP fielded 61 Muslims of which 29 won which means 50% success. Thus the election results give the clear indication those Muslim masses which were in the side of Mulaym Singh's SP, has gone to the favour of Mayawati.<sup>62</sup> The people's mandate in UP has shown that people have risen above Caste identities to vote against the Mulayam Singh government. It has also shown that the wheel is turning against indecisive verdicts and in favour of single-party majorities, even in states that have in recent year been characterised by deeply fractured polities.<sup>63</sup>

Mayawati had made it clear that the principal focus of the government would be the welfare of the *Sarva Samaj* (entire society) and not particularly Dalit Samaj or Bahujan Samaj. In an interview to Frontline, a day after she took over as Chief Minister Mayawati said, "we are not pursuing a *Bahujan Samaj* agenda now. Now the principal focus will be the welfare of *sarva Samaj*. Of course, my government will have special programmes for uplifting the weaker sections, but at the same time, there will also be a focus on the economically backward section among the upper case communities".<sup>64</sup>

On the basis of social engineering projects- the Dalits, the OBCs, the Brahmins, the Baniyas and the Muslim she formed a rainbow Cabinets. The list of Cabinet Ministers includes eight Dalits, four Brahmins, four members of the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and one each from the Muslim, Baniya, Thakur and Bhumihar communities. The ministers of state with independent charge include 11 Dalits, seven OBC members and four each of the Brahmin, Thakur and Muslim communities.<sup>65</sup>

Behen Kumari Mayawati on the line of "*Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya*" had taken many welfare policies like '*Dr.Ambedkar Gramin Vikash Yojna*' for covering 17100 villages for complete development within five years. Ten thousand corer allocations for concrete (cement) roads connecting to rural areas under, '*Babasaheb Dr.Ambedkar Gram Sabha Samagra Vikash Yojna*'. '*Manyavar Shree*

*Kanshi Ram Sahari Samagra Vikash Yojna*’ a housing project for urban poor families. Increase of Daily wages from rupees 58 to 100 rupees. Pensions for physically challenged and old age pensions has been increased from 150 rupees to 300 rupees. To strengthen the primary education 44 thousands primary teachers has been appointed.<sup>66</sup> Above all ‘*New Positive Reservation initiatives*’ for first time in our country by the BSP Government in Uttar Pradesh giving reservation for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, Religious Minorities and Upper Castes. Reservation of posts for SCs, STs and OBCs in the Public-Private Partnership industry as well as reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in outsourcing works. Moreover, Positive actions for providing reservations to Sarva Samaj in the projects to be established in the Private Sector with the assistance of the state government. Mayawati’s demand to centre to fulfill other reservation demands such as (1) the reservations extended to the Private sectors and other sectors to be inducted in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. (2) Government of India should also amend the Constitution for providing benefits of reservation to the persons of Upper Castes of below poverty line. (3) Adequate additional reservation should be provided to such persons of Scheduled Castes who were converted to Muslims or Christian religion, maintaining the present share of quota. Above the policies, the BSP government have so far been filled 29,576 backlog Posts and recruitment on remaining Posts are in progress.<sup>67</sup> The UP verdict will inform Dalit organisations in other parts of India that this is the era of Dalit Bahujans and it could be useful in states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Rajasthan with hard work and dedication.

### **General Election, 2009(Lok Sabha):**

The success of Bahujan Samaj Party in UP running high in the mind of *Behen Ji* and as early as January 2008, Chief Minister and National President Kumari Mayawati declared that her next target would be the Post of Prime Minister of India. In an interview, she asked: “I am fit to rule the largest state, why cannot I rule the whole country?” Addressing a mammoth rally in Bhubaneswar (Orissa) in 2008, she made it clear that from today our campaign for general election begins and my target would be the Delhi. Speaking to the Frontline, Mr. Ambeth Rajan, Party Spokesperson and Member of Rajya Sabha said, ‘we were the first to finalise candidates, and they have been working systematically as it helped us in the Assembly polls and it will help us now too. Moreover, there has been no depletion of the Dalit-Brahmin unity

and the Sarvajan Hitaya agenda we have advanced and the BSP will come up with an impressive results'.<sup>68</sup> The BSP's appeal to the people of India for the upcoming Lok Sabha election in April- May, 2009, where the party focuses that after 61 years of independence the conditions of Bahujan Samaj (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Castes, Minorities like, Muslims, Christians, Paris and Buddhists) consisting of 85 per cent out of 100 per cent has not substantially developed. Though the 'Third Front', desperately invited her to join in the Front and the Front projected her as 'Prieministrial Candidate' but Behen Mayawati categorically denied the proposal and decided to go alone in the election and also contest election individually in different states. The BSP in its vision to establish an "*Equalitarian Social Order*" in the society by creating brotherhood in the '*Sarva Samaj*' through the humanitarian movement will carry out the campaign throughout the country. The Party decided to extend the social engineering formula across the nation as the Dalit, Brahmin, Bania and Muslims *Bhaichara* turn out to be huge success. The Party in its 'Election Manifesto' highlighted the performances of the government and various policies taken for the Economic and Social Transformation of the '*Sarvajan Hitaya and Sarvajan Sukhaya*' in Uttar Pradesh such as '*Dr.Ambedkar Gram Sabha Development Scheme*' complete development of rural villages within five years. Ten thousand corer allocations for concrete (cement) roads connecting to rural areas under, '*Babasaheb Dr.Ambedkar Gram Sabha Samagr Vikash Yojna*'. '*Manyvar Shri Kanshi Ramji Urban poor Housing Scheme*' a housing project for urban poor families. Land ownership rights to landless poor families and slum dwellers under '*Sarbajan Hitaya Urban Poor Housing Ownership Right Scheme*'. For the development of education, BSP government is giving special Scholarship and free coaching to the students belongs to SCs/ STs/ OBCs/ Minorities specially (Muslims). Students of all categories of Gautam Buddha University of Greater Naioda, pursuing technical education were decided to be sent to Europe for higher studies at government expenditure. The BSP government has taken '*New Positive Reservation initiatives*' for first time in our country giving reservation for Scheduled Cases/ Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, Religious minorities and Upper Castes in the state. The BSP government also determined to provide Reservations of SCs, STs and OBCs in the Public-Private Partnership industry. For the empowerment of women as well as for the socio-economic advancement of women the government has lunched '*Mahamaya Garib Balika Ashrivad Yojana*' for girls those who have born in a BPL families after 15-01-2009,

will be entitled to get ‘one lakh rupees’ after completion of 18 years. And the second programme is ‘*Sabitribai Phule Balika Shikhya Sahayak Yojana*’ aiming to give educational help for girls belongs to BPL families. Under this programme a girl will get 15,000 rupees along with a Ladies Cycle when she will pass the tenth class examination and get admission to eleventh class. And girls reading in twelfth class after passing the eleventh class will get educational help of 10,000 rupees.<sup>69</sup>

Except the above policies of the Mayawati government, she declared that there would be no more injustice and exploitation to Bahujan Samaj if the Party will come to power in the Centre. Now under the Central government flagship programme of ‘National Employment Guarantee Scheme’ people are getting only 100 days employment. But the BSP government will ensure 365 days employment instead of 100 days. And the government also implements ‘*National and International*’ policies keeping in mind the interests of all communities and Castes in India and so also the ‘*Foreign Policy*’ would be determined on this basis. My Party government will not enter into alliance with any country of the world by which my country will have a short term development and enslavement forever. Thus BSP government will ensure capital development of the country in stead of the growth of capitalist sections. The BSP is not against any Caste or ideology. The Bahujan Samaj Party’s Movement is humanitarian movement and it wants to establish an ‘*Equalitarian Social Order*’ breaking down the ‘Unequal Social System of India.’<sup>70</sup>

**Table 1 The position of BSP in UP Assemlly election:-**

Year	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Per cent of votes
1985			2%.
1989			9%.
1991			11%.
1993			20.6%.
1999		67	29%.
2002		98	23.06%
2007		206	30.45%

- Source: Bahujan Samaj Party, Orissa State Unit. Publication: Ambedkar Vichar Chakra(Oriya). Bhubaneswar.

**Table 2 The State-wise position of BSP in Lok Sabha Elections 1998, 1999 2004 and 2009:-**

States	1991998			1999			2004			2009		
	Seats	won	% of vote	Seats	Won	% of vote	Seats	Won	% of vote	Seats	won	% of Vote
UP	85	4	20.90	85	14	22.08	80	19	24.96	80	20	27.42
Punjab	4	-	12.65	3	-	3.84	13	-	7.57	-	-	-
Uttaranchal	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	6.77	-	-	-
MP	35	-	8.70	27	-	5.23	28	-	4.75	-	-	-
Hariyana	3	1	7.68	3	-	1.96	10	-	4.75	-	-	-
Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	4.59	-	-	-
Bihar	3	-	0.53	30	-	0.95	40	-	4.05	-	-	-
Rajasthan	22	-	2.12	16	-	2.76	24	-	3.16	-	-	-
Maharashtra	27	-	0.75	16	-	0.32	47	-	3.06	-	-	-
Delhi	6	-	2.34	3	-	2.75	7	-	2.48	-	-	-
Jharkhand	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	2.38	-	-	-
Chandighar	-	-	-	1	-	2.75	1	-	2.31	-	-	-
J &K	4	-	4.97	2	-	4.84	3	-	2.22	-	-	-
Orissa	8	-	0.32	4	-	0.33	12	-	2.20	-	-	-
Damon	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2.07	-	-	-
HP	-	-	-	1	-	0.31	4	-	1.75	-	-	-
Gujarat	-	-	-	4	-	0.07	20	-	1.48	-	-	-
AP	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	-	1.42	-	-	-
Karnataka	6	-	0.08	6	-	0.65	9	-	1.22	-	-	-
WB	14	-	0.24	19	-	0.24	36	-	0.97	-	-	-
Dadra Habelli	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	0.86	-	-	-
Andaman	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	0.73	-	-	-
Tamilnadu	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	0.58	-	-	-
Pondicheri	1	-	0.63	-	-	-	1	-	0.55	-	-	-
Kerala	7	-	0.13	5	-	0.09	14	-	0.49	-	-	-

- Source: Bahujan Samaj Party, Orissa State Unit. Publication: Ambedkar Vichar Chakra(Oriya). Bhubaneswar.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election 2004, the party had won 19 seats and its vote percentage was around 25 percent. The 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general elections result declared on May 16, 2009 and BSP won 20 Parliamentary seats. In this general election BSP's vote percentage was 27.42, and the party stood runners up about 50 seats along with this BSP emerged as the third biggest party in the country after the Congress and the BJP.<sup>71</sup> Undeniably, BSP is no longer a Dalit party it is now a party of 'Bahujan Samaj' means party of majority sections of the society which includes SCs/STs/OBCs and religious Minority, except this Thakurs and Brahmins has come into its fold. Now the party propagates a new slogan from 'Bahujan' to 'Sarbjajan', and all this happened due to its inclusive welfare policies and hard work.

However, the social transformation movement of the BSP is moving forward under the able and charismatic leadership of Mayawati. Her popularity has taken her to new heights, US's International Journal, **Newsweek** listed Mayawati among eight women leaders worldwide who have reached the top despite all odds. '**Newsweek**' on its April 27, 2009 issue featured her on the cover with the US weekly drawing parallels between her and US President Barack Obama – in their rise to political heights though belonging to the bottom of the social ladder.<sup>72</sup> Within the Caste pyramid, there were the Savarnas (higher castes) and the Avarnas (lower castes); the Melchhas (the outsiders), were added to this list once the Muslims and the British arrived. In the south, and in the Deccan plateau, social reform movement had almost ironed out caste stratification. But the social revolution is still incomplete there. But Aryavarta, the Hindi speaking north- particularly the belt linking Ayodhya, Prayag, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Kashi and Mathura-is where the revolution has taken a most interesting shape because of Mayawati's arrival. In this area, the Caste pyramid is under the absolute control of Savarnas. Mayawati is the change that elite had not anticipated. The Brahminical elite had not anticipated this cog that came after almost 1,200 years of outsider influence. Sociologist M.N.Srinivas asked a fundamental question: what is Hinduism without caste? Mayawati is the answer to that question. She is the leaders of the Chamars, Passis and other lower castes but is smarter enough to understand that Bahujans alone cannot get her votes. Hence, the political transformation targeting Sarvajjan is the need of the day. This shift of power is an unverifiable travesty for India. If you are at the top of the heap for 5,000 years, figure like Mayawati is rude shock. She has used power to create symbols for Dalit

authority. Her parks are challenge for the posterity. Anyone aiming to pull them down will have to face Dalit wrath. So long as media is in the hands of the upper castes, they will continue to project her evil.<sup>73</sup>

However, the rise and success of the Bahujan Samaj Party has given a new impetus to Dalit assertion and has completely changed the face of traditional assertive Dalit movements. The unique character of BSP is that in Independent India, it is the first National Political Party of India founded by a Dalit and also led by Dalit leadership. Along with the Constitutional right to vote Dalits, BSP has given them power to vote<sup>74</sup> A new hope and aspirations has emerged among them as policy-makers and now they are ready to shapes their own destiny. It is the Bahujan Samaj Party that given strength and power to Dalits and Backwards people to be a ruler of this country.

Dr.Ambedkar had put the entire emphasis on the achievement of political power by the vast majority of down-trodden people known as the Depressed Classes, and who go by the name of Dalits in the political circuit of India, and also by the name of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes as a result of the recognition by the state the injustice heaped on them for ages that made them backward. But he was also aware that no progress can be made towards development if people are merely recipients of benefits and cannot participate in the attainment of their lawful rights. He stated in unhesitating voice while referring to the option of depending upon or truing the enlightened self-interests of the Hindu privileged classes and the fraternity of the Hindu proletariat, that from both these classes, any hope of help will be a vain hope. The first section can only be benevolent despots which will be another form of bondage, and the second section may not want to share common advantages with the depressed classes as there is no sense of social solidarity among them.<sup>75</sup> The Dalit movements and the Dalit politics of today also have their starting point from this point of view, and their struggle for political power has taken them to the center stage of Indian politics. Acute discrimination and denial still there-the hardest obstacle is the abject poverty- But equally a desirable norm is recognized. The law recognized that they too are eligible to be equal. The search for new identity is restricted to the political level where as the poor landless agricultural labourers, small farmers, coolies and labourers in urban sectors, petty part-time workers in big and small cities also do not have regular means of substance, and mostly comes from the

Dalits and from considerable sections of the country's poor and destitute population. The Bahujan politics of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati could not procure them anything except an identity that is known by the percentage the countable as electors. As a result, Dalit identity formation movements could not follow a uniform path like Marxism which by its very nature of identifying class consciousness.

It is argued that the recent vandalisation of the statues of Dr. Ambedkar in Maharashtra and elsewhere has sparked off violent protest and revolts by the Dalits leading to police intervention in which many people are killed. These kind of vandalizing incidents have been many in recent years. But what have come out of this act is that violent and widespread revolts and agitations had sparked off in retaliation. These revolts have given specific identity to Dalits establishing their assertion in Indian scene. As compare to this, Ambedkar's Mahada Satyagrah and burning of Manusmriti are not at all violent but peaceful and more in the line of Gandhian movements. Surprisingly, it was so despite the fact, Dr. Ambedkar's revolt was of a new kind in the contemporary Indian political scene. But his legacy in the Dalit assertion in today's politics has become much stronger and more violent the reason may be that Ambedkar's legacy survives as a symbol of achievements to the modern Dalits who are still more marginalised and deprived in the ever growing globalised capitalist economy and deprived of any other cultural ideology that can totally encompass them. Ambedkar's ideology gives them the much needed socio-cultural political space which allows them to breathe, and feel triumphant by the powerful concept of Ambedkarism.

Gail Omvedt has rightly observed that the kind of total transformed that Ambedkar has envisaged in more or less lost in the revolutionary rhetoric of the modern Dalits.<sup>76</sup> V.T. Rajshekar views Dalit no longer demand their equal shares and equal powers in the society, after getting jobs they have forgotten the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar. Dalit movements and the Ambedkar thoughts are confined only to men. Educated men are not allowing their women to come forward and join in the movements for social transformation. Due to male domination and less participation of youth and women, Dalit movement is dwindling. Ambedkar says, "Political power is the master-key to open all locks". In addition to this, he has given more priority to socio-cultural revolution. He asserted that political power can come only if it is preceded by a thorough going socio-cultural revolution. Therefore, he converted to

Buddhism and wanted to use Buddhism as a socio-cultural revolution. Following the path of Dr. Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram, the founder of BSP, spent several years in UP with Dalits and oppressed people to bring them into the fold of socio-cultural movements which finally led him to capture political power.<sup>77</sup> In fact, it was Kanshi Ram and his Party who made Ambedkar and Buddhism a household name among the Dalit Bahujan communities across India and making Dalits more assertive and politically conscious as well.

Bahujan Samaj Party coming to power in UP, with Mayawati as Chief Minister, has been a matter of special pride of Dalits; and their consolidation has become a major factor in UP's vote bank and some form of the socio-political activities at the grass-root have been taken among them such as celebrating Ambedkar's birth day, installing statues of Ambedkar, reading Dalit literature; forming Dalit associations to protect their interests etc. Unless Dalit rising can be initiated in a more planned manner by the Indian government (positive discrimination is only one step towards it), Ambedkar's dream of raising the servile classes to the pedestal of being able to govern themselves that is truly participatory democracy will not be realized by militant Dalit movements which are not enough. Whatever little socio-political and economic power is grasped should be leveled towards the holistic improvement of this people.

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