CHAPTER -III
METHODOLOGY

"Revolution is the mother of Philosophy and if it is not the mother of Philosophy, it is a lamp while illuminates Philosophy. Religion is no exception to this rule" said Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was a radical thinker of modern India. He condemned the existing social order for its in-built importance given social inequality, untouchability and exploitation. To free the scheduled caste from these age-old traditions which had consigned them to a low position was his social movement. The turn towards Buddhism can itself be termed as a movement towards self betterment. It was a movement to establish and restore human dignity and honour to those deprived sections of society for centuries. No doubt there have been several reform movements, but they were only the beginnings. The movement initiated by Ambedkar not only laid the foundation but it went much ahead. It was a social movement which gave a new identity, a new social solidarity and a sense of fulfillment to his followers. In this sense the Neo-Buddhist religious movement is one of the greatest movements of modern India.

In this connection Ghanshyam Shah (1990:9) says : "Social movements are not the concern of political science only. In fact, for a variety of reasons, political science has by and large ignored this subject. One who is interested in understanding the nature of the state, political power and conflict in society cannot but help studying social structure, social processes, culture, economic structure and the inter-relationships between them all". Observing that the study of social movements should be inter disciplinary, Shah says that social movement have dealt with decision making and that they are many times limited to certain class or structure.
Shah (Ibid: 107) further observes that the Dalit movement of Maharashtra led by Dr. Ambedkar has been projected as an All-India movement, but his role in mobilizing the scheduled castes outside Maharashtra is not very well known. Hence, he observes in this context, "There is no full fledged study or even an anthology giving information about various SC movements in different parts of the country". Hence there is every need to study and understand the way in which the scheduled caste people in different parts of the country have attempted to change their social status.

The main issues which have been tackled by scheduled caste or Dalit movement has been the issue of untouchability and discrimination practiced by the upper castes in India. Therefore most dalit movements have been anti-untouchability movements.

Ghanshyam Shah (1980) classifies Dalit movements into two types (1) Reformative movements (2) Alternative movements. The former type essentially relates to solving the problems arising out of the caste system and removal of untouchability. The latter centres around the creation of a movement of alternative culture and socio-cultural structure by conversion to another religion. Both these types utilise political means to obtain their goal.

Shah further classifies the reformative movement into (a) Bhakti movement (b) the Neo-Vedanth movement (c) Samskritisation movement.

The alternative movement in further classified by Shah as (a) conversion movement (b) religious or secular movement.
From the above we may understand that the Bhakti movement and Neo-Vedantic movement were not confined only to the scheduled castes. They were Hindu reformatory movements which attempted to remove untouchability and bring about social equality. They were led by Hindu social reformers such as Mira Bai, Tukaram, Sant Raidas, Jnaneshwar etc. Similarly Dayanand Saraswati of the Arya Samaj worked for the common good. In fact the Arya Samaj even started educational institutes for the welfare of the people without any discrimination Satish Kumar Sharma (1985) brings out how the untouchables were helped in their upliftment by Arya Samaj. Similar study has been done by Pimpley and Sharma (1985). These movements were confined mainly to north India and especially in the regions in Punjab and Maharashtra. However they played an important role in motivating the Dalit movements at a later stage in other parts of India.

The Stayashodak Samaj and the Self Respect movements in Maharashtra, the Adi-Dharma and the Adi-Andhra movements in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh etc were later Dalit movements which created an awareness among Dalits and fought against the practice of untouchability. In this context, Trilok Nath (1987) observes that some of these movements were used by the backward castes for their own gain. He observes that the backward castes utilised the Dalit movement to gain power from the Brahmins, as these movements were essentially anti-Brahmin movements. However, once they secured the upper hand in the society, they declined the help of Dalit movements and kept the scheduled castes away.

Examining the concept of social movements further, M.S. Gore (1993 : 18-19) observes that all social movements are in the form of a
"Process" and further classifies it as follows: "We may say that a process is a name we give to the continuing transactions or interactions that go on between individuals occupying certain role position in society. These roles are basic elements of social structure; the interactions between them are the processes of day-to-day social life". Thus social movements being about collective behavioural changes and are attempts to create a new social order.

Mark Juergensmeyer (1982) has studied the Adi-Dharma movement of the Punjab. This movement was started in the 1920s. Its main agenda was to secure a position of equality for the untouchables. Their argument was that the untouchables were the original inhabitants of the country and formed a separate community apart from the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. This movement attempted to bring about a separate identity for the scheduled castes. However, this movement did not progress, because it become absorbed into Ambedkar's movement which was gaining an All India status. Thus it was absorbed into the Scheduled Castes Federation in the 1940's. Its merging with Ambedkar's movement has been studied in detail by Saberwal (1976).

The sanskritization movement as underlined by M.N. Srinivas was an attempt made by the lower castes to abandon their rituals and traditions which were considered ritually impure and unclean. Many of the scheduled castes, especially in South India, rejected their age old traditions such as animal sacrifices, meat eating and liquor offering at ritual ceremonies. They felt that by rejecting these practices and by adopting some of the Brahminical practices they could gain acceptance among the upper castes and that they could gain upward social mobility. Thus they began to follow sanskritic rituals and customs. However, many
studies show that a large number of untouchables have not gained anything significant by this practice. However some castes such as the Nadars of Tamil Nadu, the Iravas of Kerala have gained a somewhat higher position. But the success of these castes in gaining recognition according to Hardgrave (1969) is because they secured political power through caste based organizations. The Nadars formed the Justice Party in the 1930's which later supported the Congress party. In Kerala the Iravas formed the SNDA Yogam under the leadership of Sri Narayan Guru. This social and political organisation successfully bargained for economic, social and political opportunities.

In this context Hardgrave (Ibid : 200) observes: "The caste association has played a vital role nevertheless, in the political mobilization of the Nadar community, serving as the agent of the community integration and as the vehicle for its entry into the political system of modern India".

In fact Mathew (1986:1) says that "in the age long development of social movements, the scheduled caste movements is seen as essentially a socio-historical and cultural phenomenon of immense importance". Thus Mathew places the scheduled caste movement as a movement of the people who had to struggle against various exploitative elements in the society and therefore as one of the greatest of all social movements. In fact he identifies the Dalit movement as a protest movement. It was a movement of the improvised, the socially disabled and the underprivileged underdogs of Indian society who were trying to find a rightful place of equality in the society.
Mathew (Ibid :2) therefore elaborates the basic characteristics of a social movements.

i. the development of a system of ideas, programmes of doctrines and action which may be called the ideology of the movement.

ii. Some form of organisation

iii. Role of leadership as a particular kind of change agent

iv. Elements of discontent and thereby protest potential; and

v. Factors of social change and social mobility

Therefore a sustainable movement must have (a) an ideology (b) a form of protest and together these two factors lead to (c) social mobility.

Every social movement therefore has an ideology, which is necessary to attract and gather the people. An ideology serves to brings like minded people to come together. An ideology which is radical in nature or reactionary in nature may have what may be termed as a "Counter ideology". The Marxist revolution was one such. Such movements try to restore something which has been taken away from a class of people. As Gusfield (1968:14:444) points out an ideology in such cases serves to intensify discontentment. It aids an action of protest.

John Wilson (1973) observes that an ideology performs certain important functions. Firstly it helps to channalize discontentment and gives it a proper shape and form. Secondly it helps to obtain recognition for a group, a sense of identity which in turn helps the group to integrate within society. It helps to intensify a sense of involvement for the
followers of a movement. It strengthens their belief system. Therefore upon the strength of an ideology, a social movement may sustain itself.

A social movement may also have a form of protest. A protest is one way of registering one’s discontentment. Its expression can make the society at large take notice of a movement. Therefore Richard Clutterbuck (1973:11) says “a protest is necessary to maintain a fair rate of change in the face of entrenched interests in any society”.

Norman F. Cantrol (1970:2-3) observes that a social movement is a method through which unhappy, frustrated and exploited people find participation. Many times such a class of people often think of nothing else but their culturally and socially impoverished status that become too much absorbed in it. Their participation leaves them little scope to improve themselves through other methods thereby making their movement counter productive. However, social change brought about by a protest movement may at times have a ‘therapeutic effect’ on the society.

Identifying the section of the society who are better prone to protest, Arora (1971:343) says that it is often the urban based dissatisfied individual who often participate in social movements. However, he also observe that the poorest of the poor do not. His contention for the analysis is that awareness is an important criterion for participation and protest. Thus urban-based people are more aware and so take part in protest social movements than their rural counterparts. Similarly the very poor section are more busy keeping their life and soul intact to pay need to movements. Therefore it is concluded that most of the social movements are urban based, they are led by the educated and
it is the middle class who are in the forefront. However, is this analysis correct?

J. Mathew (1986) says that the above impression is not wholly correct, because much of the social movements of the lower classes has not been recorded or systematically studied. Most social scientists have studied movements through a class bias and a middle class perspective. Hence there is every need to day to study movements from a subaltern perspective. Further many movements are thrown up by common people who are drawn by a political ideology and mass participation. Such people are not opportunists, but they are a socially deprived section who need proper guidance and leadership.

The very term “struggle” which is often associated with movements highlights this fact that it comes from within and is a matter concerning changing of the existing social hierarchy. This often brings about social unrest leading to a political interest. Disequalibrium brought about discrimination, subjugation, exploitation and lack of status improvement scope often are at the very basis of protest movements. Therefore when there is a lack of recognition for the deprived section of society they are forced to protest.

Protest behaviour should not be taken to mean deviant behaviour. People who participate in such movements generally believe that their action is rational and it will achieve for them what has been rightfully theirs but not given to them. Therefore a protest is also a collective action. It also involves a reason to protest, a method to protest, a time to protest and above all a proper and rightful leader to lead the protestors.
At this juncture it may not be out of place to add another dimension to social movement. That is, why are social movements brought into force? They are to protest against deprivation and to obtain a proper status in the society. Hence to achieve that status they will have to change their present status. This means a protest social movement is intrinsically linked to the concept of upward social mobility by the deprived sections who are consigned to a low status.

One of the first to make a systematic study of social mobility was P.A. Sorokin (1954). Sorokin studied social mobility as a dynamic aspect of a society. He feels that there is a constant change in the status of a person depending upon his achievement. Thus he says that there is both vertical mobility and horizontal mobility. Vertical mobility refers to changes in one's occupation, economic or political status. Horizontal mobility refers to change in one's occupation, prestige, income, wealth and social class in the same level. While vertical mobility brings about change from strata to strata, horizontal mobility is change of status within the same strata.

Many factors play an important role in social mobility such as education, awareness, polity, economy and leadership. In this context Runciman (1968) identifies three factors such as (a) class (b) status and (c) power. These three factors co-ordinate to bring about social mobility within a social movement.

This idea is not a new one. Andre Beteille (1965) also touches upon these factors in his study of caste system and social hierarchy in the Indian context. M.N. Srinivas also studies it from the viewpoint of sanskritisation process.
A social movement therefore also relates to social mobility. Stratification leads to a social hierarchy. When stratification brings about a constraining influence it leads to a social protest. Mobility is the process through which members with unequal status, unequal distribution of power and income try to effect a change. Hence, it leads to mobility between various strata. Thus ideology, protest and social mobility according to J. Mathew (Ibid : 7) are inter related. They are conceptually linked. Therefore he says "Protest which is a collective action is adequately sustained by an ideology and an organisation nurtured by an appropriate leadership. They inturn, bring about social change in the society.

Protest movements therefore point out to the presence of pressure groups with a charismatic leader to draw the followers together and make them aware of an ideology. A charismatic leader is a spark which light the fire of protest. It is he who provides the emotional link and strengthens the bonds between the deprived segments in the society.

In this context Norman Cantor (Ibid) stresses that while a social movement with a good charismatic leadership can channelise a protest to bring about a gradual social change, a radical leader can bring about a revolution which can often lead to chaos, civil war and a new form of tyranny. Protest can accelerate change but it needs seasoned leadership. Protest accentuates social mobility, but it should be properly channelised.

Speaking of movements as social reform movements M.S.A. Rao (1986:292) says : "Social movement is an attempt on the part of a section of society to change the social order either as a whole or in parts, through collective mobilization backed by an ideology. The ideology is either
present in the beginning or gets formulated during the course of the movement. In any case ideology is important as it makes the movement self-sustained and enduring”.

M.S.A. Rao identifies three important attributes of social movements (1) collective mobilisation through leadership (2) an effective ideology (3) orientation towards charge.

Rao concludes by observing that social movements are not without conflict, as they occur in opposition to the existing social order.

Herbert Blumer (1969:23) underlines the fact that social movements are expressive movements. He says that the tension and unrest which is experienced collectively is brought forth as a social movement and released in some type of expressive behaviour. Hence Blumer, referring to religious movements observes “Religious movements... represent an inward direction of unrest and tension in the form of disturbed feelings which ultimately express themselves in movements designed to release tension. The tension does not then go over into purposive action but into expression. This characteristic suggests the nature of the situation form which religious movements emerge. It is a situation wherein people are upset and disturbed, but wherein they cannot act; in other words, a situation of frustration. The inability to release their tension in the direction of some actual change in the social order leaves as the alternative mere expressive behaviour.

Blumer identifies the main features of religious social movements thus (a) intense intimacy (b) esperit de corps (c) exaltation ecstasy and (d) the projection of collective feelings. Thus the adherents of such a movement express a sense of belonging, a deep sense of belonging to a
group, a feeling of having or about to achieve something leading to a feeling of excitement and finally the expression of their sentiments collectively.

However Anthony F.C. Wallace (1969:31-32) brings out another important feature of a social movement. He says that it is a process of revitalisation. Wallace observes "A revitalisation movement is defined as a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture. Revitalization is thus, from a cultural standard point, a special kind of culture change phenomenon: the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system; they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases, new tracts". Wallace identifies this theory as an organise analogy. He further adds the concept of "Nativistic movements" (Ibid:34) which is a movement towards eliminating alien tracts in a culture and emphasizing on indigenous or native customs as being better and superior.

A revitalization movement consists of a process such as (a) reformulation (b) communication (c) organisation (d) adoption (e) cultural transformation (f) routinization.

It would not be out of place to refer to Dahrendorf's views on how a group of people without identity come together to forge a new identity for themselves and as a consequence of which there is tension in a society as the new group demands political and social justice. Though this theory falls in the realm of the study of social conflict, one cannot neglect it as
the "process of change due to conflict" comes close to the formation of a social movement.

Ralf Dahrendrof (1958:127) observes that conflict is generated in a society due to unequal distribution of power and authority. A social group is one which elaborates society because it is in a position to control, pass orders, demand allegiance, give warnings, make others to obey, prohibit certain types of behaviour etc on a sub-ordinate group. Such a group is identified as an imperatively co-ordinated authority. Such ICA groups can easily identified on the basis of external traits such as income, status, prestige, life style, etc.

In a society where the subordinated group is unaware or unable to assert their rights the conflict is passive. Such a group is "scattered" as they are not united.

However certain social, technical and political condition can usute a "scattered" subordinated group. Such a group which comes together to seek justices is a quasi group. In a Democratic society where there is a willingness to share power conflict is latent, but in a rigid society conflict becomes manifest and violence is its external trait what makes a scattered group a quasi group?

Dahrendert identifies it thus –

a. Technical conditions – leadership, education, role of mass media

b. Political condition – ideology, party formation,

c. Social conditions – similarity of culture, language, communication and exploitation
Thus a quasi group comes into existence and attempts to become an imperatively co-ordinated group by itself. The process of acquiring an identify by a scattered group to become a quasi group and later an ICA is itself a social movement in which conflict is involved.

In conclusion it may be said that there were many social and reformatory movements to help the weak and the downtrodden to acquire justice social, political and economic. But these movements were either wholly regional or had a limited range of impact. The Neo-Buddhist movement initiated by Baba Saheb Ambedkar is one movement which has attempted to gather together the downtrodden and the exploited class and offer them a new status in society. It is thus a quiet revolution.

Emphasizing the need for the study of a movement started by Dalits in order to improve then social status. John C. B. Weber (1996:189) says: “The Dalit movement has not received the attention it deserves from histories of modern India written a generation ago. The Dalits were treated as a marginal people without a history of their own or as objects, rather than subjects, of the history of the nation as a whole”. Thus Weber observes that though various social movements have received attention and have been extensively written about, lotte Western scholars and Indian scholars have not made any proper study of the movement by Dalits. Most considered Dalits, not as movers but as a class who were passive and that others such as the educated elites from other castes who were creating movements on their behalf. Hence there is a reason to correct this perspective. A processing work in this regard was by Eleanor Zelliot (1969).

In this context it may be noted that Jayashree Gokhale classifies the Dalit movement into three stages: (1) The first from 1890-1930 was a
period of self reform integrated principally by Phule and an era of making their preserve felt (2) The second phase was from 1930-1950s which commences with the round table conferences and the entry of the dalits into the field of politics (3) The post 1952 period when the Republican party was defeated at the polls and the mass conversion of Mahars to Buddhism in which they sought to establish a new identify for themselves.

On the other hand Gail Omved (1994) observes that the Dalit movement he studied more as an anti-Brahmin movement and an anti-caste movement. She studies it as being anti-spermatic rather than basically reformist in nature. She challenges the Marxist view of class movement in determining the Dalit movement, though they were oppressed and exploited section of society.

Omved feels that the years 1930-32 were the crucial period in defining the nature of Dalit movement.

Jagadand (1991) similarly reviews the Dalit movement in Maharashtra, particularly with reference to the post Ambedkar periods which led to the establishment of the Dalit Panthers and the upsurge of Dalit literature. It was a period of Dalit identity creptallisation led by dalits who had received education.

Weber (Ibid : 199) concludes by raising the question can one speak of Dalit movements or should one use a blanket term Dalit movement? He says that the latter may be used because though there were several movements all over the country, they did not operate in isolation. Also all these movements had one aim: they were questioning the validity of the
caste system (its demonscores of hereditary occupation and concept of purity) and seeking to establish an identity. Further all the participants were 'Dalits' which is a translation of the English term "Depressed classes". Thus all were similarly situated. Thus Dalits are a category, same as peasants, industrial workers, tribals etc. Therefore there is no contradiction in using the term. Dalit movement, though written this term there were several "movements" through different periods in the nation's history.

Having understood the theoretical consideration of Neo-Buddhism as a social movement which is reformatory, revolution and revitalizing in nature, the present study deals with the process of conversion and the change brought about among Neo-Buddhists as a result of conversion. The study aims at understanding the present social and religious status of Neo-Buddhists, who were the ex-untouchables of Indian society prior to their conversion. These untouchables were denied all types of opportunities and facilities in orthodox Indian society. They were denied education, denied establishment social relationships with upper caste Hindus and were relegated to the lowest position is the caste hierarchy. Therefore to emancipate from the evils of the caste system Dr. B.R. Ambedkar decided to embrace Buddhism. Later he along with millions of his followers converted to Buddhism in 1956. Then and now this process of conversion has gradually increased. As a result the Neo-Buddhists are beginning to enter the mainstream of social and political life. Hence to study the change effected among the Neo-Buddhists the present research study has the following objectives.
OBJECTIVES

• To know the socio-economic background of the Dalits after conversion to Buddhism.

• To identify the changing social status of Neo-Buddhists with the wider community.

• To understand the changing social relationships between neo-Buddhists and other upper caste Hindus.

• To find out the various factors which have forced the Dalits to convert Buddhism.

• To understand the changes in religious practices among Neo-Buddhists.

• To know some of the important social practices such as marriage and naming ceremony among Neo-Buddhists.

• To evaluate the social status of Dalits after their conversion to Buddhism.

HYPOTHESIS

• Even today the economic condition of Neo-Buddhists is not on par with the mainstream of the society.

• Conversion made the respondents to easy mix up with other community people, by removing caste stigma attached to them.

• Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had unimaginable sway over Neo-Buddhists for their conversion.
• All the Neo-Buddhists strictly follow the rites and rituals of Buddhism by denying Hindu fold society.

• Neo-Buddhists do not visit Hindu temples and worship Hindu gods and goddesses and do not celebrate any Hindu festivals.

• They identify themselves as either Neo-Buddhists or Buddhists, but not through castes and sub castes.

• Neo-Buddhists not merely enjoying the equal status with other Hindus, but more superior to caste Hindus.

• The conversion to Buddhism not only emancipates former untouchables from the idea of inferiority in the Hindu caste system, but puts them in an upper religious strata.

• The conversion brings about social, educational, economic and political changes among the Neo-Buddhists.

• The social inter-relationships of scheduled castes with upper castes have improved after their conversion to Buddhism.

• The inter-sub-caste marriages are common among Neo-Buddhists, who celebrate them as per Buddhist rites and rituals.

• The Neo-Buddhist do not aspire the perpetuation of reservation policy for themselves.

Variables for the study

Different subsystems of wider social organisatoin are considered for the present study such as the family, original castes of the Neo-Buddhists, occupation, income level, age and education level of the Neo-
Buddhist respondents, which have been taken into consideration for the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. These variables have greater repurcussion upon the social and religious changes among the Neo-Buddhists.

Selection of the field area

This study is based on a sample survey conducted in Belgaum district of Karnataka state.

The total geographical area of Karnataka is 1,91,800 sq. km with a population of 4,48,07,000 according to 1991 census. In the northern part of Karnataka state Belgaum district occupies an important position. The district is towards the northern boundaries and is close to the neighbouring state of Maharashtra. The villages Examba and Kadapur of Chikodi taluka and Nerli of Hukkeri taluka were selected for the present study. In this region a majority of the scheduled caste population embraced Budhism and hence a major portion of the population of these villages belongs to Neo-Buddhists.

In Karnataka one finds the Neo-Buddhists only in Belgaum district and Kolar district as also in some parts of Hyderabad Karnataka. But the numerical strength of Neo-Buddhists is more in Belgaum district as compared to other parts of Karnataka. Hence these villages of Belgaum district were selected for the present study by the research scholar.

Sources of Data collection

The main sources of the data collection for the present study are two, viz., A. Primary sources and B. Secondary sources.
A. Primary sources

The researcher has collected data from the primary source through fieldwork. To collect the necessary information a researcher prepared the structured, close ended questionnaire schedule. This was administered to the respondents. In this way the researcher applied the schedule to elicit the data for analysis in order to arrive at objective conclusion.

B. Secondary sources

The secondary data was collected from libraries and statistical departments. It was collected from census reports, district census Handbook, district Gazetteer, various sociological journals, books and other reports to throw more light on the subject under the study.

Tools of data collection

Social sciences have developed various methods for inquiry, among which interview and questionnaire methods are important. From the sociological perspective the interview method is considered as a very useful instrument to collect primary data. In the present study the essential supporting primary source information was also collected through the interview method.

The researcher personally visited the villages and collected the information with the help of the questionnaire schedule prepared by him. The researcher helped the Neo-Buddhist respondents in filling the schedule, particularly the illiterate respondents by faithfully recording the information given by them. The questionnaire was administered to the head of each household selected for study through sampling procedure. The questionnaire schedule was prepared in the Kannada
language which is the mother tongue of the respondents, in order to elicit reliable data. A majority of the respondents provided all the needed information with enthusiasm.

**Technique - “questionnaire Schedule”**

All the required data for the study was collected through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire schedule. It was a very useful tool to collect the data and use it for computer analysis. The questionnaire schedule contained three parts, viz.,

a. Section ‘A’ – This section contains the questions pertaining to the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

b. Section ‘B’ – This section contains the questions pertaining to the process for conversion and other religious practices observed by the respondents.

c. Section ‘C’ – This part contains the questions pertaining to the social, economic, political, educational and religious changes among Neo-Buddhists.

The researcher also interviewed the respondent to elicit information which could not be gathered strictly within the framework of a questionnaire.

**Sample**

The sample was selected from three villages of Belgaum districts, where the population of Neo-Buddhists is more in member in Karnataka state. To select the samples, the disproportionate sampling method was used. The researcher selected 300 Neo-Buddhist respondents for the
study from the universe. To collect the needed information, the researcher visited the residence of the respondents and collected the information only from the head of the family. The researcher also orally asked some questions to elicit objective answers to some questions, which were concerned to religious practices.

The study is conducted on a sample size of 300 respondents selected from three villages namely Kadapur and Examba (in Chikkodi taluk) and Nerli (in Hukkeri taluka) of Belgaum district. This region was selected by the researches as there is a high degree of concentration of neo-Buddhists in this area which is close to the Maharashtra border where neo-Buddhism is popular with the scheduled castes. The population of each of these villages is as follows: Kadapur has 450 families, Examba has 500 families and Nerli has 400 families which converted to Buddhism about forty years ago. This was due to the leadership of Sri. D.A. Katti a prominent scheduled caste leader and staunch follower of Ambedkar. He was an M.P. for a long time and became a Buddhist along with his follower when Dr. Ambedkar visited Nippani, a business centre and a tobacco growing area in the region. This accounts for the large number of neo-Buddhist families in the region selected for study. Due to inter marriages and social relations, neo-Buddhism spread from Examba to Nerli and Kadapur. Today together there are about 1200 families in three villages. The scholars selected, on the basis of random sampling method 350 respondents from these three villages which have a good concentration of neo-Buddhist families. It was observed during field work that approximately fifty respondents were either not co-operative or unavailable. Hence they were dropped and the scholar finally administered the questionnaire schedule to 300 respondents. The head of the family was selected for obtaining the data.
The researcher established rapport with the respondents and obtained data without interference or suggestions coming from other family members of the respondent. Family members were interviewed separately by the researcher to get additional information.

**Pilot study**

Before entering into the field the researcher made a pilot study to test the validity of the questionnaire schedule. The researcher selected 25 Neo-Buddhist respondents of Examba and Kadapur villages for pilot study. With the help of the pilot study the objectivity of the questionnaire schedule was tested and some modifications were made in the schedule. The questionnaire schedule was prepared systematically and objectively. Thus on the basis of the results obtained in the pilot study, the interview schedule was properly structured by the researcher by excluding irrelevant questions and by including certain questions which would elicit data which was within the framework of the research study.

**CHAPTER SCHEME :**

This research study has been organised into seven chapters as given below.

1. **Introduction** : This chapter explores the development of social reforms over the centuries to improve the conditions of the Dalits in terms of the problems faced by them due to centuries of suppression, discrimination and exploitation due to the evils of the caste system. The chapter also critically reviews available literature on studies conducted on Neo-Buddhist communities in different parts of India by other scholars.
2. **Chapter II**: An attempt has been made in this chapter to assess the movement initiated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar for self betterment among the Dalits. His unsuccessful attempts to convince the upper castes to change their attitude, his attempts to choose an alternate religion and not finding them suitable. Finally his selection of Buddhism as the only religion which could emancipate his people. The chapter also throws light on the basic principles of Neo-Buddhism.

3. **Chapter III**: This chapter focuses on the Methodology adopted by the researcher. The theoretical background of Neo-Buddhism as a social movement with a specific ideology, as a vehicle for upward social mobility and especially as a protest movement are outlined. Further the hypothesis, objectives, tools of data collections etc are highlighted.

4. **Chapter IV**: This chapter introduces the study area, namely the villages where Neo-Buddhism has become popular in Belgaum district in Northern Karnataka. The primary data regarding the socio-economic status of the respondents is also presented.

5. **Chapter V** deals with the factors which are responsible for their conversion to Buddhism and of practices of the Buddhist religion by Neo-Buddhists in their daily life.

6. **Chapter VI** gives information about the social, economic, religious, educational and political changes among the Neo-Buddhists. It deals with the changes in their practices and festivals and relationships with upper caste Hindus.

7. **Chapter VII** brings out the summary and the conclusions based on the study.
Limitations of the study

The study has some limitations. All the respondents of the present study are male members as no female informant was available. The researcher faced some problems while he was in the field. He made efforts to elicit the information, where in the village Examba, the respondents opposed to pronounce them as Neo-Buddhists. They wanted to be called just “Buddhists”. Because according to them the term “Neo” creates difference between original Buddhists and converted Buddhists. The study covers only the respondents of Belgaum district of Karnataka state.

Due to limitations of time and other constraints the study could not cover other regions of Karnataka which have neo-Buddhist population.

Classification, Tabulation and Analysis

After the collection of data, the interview schedules were edited by the researcher for completeness, accuracy and uniformity. The classification and tabulation of the data was done both manually and with the help of computers. Accepted sociological statistical calculation are made in the analysis of the data to arrive at objective conclusion.