"The aim of human society must be to enable every person to lead a life of culture which means the cultivation of the mind as distinguished from the satisfaction of mere physical wants."

- Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

Chapter IV

Buddhist Way of Life accepted by New Converts
Chapter IV

BUDDHIST WAY OF LIFE
ACCEPTED BY NEW CONVERTS

This chapter presents a brief description of the way of life of the Neo-Buddhist elite respondents especially their perception about Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Buddha, the Dhamma, Worship pattern, recitation of prayer, visits to the centres of pilgrimage, celebration of festivals, belief in fatalism, magical rites, observance of fast, food habits, mode of salutation, adoption of twenty-two pledges etc. It seeks to investigate the impact of ideas and teachings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the way of life of Neo-Buddhist elite. We propose here to examine a process, if any, leading to mobility of the respondents.

Despite an apparent rigidity of caste stratification some routes are open for social mobility of the lower caste. Different models of status mobility are suggested by the scholars. M.N. Srinivas has proposed the process of emulation of Brahmin rites and customs i.e. sanskritisation. According to him “Sanskritisation is the process by which a low Hindu caste or tribal or other group changes it’s customs, rituals, ideology, way of life in the direction of high and frequently twice-born (dwija) caste.” He asserts that Low caste is able in a generation or two to rise to higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism and by sanskritising its’ ritual and pantheon. He has modified this concept to include the emulation of ‘dominant caste’ of an area in social change (M.N. Srinivas, 1962 : 6). The process of following the Brahminical way the Mahars has a long history. Whatever rituals followed by the Brahmins were taken for granted as the best and were followed by the other castes and subcastes including a section of the Mahars.

Srinivas has analysed the process of vertical rise in the castes of Lower strata by providing the concepts of sanskritisation and westernisation. N. Prasad has
advanced the concept of kulinisation, which encompasses the twin processes of sanskritisation and westernisation. Westernisation is a process involving the acceptance of western thought, dress, diet, manners, education, sports, values etc. Broadly speaking, the process refers to the adoption by a community of western elements in dress, habits, manners and customs (Beteille, Andre, 1969 : 127). According to Lynch, “Sanskritisation is the traditional means of mobility for a caste whose economic or other rank has improved and is therefore out place with its low ritual rank.”² He has perceived limitations of this process and felt the necessity of other functional alternative to sanskritisation. He has forwarded a thesis that political participation for some castes, such as the Jatavs, is the functional alternative to sanskritisation and westernisation. D.N. Mujumdar in his book, “Caste and Communication in an Indian Village,” has used the concept of ‘desanskritisation' to denote the rejection of Sanskritic i.e. culture. Shyamlal has propounded the concept of “Asprushyeekaran”³ in place of desanskritisation. K.K. Gangadharan has stressed a broad trend in cultural process which has been characterised as “Brahminisation, Aryanisation, Hinduisation, Indianisation and Sanskritisation.”⁴ He has used these different terms but they connote basically the same thing. He has further mentioned that Indianisation means Hinduisation which really means Brahminisation. Srinivas has expressed different opinion and has stated that sanskritisation is much broader concept than Brahminisation. Sociologists have suggested to employ the term acculturation as universal and broader than the regional term sanskritisation.

Anticipatory socialisation is another important process for achieving upward mobility. It is a process whereby person adopts the norms and conforms values of reference group with a view to be accepted by the reference group. The Mahars seem to have accepted different reference groups in different periods. Mostly the Brahmins were positive reference group for the untouchables. “The Mahars have adopted the Brahminic values, model of living and rituals with a view of attaining
social mobility within the caste hierarchy." Robert Merton observes that anticipatory socialisation is functional for the individuals only within relatively open social structure. But it is dysfunctional for the individuals in a relatively closed social structure where he would not find acceptance by the group to which he aspires. The Mahars being the segment of closed stratification could not raise their status by adopting the process of anticipatory socialisation. It has continued for a long time but it did not help them in achieving upward social mobility. Hence they have discarded it and continue their search for another functional substitute. Thus, in the Pre-Ambedkarite period, Sanskritisation, Westernisation, anticipatory socialisation, Kulinisation, Islamisation, Christianisation have been employed as the processes of elevation of status by different lower castes of various parts of the country. The Sanskrit influence has not been universal in all parts of the country. In the dominion of Hyderabad of which Marathwada was a part, Islamic tradition has provided a basis for cultural imitation. Islamisation has provided functional substitute for sanskritisation. However the untouchables in Marathwada were neither under the influence of Islamic culture nor Westernisation. There are no instances of mass conversion either to Christianity or Islam by the ex-Mahars except few individual cases. In the past, the untouchables were prevented from sanskritising the style of life of Brahmin or a dominant caste of the area by a variety of legal and ritual sanctions. "Mobility within the caste system in Srinivas phrase Sanskritisation was not available to the untouchable, he was too low and impure for that to be feasible. Moreover the material pre-requisites for Sanskritisation, the generation of an economic and political base was also beyond his reach. The Mahars did not possess the economic resources which could be translated into power and thus could not make a convincing case for higher ritual status."

The Mahars of Maharashtra, like coorgs of Karnataka had adopted some customs of Brahmins and gave up meat-eating, Consumption of liquor, animal sacrifice to their deities and imitated the Brahmins in matters of dress, diet and
rituals. The Arya Samaj has worked on these lines. This process of mobility continued not only for a generation or two, but for the years unknown. However it has not resulted in the elevation of social position of the ex-Mahars. This experience and historical studies have shown that "the process of Sanskritisation by very nature and history of the caste society has very severe limitations and must be interpreted in a different way from the role attributed to it by Srinivas." Patwardhan has also indicated the flaws and shortcomings of this process. "Sanskritisation is not a total process, it is not an adequate idiom for successful mobility. It is a part-process in the attempts at upper social mobility." According to Nandu Ram, the scheduled caste in the country have realised the failure of the process of sanskritisation and social mobility in the caste system. They are, therefore, inclined to acquire absolute social equality at least at the institutional level, by embracing a more humanistic and egalitarian Buddhist religion (Nandu Ram, 1995: 223). After becoming unsuccessful in attaining upward social mobility by way of Sanskritisation, few groups of untouchables have realised that embracing Buddhism is only way left out for them. More specifically to say, the ex-Mahars have realised that they could improve their status by improving their economic condition rather than by absorbing rituals followed by the upper castes. "It appears that their exposure to the new Socio-economic order has made them believe that any amount of change in custom to imitate the upper castes is irrelevant for social transformation." Conversion to Buddhism proves indigenous source of social change i.e. a source of change that arises from within the lower strata. The new converts to Buddhism have rejected the twice-born caste model of social and cultural mobility. They hate sanskritised 'White-collar Dalit Brahman'. The elite of the first generation were on the old track. They have attempted to elevate their status by sanskritising themselves. However they could not attain higher position in the caste based stratified society. After the emergence of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on socio-political horison, the followers have overthrown meaningless imitation of
Brahminic culture. They have started to follow a new process which can be termed as Ambedkarisation.

**Process of Ambedkarisation**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the great emancipator, has liberated the untouchables from the caste discrimination and exploitation and initiated them into Buddhism in modified form, a Neo-Buddhism. He has authored the concise Buddhist text book like Bible, “The Buddha and His Dhamma”, a Magnum, Opus and a systematic summary of Neo-Buddhism and ‘Bhim-Pitaka’ (Pandyan, K. David, 1996 : 126). He has initiated Buddhism to the ex-untouchables. He has compelled the followers to abide themselves by twenty two vows, an integral part of Dhamma-Diksha, Initiation into Buddhist Dhamma. “Of this special vows, the first eighteen vows require the initiates into Buddhism not to worship the Hindu gods and goddesses, not to regard the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu, not to perform the traditional Hindu rites for the dead and not to employ a Brahmin priest to perform any rite and ceremonies. The vows from eleven to eighteen call upon the new initiates into Buddhism to practise the noble eight fold path and the ten paramitas and to lead a life in which right knowledge, right conduct and compassion are harmoniously interwoven.”

These vows affirm that hereafter he will lead a life according to the teachings of the Buddha. Dr. Ambedkar has prescribed some rituals and practices to be adhered to in day-to-day life. He has published a booklet captioned ‘Buddha Puja Path’ (Buddhist worship and recitation) based on ancient Pali scriptures. He has made it clear that embracing Buddhism meant repudiating Hinduism and it’s beliefs and practices. He has also insisted that a Lay Buddhist is also expected to practise Buddhism. Some Buddhist monks of Indian and foreign origin and Bhartiya Bouddh Mahasabha have also published booklets on Buddhist sanskaras, which institutionalise the Buddhist practices. All the rites commencing from birth to death are performed as per the procedure incorporated in the booklet written either by a Buddhist monk or
Dhammachari or Bouddh Acharya. Generally a Buddhist monk or Dhammachari or Bouddh Acharya is invited to perform all religio-cultural rites. In case of non-availability of any Buddhist person, the householder invites a Buddhist laity (upasaka) to perform the religious rites or he refers a prescribed booklet on Buddhist rites and perform the rites accordingly by himself. The vigilant cultural groups dissuade the wrongdoers from violating the Buddhist behavioural pattern. The precepts, twenty-two pledges and vigilant cultural groups determine general behavioural pattern of new converts and prevent them from any sort of deviation. All these precepts have given new shape to the behavioural pattern of the Buddhist converts. This is a new process of internalising the Buddhist beliefs and practices. Zelliot has termed this 'purifying process' as pali-ization.\(^1\) She has used this equivalent term to the sanskritisation the emulation of dominant caste practices. According to Richard W. Taylor “Ambedkar’s Buddhism is not sanskritisation, but Easternisation or Mahabharatisation.”\(^2\) The connotation of these terms is much broader. However they do not suit to Ambedkar’s Buddhism. Because it is not confined to initiation of mere rituals and religious practices of Buddhist religion. It means following the ideologies and teachings of Dr. Ambedkar also. This new process of institutionalising the beliefs, values and ideology of Dr. Ambedkar may be termed as Ambedkarisation. Thus, the process through which a high or low caste person, other group or a tribal internalise the ideology, faiths, values, way of life, religious practices and rites of day-to-day life preached by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is called Ambedkarisation. It is a process of socio-cultural transformation formulated on the basis of teachings of Dr. Ambedkar. It means adoption of ideas and values indoctrinised by Dr. Ambedkar. Ambedkarisation is a broader term which includes several factors that lead to upward mobility. The inclusion of protective discriminatory provisions in the constitution of India, motivation for educational achievement, political mobilisation, conversion to Buddhism, changes in beliefs, rites, practices, value system and ideology can be enumerated as some of
the important factors. All these factors can be integrated in the process of Ambedkarisation. The protective discriminatory provisions safeguard educational and economic interest of the scheduled castes including the Neo-Buddhists. Political mobilisation gives them domination and power. The conversion to Buddhism sheds their sense of inferiority and builds up self confidence to move towards higher social position. Thus Ambedkarisation leads to the changes in the status of the ex-Mahars and their cultural pattern. Ambedkarisation, as a process, is more active in the state of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. However it has also spread in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Gujrat, Punjab, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Karnata. These states show increase in the Buddhist population after 1956. The number of Ambedkarite activist groups has also increased in these states.

**Ambedkarism**

The process of Ambedkarisation is intertwined with Ambedkarism. The scholars have conceived of Ambedkarism as a system of Ambedkar's thought and philosophy to ascertain social justice, equality, freedom, self respect and dignity. (See for details - Bali L.R., 1974 : 37-48; Raosaheb Kasbe, 1989, Yeshwant Manohar, 1999 : 25-114). Gail Omvedt has explained the main themes of Ambedkarism. She has interpreted it as a theory of Dalit-liberation\(^{13}\) (Omvedt, 1994 : 223-259). M.S. Gore has analysed Dr. Ambedkar's political and social thought and the social context of his ideology (Gore, M.S., 1993 : 120). The strategy of the Ambedkar movement is based on these ideological propositions. While Ambedkar's ideology provides to the ex-untouchables a political means to achieve their ends, Buddhism opens a new vista to escape from the "stigmatised identity" (Berreman, 1979 : 164, 177). Humanitarianism and rationalism are the basic components of Ambedkarism. It attempts to demolish traditional Hindu social structure based on graded inequality. It proposes to establish a modern society based on principles of liberty,
equality and fraternity, a neo-humanism. It endeavours to establish a casteless and classless society and to reconstruct the world by defeating counter revolution.

The great conversion to Buddhism has formulated a new set of symbols, myths, festivals and religious rites for the new converts. These are to be internalised by the Neo-Buddhists. The process of imbibing new faiths, values, rites, practices, customs, ideology by the new converts to Buddhism can be defined as Ambedkarisation. The Jatavs of Uttar Pradesh & Ex-Mahars of Maharashtra have accepted Dr. Ambedkar as a ‘Culture-Hero’. They follow ideology, ways and practices laid down by Dr. Ambedkar. They strongly oppose the rituals, festivals, beliefs and traits or elements of Brahminical culture. There is a new cultural and social renaissance which has transformed the behavioural pattern of the ex-Mahars. The Neo-Buddhists have internalise new modes of behaviour. This refers to the manner of performance of rituals, the ceremonies and festivals to be celebrated and the sanskaras to be followed.

"Before conversion to Buddhism, the ex-Mahars worshipped mainly Mariai, the goddess of death. They believed that the prevalence of diseases in the villages, is due to the displeasure of Goddess Mariai. Therefore, they sacrificed some animals to please her for safety of the villagers. A male child of ex-Mahar family was offered to Mariai as a lifetime devotee, who was called a potraj. After the adoption of Buddhism, the worship of Hindu gods and deities including Mariai had been discontinued. The custom of animal sacrifice to Mariai and Potraj is now completely discontinued."14 Shrines of Gods, Goddesses and articles of their worship including the stones representing the deities are drowned into rivers, streams, ponds and wells. They have stopped worshipping the Hindu gods and goddesses. They have constructed vihars and stupas and installed the statues of lord Buddha and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The statues or photographs of lord Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar are garlanded with reverence in the houses, offices, vihars and public meetings. They celebrate Buddhist festivals such as Buddha
Jayanti, Bheem Jayanti, Dhammacharka Prawartan Day, full moon days and Mahanirvan day of Dr. Ambedkar. These festivals are celebrated as the religious occasions by the new converts to Buddhism. It has become a practice to wear white robes on the special occasions including birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar and lord Buddha, Wedding Ceremony, naming programme etc. They have adopted Buddhistic names which have given them an independent Buddhist identity such as Milind, Gautam, Rahul, Siddharth, Ashok, Nages, Bhimrao for males and Yashodhara, Vandna, Mayawati, Gautami etc. for females. The traditional Hindu salutation 'Saprem Namaskar' has been changed into 'Saprem Jaibhim'. “This unique way of greeting constantly reminds of their common bond of affinity” (Pandyan, K. David, 1996 : 212) The salutation with the word ‘JaiBhim’ has become a mark of respect, intimacy and identity of the members of a definite, cohesive group. The sense of likeness or consciousness of kind is developing fastly. The realisation of a common interest, feelings, attitudes behaviour, ideology and so on is leading towards the emergence of ‘Ambedkarite Society.’

With this major consideration in mind a study of way of life of Neo-Buddhist elite has been undertaken. The question whether the Neo-Buddhist elite have internalised Buddhist beliefs, practices and rites? can be understood by analysing their present style of life. It is a very wider term which includes different behavioural pattern exhibited in routine life. It is not possible to cover all the traits of cultural and social life of emerging society. We have to concentrate on selected fundamental beliefs, practices and rites alone in the present study.

The behavioural pattern has been divided into two categories, on the basis of attitude of rejection and acceptance with negative and positive sense respectively, attached to it. The rejected behavioural pattern consists of belief in magic, superstition, omens and lucky days, observance of holy fast and practice of beef eating. The accepted behavioural pattern includes new perception about Dr. Ambedkar, the Buddha, the Dhamma, worship of the Buddha, celebration of
festivals visit to centres of pilgrimage, adoption of 22 pledges, mode of salutation etc.

**Belief in Superstition**

Superstitions are irrational faiths. "Faith becomes superstition when it parts company with reason." (Ahir, D.C., 1968: 60). Historical records reveal that, "The ex-Mahars of Maharashtra believed in ghost, evil spirit, black magic and superstitions. They believed in auspicious and inauspicious days such as Saturday and Amavasya as inauspicious days hence not good for starting an important work. They believed in Bhanamati, Karni, Chetaki etc."\(^{15}\) These superstitions are always born of ignorance and illiteracy. In the post independence period there is remarkable increase in the levels of education which helped in removing superstitious beliefs and irrational faiths. Buddhism gave them rational thinking. The Buddha advanced the doctrine of Samma ditthi, the most important element in his 'Ashtang Marg' (noble eight fold path). The Buddha was against irrational religious rites, ceremonies and observance. "He was against them because they were the home of superstition and superstition was the enemy of Samma ditthi."\(^{16}\) Buddhism is synonymous with rational thinking and scientific values. After the adoption of Buddhism, the converts gave up superstitious beliefs. Information regarding the possession of superstitious beliefs has been collected through the pertinent question, namely, "Do you believe in magic, superstition, omen and lucky days?" To this question, out of 200 respondents 193 (96.5%) have replied negatively and 7 respondents (3.7%) have answered affirmatively. The largest number of respondents (96.5%) under the sample of the study, indicated that they do not believe in superstitious powers and do not perform magical rites. They see necessity to get rid of superstitions born of ignorance and illiteracy. This has been revealed in the informal discussion with the respondents.
Observance of Holy Fast

Observance of fast to secure 'punya' or to fulfil 'navas' is the most common practice amongst the Indian people. In order to analyse this religious act of the respondents, a direct question has been asked to the respondents, namely "Do you observe fast in the name of God and religion?" It is observed from the answers given by the respondents that 94.5 per cent (189) respondents have said 'No', in contrast to 5.5 per cent respondents have put '(√)' right mark against the word 'Yes', means thereby they observe fast. N.D. Kamble gives different version of this phenomena. He mentions that, "In some places their fast in the name of Gods and Goddesses has been replaced by the fast in the name of Buddha on full moon day or Thursday."\(^{17}\) The respondents in our sample have expressed negative attitude. It can be deduced that majority of the respondents have expressed no belief in the super divine power. They do not observe fast to please the God and Goddesses.

Food Habit

The census report has mentioned that, "The meat of the dead cow formed the chief item of food consumed by untouchable community."\(^{18}\) The untouchables used to eat beef. There were two taboos regarding food. One of the significant taboo was against beef-eating. The practice of beef eating had completely differentiated the touchable from the untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar has associated continuance of beef eating with the origin of untouchability. "The reason why Broken Men only became untouchables was because in addition to being Buddhists they retained their habit of beef-eating."\(^{19}\) He has further concluded that, "The Broken Men were exposed to scorn and contempt on the ground that they were Buddhist, the main cause of their untouchability was beef-eating."\(^{20}\) In the light of this knowledge, it is very pertinent to examine whether the practice of beef-eating is in continuance or has been ceased? Because it has created and developed hatred and abhorrence against the Buddhists in the mind of the Hindus. With this
result the Broken Men came to be regarded as untouchables and thus untouchability has been perpetuated for the longer period.

With a view to examine the practice of beef-eating a simple question, namely “Do you eat beef?” has been incorporated in the body of interview schedule. The respondents are given two options only i.e. ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. The information collected reveals that there is not a single respondent in our sample, who has mentioned ‘Yes’. All the respondents have put right mark (√) against the answer ‘No’. They have given negative answer to this question. They consider the practice of beef-eating as an indication of poor economic condition and lower social status. The rejection of beef-eating by the largest number of respondents compel us to infer that the practice of beef-eating is no more prevalent among the Neo-Buddhist elite. This is very good sign for cultural development.

**Ideological Source**

The great man whose ideology is upheld by the elite is a matter of great importance. This has resulted in the formation of different rigid camps of elite. The main groups of elite are visible such as, first, the elite with Marxist orientation, second elite with Ambedkarite orientation, third Phule-Ambedkar ideologist and fourth, Gandhian elite. Comrade Sharad Patil, a renowned critic, formulates a new ism with the composition of thoughts of Karl Marx, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. He has popularised this distinguished ism as Marx-Phule-Ambedkarism. The followers of these camps seek legitimacy to their ideas and approaches by quoting of their idealised thinkers in their support. The faction is clearly observed in the field of Dalit literature. Some of the prominent Marx oriented Dalit writers are Baburao Bagul, Daya Pawar, Namdev Dhasal, Arjun Dangle etc. The propagators of Ambedkarite literature are Gangadhar Pantawane, Yeshwant Manohar, Raja Dhale, Vasant Moon, D.M. Khairkar, Sudhakar Gaikwad, Raja Jadhav, Tarachandra Khandekar etc. “According to them Neo-Buddhist writers can not be Ambedkarite and Marxist both at the same time.”21 In the field of politics
the first split among the Neo-Buddhist political leaders was between B.C. Kamble, a pro-Ambedkarite and Dadasaheb B.K. Gaikwad, a pro-communist. On the issue of 'Eknishtha and Communist' Dalit Panthers have fragmented themselves into two infighting camps led by Raja Dhale and Namdev Dhasal.

Dalit movement seeks its ideology mainly from Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, mahatma Jotirao Phule and Karl Marx. "Apart from giving the movement an organisation and direction, Ambedkar gave it ideological platform necessary for revolution." However the intellectuals differ on the question of whose ideology will be proved effective for the liberation of the depressed classes. They are very much influenced by the writings and thoughts of their idealised thinkers. They establish ideological linkage with them. They derive ideological framework based on the thoughts of different thinkers as per their interest and conviction in the ideology. It is in this context, it becomes a matter of considerable interest to know the main source of ideological inspiration of the Neo-Buddhist elite. On the enquiry into the ideological inspiration, the respondents have indicated their main source of ideology as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Ideological Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mahatma Jotirao Phule</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Karl Marx</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the table 4.1 that 48.5 per cent respondents have shown Dr. Ambedkar as their main source of ideological inspiration. A few respondents (4%) opine that Mahatma Gandhi is ideological hero for them. However a large
number or 39.5 per cent respondents follow the ideology of Mahatma Jotirao Phule. The thoughts of Karl Marx are followed by 8.0 per cent respondents only. Surprisingly, while 8 per cent respondents follow Karl Marx, only 4 per cent elite respondents accept Mahatma Gandhi as an ideological source. The rejection of Marxism and Gandhism has become a common legacy for the ardent disciples of Dr. Ambedkar. He has made a distinction between Buddha and Karl Marx in his speech to 4th conference of World Fellowship of Buddhist, Kathmandu, 1956 and advised his followers to adhere to Buddhism (Das, Bhagwan, 1968 : 126-138). Dr. Ambedkar has written, “Mr. Gandhi and the emancipation of the untouchables” (1943) and what congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables (1945). “He clashed with the Mahatma not for any personal reasons but on account of the ideological differences and his approach to the problem of the untouchables.”

Despite their common concern, Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi were often at odds in their programmes for the abolition of untouchability. “Both the reformers had a vision of equality, but for Ambedkar equality meant not equal status of the varnas, but equal social, political and economic opportunity for all. Ambedkar planned his programs to bring the untouchables from a state of ‘dehumanisation’ and ‘slavery’ into one of equality through the use of modern methods based on education and the exercise of legal and political rights.”

It may be due to these ideological differences, anti-Gandhi feelings are sustained by the Neo-Buddhist intelligentsia. Thus the above discussion leads us to conclude that Ambedkar-Phule seems to be the ideological source of inspiration for the vast majority of the respondents (176, 88.0%). Majority of New-Buddhist consider Phule-Ambedkarism as a holistic ideology having social, cultural, economic, political, educational and literary aspects capable of bringing transformation, in totality, of the caste-ridden Hindu society. They firmly believe that the ideology of Phule-Ambedkarism has emancipatory dynamics.
Perception about Dr. Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar is a versatile genius. He has carved out a valued place for himself in the history of India as the saviour of the untouchables, chief architect of the constitution of India, a social revolutionary, a politician, an educationist, economist, labour leader, a scholar and the greatest pioneer of revival of Buddhism in India. He has liberated and emancipated the untouchables from the yoke of Hindu social slavery. He has secured for them political rights. He has also enshrined their rights in the constitution of India. He has performed diverse roles. He combined in himself the role of a social reformer, a political leader and a spiritual guide of the untouchables. Out of these various facets of his personality, some of the aspects have been highlighted here. We have attempted to examine the perception of respondents about Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Table 4.2
Perception about Dr. Ambedkar by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Nature of Perception</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dhammadata</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bodhisattva</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Architect of Constitution</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Emancipator of Dalits</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Political Leader</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 bears the imprint of some of the facets of Dr. Ambedkar’s personality. It appears from the table that the largest percentage of respondents (40.0%) perceive Dr. Ambedkar as an emancipator of Dalits. The term Dalit has been used here in broader connotation including all sections of untouchables and Bahujan Samaj. It is not restricted to any segment of caste or sub-caste. Dr. Ambedkar has rendered his services to the cause of all depressed classes and
deprived castes. It would be unjustified to set limit to the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. 8.5 per cent (17) respondents remember him as Dhammadata, while the role of political leader is equally important for seven per cent respondents. 30.5 per cent (61) respondents have remembered him as an architect of the constitution of India. Even though Arun Shourie\textsuperscript{25} has refused the authorship of the constitution of India, millions of Indians have convinced themselves that Dr. Ambedkar is the chief architect of the constitution. The similar sentiments are reflected in this table. Dr. Ambedkar has initiated the untouchables into the refuge of Buddhism. Table 4.2 also reflects that fourteen per cent respondents acknowledge Dr. Ambedkar as Bodhisattva in recognition of his role in bringing modern Indian converts into Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar is a born Bodhisattva. "The Bodhisattva is a bodhi-being, a heroic being, an aspirant for Bodhi. In other words a Bodhisattva is a future Buddha."\textsuperscript{26} The idea about Dr. Ambedkar as a Bodhisattva is actually conceived by Dr. Bhadant Anand Kauslyayan of Nagpur. The followers perceive Dr. Ambedkar very much as a second Buddha. He is portrayed as Bodhisattva in yellow robe (chivar). It is observed that his portrait is invariably kept along the side of the Buddha and is worshipped in the same way with prayer and flowers. It is to be remembered that Dr. Ambedkar criticised hero-worship. He has addressed himself as an idol breaker and not an idol worshipper. However the followers see him very much as a second Buddha. Dr. Ambedkar is 'Babasaheb', the respected father of his people. "Thus the deification of Dr. Ambedkar and his transformation into a Bodhisattva has become a central component in the Buddhist ideology of the ex-Mahars."\textsuperscript{27} However our table shows that only 14.0 per cent respondents perceived him as a Bodhisattva, whereas 86 per cent respondents do not deify him in any way.

**Perception about the Buddha**

Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and Krishna are the founders of religions who have influence over the vast masses of the world. They assume different status in
their religion. "Jesus insist that he is the son of God and that who wish to enter the kingdom of God will fail to do so if they do not recognise him as such. Prophet Mohammed went a step further. He claimed that he was a messenger of God on earth. But he further insisted that he was the last messenger. He declared that those who wanted salvation must not only accept that he was the last messenger. Krishna went a step beyond both Jesus and Mohammed. He refused to be satisfied with merely being the son of God or being the messenger of God. He was not contended even with being the last messenger of God. He was not even satisfied with calling himself a God. He claimed that he was 'Parmeshwar' (God super) or 'Devadhideva' (God of Gods). "Our Puranas describe the Buddha as an the ninth avatar of Vishnu." (Radhakishan, S., 1997 : xiii). In a sense the Buddha is a maker of modern Hinduism (Radhakrishnan, S., 1997 : xiv). Buddha never claimed of himself any such status. The inclusion of the Buddha among Vishnu's Avtara is a typical Brahminic - Hinduism tendency to assimilate all faiths. (Collier's Encyclopaedia, 1986 : 130). Buddha made a clear distinction between 'Margdata' and 'Mokshadata'. The Buddha was satisfied with playing the role of 'Margdata'.

In the few sects of Buddhism in India and abroad, the Buddha has been given a status of God. But Dr. Ambedkar offered a new vision about the Buddha. He has declared that, "It is wrong and mischievous to say that Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu." The followers of Ambedkar refuse to accept the Buddha as God of Gods, Incarnation of Vishnu, Son of God or a Messenger of God. With a view to verify this fact, the respondents have been asked, "How do you perceive the Buddha?"
Table 4.3
Perception about the Buddha by the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Nature of Perception</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>God of Gods</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Incarnation of Vishnu</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Son of God</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Messenger of God</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Mokshadata</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Margdata</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 clearly shows that not a single respondent think the Buddha as God of Gods, incarnation of Vishnu, son of God or Messenger of God. Out of 200 respondents, 13 (6.5%) respondents consider the Buddha as the Mokshadata (Giver of Salvation). In the discussion they have clarified that they understand Moksha as Nibban. Nibban means destruction of Lust. Dr. Ambedkar has distinguished the Margdata (Giver of Way) from the Mokshadata (Giver of Salvation). This connotation has a Ambedkarite touch. It is seen from the table that the largest majority or 93.5 per cent respondents perceive the Buddha as the Margdata. It seems that the Ambedkarite vision has influenced the perception of the Neo-Buddhist respondents.

**Perception about Buddhist Dhamma**

The Bouddh Dhamma is conceived in different forms. The Mahabodhi Society of India represents a traditional Buddhism and believes it as a branch of Hindu religion. Mahasthavir Chandramani and other monks have declared that Hinduism and Buddhism are branches of the same tree. Dhananjay keer, a biographer, has also expressed the similar view. The Hindu philosophers including S. Radhakrishnan propagate that Buddhism is a sect of Hindu religion (Bapat, P.V.,
1997: xii). They include Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, Lingayat, Mahanubhav in the broader fold of Hindu. However, the Neo-Buddhists of India strongly reject these ideas. They recognize the Bouddh Dhamma as a distinct Dhamma, a code of social morality. In the light of this knowledge, an attempt is made in this study to elicit the opinions of the respondents over this issue.

Table 4.4
Perception about Bouddha Dhamma by the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Nature of Bouddh Dhamma</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Branch of Hindu Religion</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sect of Hindu Religion</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Distinct Religion</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Part of Indian Culture</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Code of Morality</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the table 4.4 that none from the sample under the study, perceive the Bouddh Dhamma either as the branch of the Hindu religion or a sect of Hindu religion. Only 5.5 per cent respondents consider Bouddh Dhamma as a part of Indian culture. A large majority or 56.6 per cent respondents consider Bouddh Dhamma as a distinct religion. The second larger number of respondents (76, 38.0%) perceive Bouddh Dhamma as a code of morality. The emphasis on this aspect of Buddhism can be attributed to the deep thinking of Dr. Ambedkar. He has explicitly distinguished Buddhism from Hinduism. He has rejected the concept of Dharm (religion) and replaced it by the term Dhamma. According to him, the purpose of religion is to explain the origin of world and the purpose of Dhamma is reconstruct the world (Ambedkar, B.R., 1973: 245). He has given a new doctrinal basis to Buddhism. It appears from the information collected that the respondents are very much influenced by the ideology of Dr. Ambedkar.
Worship of Photo/Statue of Buddha

Table 4.5
Worship of Photo/Statue of Buddha by the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Nature of Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During an ancient period, insecure life and events beyond human knowledge and control made the people believe in super natural powers. Before conversion the ex-Mahars used to worship the Gods and deities of Hindu and Muslim religion. The gods and deities worshipped by them were not the gods of the all India pantheon but local one. The family deities of ex-Mahars were Bahiroba, Jyotiba, Mhasoba, Khandoba, Giroba, Jokhai, Kalkai, Janai, Yellamma, Pochamma, Satvai, Ambabai, Laxmiaai, Somani (Enthoven, 1922 : 412). They were chiefly worshipper of Mariaai (Goddess of death) and the Vithoba of Pandharpur. With a view to know the change in the religious orientation, if any, certain questions were included in the interview schedule. The answers have been sought to the question, namely, Do you worship Photo/Statues of lord Buddha? To this question 74.0 per cent (148) respondents have given positive replies and 26.0 per cent (52) respondents have given negative replies. It can be deduced from the table that majority of respondents are upasakas (Laity, Devotee) of the Buddha. The mode of worship is found to be different from the Hindu traditional method. The upasaks burn incense and candles in front of the statue/photo of Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar, recite refuge and precepts in Pali language in lower and melodious tone and offer panchang namaskar.
It is also significant to know the frequency of worshipping the photo/statue of the Buddha, to test the religiosity of the Neo-Buddhist respondents. The following picture emerges from the Table 4.6.

Table 4.6
**Frequency of Worshipping the Photo/Statue of Buddha by the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Frequency of Worshipping</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>On Special Occasions</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>No Idol Worship</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 4.6 shows that the frequency of worshipping the photo/statue of lord Buddha differs. The percentage of those respondents who never worship the statue/photo to lord Buddha is very insignificant i.e. 2 per cent only. The percentage of those who worship sometimes and those who do not believe in idol-worship is nearly similar. Seventeen per cent respondents worship the image of the Buddha 'sometimes', while 18 per cent respondents are against the practice of idol worship. The percentage of those who worship the image of Buddha 'daily' is 23.5 per cent. However the respondents of the largest per cent worship statue or portrait of the Buddha on 'Special Occasions'. It is revealed in the informal discussion with the respondents the 'special occasion' includes Ambedkar Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, Dhammachakra Pravartan Day, Death Anniversary Day of Dr. Ambedkar, Marriage Ceremony, Birth day programmes of the nearest relatives etc. The number of respondents who worship the statue/portrait of the Buddha daily, sometimes and the special occasion exceeds by 80 per cent than the
respondents who never worship or don’t believe in the idol worship (20.0 per cent). It can be inferred from this table that 80.0 per cent respondents are engaged in worship-ritual. The largest majority of respondents worship the image of the Buddha. Thus another trend is also revealed that there is a shift of object of worship from the deity Mari-aai and vithoba to the lord Buddha.

**Recitation of Buddhist Prayer**

Buddha never prescribed any rituals which were religious in nature. After Buddha’s nirvana vedic religion and it’s rituals influenced Buddhists and Buddhism. Consequently, rituals and teachings other than the teachings of Buddha, were incorporated by Buddhists in India and abroad (Kamble, N.D., 1983 : 198). It is an important facet of Buddhist religio-cultural life. The following Table 4.7 shows that 36.5 per cent respondents do not recite Buddhist prayer as such. However 63.7 per cent respondents recite the Buddhist prayer. This indicates the deeper devotion towards the object of worship-ritual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Nature of Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Total</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>200</em></td>
<td><em>100.0</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Twenty Two Pledges**

The three refuges, five precepts and twenty two pledges constitute conversion to Buddhism in the full sense or what Dr. Ambedkar has termed as Dhamma-Diksha, initiation to Buddhism. Twenty two pledges are integral part of the conversion ceremony. These are devised by Dr. Ambedkar for the conversion of those laymen and women adhering to Hinduism and now desires to convert to Buddhism. "The Buddhist Pledges illustrate the way in which Dr. Ambedkar
combined the rejection of specific Hindu beliefs with an acceptance of Buddhism.”

These Buddhist oaths are concerned with the declaration of leading life according to the teachings of the Buddha. By incorporating the twenty-two vows in conversion ceremony “Dr. Ambedkar did three things. he made it clear that embracing Buddhism meant repudiating Hinduism, he made it clear that a lay Buddhist was a full member of the Buddhist spiritual community (Thereby asserting the fundamental unity of that community), and he made it clear that the lay Buddhist, no less than the monk, was expected actually to practise Buddhism.”

It is a matter of considerable interest to know, whether the respondents follow these twenty-two oaths in their routine life. In order to enquire about the observance of twenty-two pledges, a relevant question has been included in the interview schedule, namely, “Do you follow 22 pledges in your routine life?” Responses received to the question are sorted out in the following table.

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Nature of Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is evident from the Table 4.8, a large majority or 96.5 per cent respondents from the sample, have indicated that they follow the twenty two pledges in their routine life, where as very few respondents (3.5%) have replied negatively. From the foregoing analysis it can be understood that the largest number of respondents follow the twenty-two pledges. It indicates that Buddhism in full sense, has been internalised by the respondents after four decades of conversion. The process of institutionalisation of Dr. Ambedkar's ideology has
commenced. However this mission needs the use of modern electronic media also for its wider inculcation.

**Greeting Slogan**

During the Fourteenth century, Chokhamela, a Maharashtrian saint used a customary address Johar Maya-Bap, Johar (Chokhamela, Abhang-71), as a salutation to God Vithoba. In latter period, it became a common usage of salutation in general public life of the untouchables. As the lowest inferior caste the untouchables have to use ‘Hayaj Sharanat’ as a mark of sub-ordination to the authority of the upper caste. During British period good morning, good evening became popular word of greeting each other among the educated group. Hindu religious leaders have popularise the slogan ‘Ram-Ram’, ‘Jai-Shri Ram’ to great each other. It is observed that every religious group has utilised specific words to greet each other. These words reflect the religio-cultural identity of users of the slogan.

With a view to collect information about the word of greeting used by the respondents, a question, namely, “What do you say when you salute others?” is included in the interview schedule. Some optional words are given to them. The data collected has been presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Slogan-Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hayaz-sharnat</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Johar</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jai Bhim</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Good morning/Good evening</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ram-Ram</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Namaste</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Namaskar</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>3+4+6+7</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.9 reveals that none of the respondents use ‘Hayaz-sharnat’, ‘Johar’ and ‘Ram-Ram’ to greet each other. This old practice has been decayed in due course of time. Only 4.5 per cent respondents use ‘Good morning’, ‘Good evening’ to greet their visitors. Secular words like ‘Namaste’ and ‘Namaskar’ are used by 8.5 per cent and 18 per cent respondents respectively. The slogan-words like ‘Jaibhim’, ‘Good morning’, ‘Good evening’, ‘Namaste’ and ‘Namaskar’ are used by a large number of respondents i.e. 28 per cent (56). This method of salutation, perhaps, continues for the matter of convenience. It is very interesting to note that the largest per cent (41%) respondents use ‘Jaibhim’ to greet each other. They greet their acquaintances, relatives and friends with slogan word Jai-Bhim as compared to other words of salutation. “Dr. Ambedkar’s name has became part of the salutation (Jaya Bhim) that Buddhists use to one another.”32 jai-Bhim has become a popular greeting slogan among the Buddhists in India and abroad,(Pandyan, 1996 : 192).

Visits to Buddhist Cultural Centres

The celebration of the religious festivals and visits to the places of Buddhist culture are also significant ingredients of the religio-cultural life of the individuals. Indians have rich tradition of visiting places of religious significance even at the cost of heavy debts. Mostly, the pilgrims visit to those places which are associated with their family deities and Gods of worship. Naturally, the festivals and places of pilgrimage also change with the changes in religious faiths. The Ex-Mahars used to celebrate all Hindu and Muslim festivals along with their own community festivals. it had become the tradition on the part of Ex-Mahars to visit religious ‘Teerth Kshetra’ (Centres) such as Pandharpur, Chandgad (Chandrapur), Tuljapur, Ambajogai, Jejuri, Tirupati etc. They also use to visit centres of ‘Pir-urus’ of adjoined district. Such shrines are reputed to possess healing powers. They visit these religious places of ‘Jatra’ (Yatra) to offer the ‘Navas’. However poor people could not undertake pilgrimages to far away places due to high expenditure incurred on the journey. After conversion to Buddhism the new converts ceased to
visit other religious centres for purely religious purpose. However the old places of pilgrimages have been replaced by the Buddhist pilgrimages. In order to understand their religious leanings the respondents have been asked, to name the important centres of Buddhist pilgrimages they have visited. The information collected has been categorised for the analysis. The data collected reveal that 77 (38.5%) respondents have visited Mhow, Mahad, Diksha Bhoomi (Nagpur), Chaitya Bhoomi (Mumbai), whereas 63 (31.5%) respondents have visited Diksha Bhoomi, Chaitya Bhoomi, Lumbini and Buddha-Gaya and 24 (12.0%) respondents have visited Ajanta, Ellora, Diksha Bhoomi and Chaitya Bhoomi. It is also seen that 21 (10.5%) respondents have visited Diksha Bhoomi, Chaitya Bhoomi, Buddha-Gaya, Lumbini and 15 (7.5%) respondents have visited Lumbini, Chaitya Bhoomi, Sarnath, Buddha-Gaya and Diksha Bhoomi. It appears from the information collected from the respondents that the largest majority of respondents have visited Diksha Bhoomi and Chaitya Bhoomi invariably. Some respondents are regular visitors to Diksha Bhoomi and Chaitya Bhoomi. It is evident that pilgrimage to Hindu places of worship has also ceased.

**Celebration of Buddhist Festivals**

Besides the question of visit to religious centres, a question on celebration of festivals has been also asked to the respondents, namely, “Which festivals do you celebrate?” The information collected reveals that, the new converts to Buddhism commemorate Dr. Ambedkar’s Mahaparinirvan Day and Death Anniversary of Mahatma Phule as a mark of respect towards them. They also celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, Dhammachakra Pravartan Day (Day of revolving wheel of Buddhist religion) and Full Moon day. Ambedkar Jayanti day is celebrated mostly in all the villages and cities of Maharashtra, as a joyful occasion. The responses given by the respondents reveal that 67 respondents (33.5%) celebrate Bhim Jayanti, Buddha-Jayanti, Dhamma Chakra Pravartan day and observe Ambedkar parinirvan day with grief and respect. The Buddhists offer rich tributes to Dr. Ambedkar in
larger gatherings. Eleanor Zelliot has designated these occasions as "Four great observances of the contemporary Buddhist in India."\textsuperscript{33} Diwan Chand Ahir, a critic, termed them as "Sacred days."\textsuperscript{34} The information collected also reveals that 40 (20%) respondents celebrate Bhim Jayanti, Dhammacharka pravartan Day and Ambedkar Mahaparinirvan Day whereas 36 (18%) respondents celebrate Dhamma chakra pravartan day, Maha parinirvan Day and Ambedkar Jayanti. It is also observed that 29 (14.5%) respondent observe Ambedkar Mahaparinirvan day, Bhim Jayanti and Dhamma chakra pravartan day and Ambedkar Mahaparinirvan day, whereas 36 (18%) respondents celebrate Dhammacharka prawartan day, Mahaparinirvan day and Ambedkar jayanti. It is also observed that 29 (14.5%) respondent observe Ambedkar Mahaparinirvan day, Bhim Jayanti and Dhammacharka prawartan day, while 15 (7.5%) respondents celebrate Buddha Jayanti, Ambedkar jayanti and Dhammacharka prawartan day and remaining 13 (6.5%) respondent celebrate Full moon day, Ambedkar jayanti and Dhammacharka prawartan day. In each category celebration of Ambedkar Jayanti is common for all the respondents. It is also evident that non-Buddhist festivals are not celebrated by the respondents under our study sample. Our findings corroborate with the conclusion drawn by Sunanda Patwardhan, "None of the Hindu calendrical festivals nor sacred days of Hindu gods nor pilgrimages to Hindu holy places are observed or undertaken by the radical, devout Bouddhas. The inner rejection was total in many cases. The overall picture is one of radical fundamental and revolutionary change."\textsuperscript{35}

Before drawing any inference on the process of Ambedkarisation we have to answer some relevant questions. The questions are: How far Ambedkarisation as a status mobility process, is inclusive enough to explain the major religio-cultural changes among the Neo-Buddhists? Whether it can be proved as an effective functional substitute to Sanskritisation? Whether the process of Ambedkarisation
will be useful to interpret a structural change? The answers to these questions require a detailed discussion.

**Ambedkarisation and Change**

The data in this chapter shows that the changes have occurred in the perception about the Buddha, Dhamma, beliefs, practices, mode of prayers, magical rites, festivals, places of pilgrimage, observance of holy fast, food habit, mode of greeting and so on. The analysis of these variables communicates that the changes are influenced, directly or indirectly, by the ideology or thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar. These changes can be treated as the concrete indicators of the impact of the process of Ambedkarisation.

The Buddhist scholars like Rahul Sankrityayan and Anand Kausalyayan have recorded two types of ancient culture. First, is Brahman culture, a Vedic culture and Second, is Shraman culture, a culture of nomadic (culture of labour). Buddhism represents Shraman culture which is very nearer to sub-altern culture of the lower castes. Both are contradictory to each other in their principles and practices. One can not be absorbed without abandoning the other. Dr. Ambedkar has preferred to ask his followers to denounce the Brahmin culture wholly and follow the Shraman culture. The new converts to Buddhism adhere to non-sanskritic culture. They have accepted the Buddhist way of life as conceptualised by Dr. Ambedkar. In other words they have adopted Ambedkarite formula of Neo-Buddhism. The internalisation of Buddhist culture and religion has brought significant changes in the way of life of the new converts. There can not be two opinions about the fact that the aforesaid changes in the way of life of the new converts have occurred because of impact of preachings of Dr. Ambedkar. It is crystal clear that his ideology is based on Buddhism. But the renaissance brought by Dr. Ambedkar has added new dimension to Buddhism, Buddhist practices and rituals. Since the ideological impact of Dr. Ambedkar is universal among the Neo-
Buddhists of Maharashtra and other states also, the way of life has attained uniformity.

They have discontinued the Hindu religious practices. They have denounced all the customs prevailing in their community which were associated with their lower social status. The traditional Hindu belief system has replaced by the Buddhist belief system. The new converts have discarded the Hindu religion and culture in to-to and adopted a Buddhist religion & culture in their 'right' sense. They have become successful in making satisfactory adjustment with Buddhism.

This overall change does not occur suddenly in the shortest period. The process of change has commenced from the year 1935 with the declaration of conversion of religion, which will give high status, by Dr. Ambedkar in Yeola conference. It has become more concrete on the 14th October 1956, the day of revolving the Wheel of Dhamma. During the period of last four decades they have assimilated the precepts of Buddhist religion in letter and spirit. The changes have accepted voluntarily and without any sort of compulsion and enforcement. The emergent change has flowed with very smooth and without any conflict and contradictions. The Neo-Buddhists do not meet with incongruity, psychological uncertainties and ambivalence about the performance of different rites. They do not experience any sense of bewilderment or marginalisation. More than 85 per cent of the respondents under the present study perform different rites through Buddhist method alone. (See chapter on mythical dilemma for further details). They do not experience ambiguity and bewilderment while performing various rites. Hinduism has been replaced by modern Buddhism. “Sudden change from one belief system to another belief system can create an inner, Psychological vacuum. This has not happened, partly because a substitution has taken place.”36

The data collected from the respondents, the progeny of the Buddhist converts, confirms the above view of S. Patwardhan. Our data and observation compel us to
draw an inference that the socio-cultural changes occurred in the way of life of the Neo-Buddhists can be explained in the context of the process of Ambedkarisation.

**Ambedkarisation and Sanskritisation**

As stated earlier, Sanskritisation denotes the process of cultural imitation of the dominant caste by the lower-castes or sub-castes. It is a process which motivates to emulate the ways of life of a higher group in the hope of gaining its status in future. M.N. Srinivas in his study, has commented that the Coorgs, an exterior caste of Mysor, could obtain high position through cultural imitation of Brahmins. Ezhavas of Kerala also could elevate their social position through sanskritisation after a long period. S. Patwardhan’s study explores that in Maharashtra, the chambhars. Dhors or Mangs (or even the Mahars in the nineteen thirties) had taken to the imitation of social groups with a higher ritual status. However the Sanskritisation has not proved successful for all castes or sub-castes in all regions. The Jatav’s of Agra city, the Shanans or Nadars of Tamil Nadu and the Mahars of Maharashtra have strove through Sanskritisation unsuccessfully for several generations to attain higher position. “The Mahars have rejected the traditional idiom of the Hindu social system with its cultural values and normative orders. They have chosen the secular axis by pursuing educational attainments, higher education and by articulation of interests though political participation.” It seems sanskritisation could not assist them in the elevation of their social status. It is still functional for the status mobility of those who remain in the Hindu fold but fails to interpret the status elevation of those ex-untouchables who have abandoned Hinduism and newly converted to other religion. The new coverts must have used some other channels of upward mobility.

Lynch does not support Srinivas’s concept of sanskritisation. After considering the inadequacies and limitations of the process of sanskritisation, lynch in his study, has raised a crucial question namely, Is there a functional alternative to sanskritisation and westernisation in modern India? He puts forward a thesis that,
“Political participation for some castes such as Jatavs, is replacing and is functional alternative to Sanskritisation and Westernisation.”38 S. Patwardhan also comments that it seems that for upward mobility sanskritisation is no longer as effective and relevant as political participation. E. Zelliot finds in her study that, “Mahars among scheduled castes have taken successfully to political means for enhancing their social status.”39 Political mobilisation under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar has proved a better functional alternative. Moreover the political ideology, strategy and policy of Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Caste Federation and Republican Party of India are also formulated by Dr. Ambedkar. The charismatic leadership of Dr. Ambedkar has made the Neo-Buddhists into a dynamic community politically. “Political participation by the Dalits has proved to be an alternative to the process of Sanskritisation.”40 Today political participation has become a ‘functional alternative’ to sanskritisation. (Mathew, Mathew, 1986 : 6). It is apparent that Zelliot, Lynch, S. Patwardhan and P. Jogdand in their respective studies have confirmed that sanskritisation is not a total process and it has a limited validity. They have also expressed a necessity of functional alternative to sanskritisation and other processes of similar connotation for attaining the higher status. The Mahars were searching for functional alternative to them. We dare to state that Ambedkarisation constitutes a final functional alternative for their status mobility. It leads to diverse social cultural changes. These socio-cultural changes among the Neo-Buddhists can be interpreted meaningfully in the light of Ambedkarisation. Ambedkarisation appears very useful concept for the analysis of the social-cultural changes among the new converts of Buddhism.

**Marginalisation of Neo-Buddhist**

Is a Neo-Buddhist a marginal man? is the most significant question which needs theoretical explanation. Uttara Shastree, in her study, explores that “To-day we find, the Neo-Buddhists are on the margin of the two faiths neither completely left the old faith, nor fully adopted the new one.”41 The Neo-Buddhists are in
marginal situation. Her study is based on the theory of marginalisation propounded by Everette V. stonequist and Robert E. Park. Stonequist observes that "The individual who through migration, education marriage or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another, finds himself on the margin of each, but a member of neither. He is a marginal man."\(^4\) He has conceived the 'Marginal Man', as one who is poised in psychological uncertainty between two or more social worlds. The marginal man experiences 'psychological uncertainty' because of dissatisfactory adjustment after leaving one social group or culture. The marginality is characterised by an attitude of ambivalence towards old & new belief system, failure of satisfactory adjustment, emergence of frustration, partial assimilation with the dominant group. Park also holds similar view. According to Park, "The marginal man is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures."\(^4\) The marginality occurs when people of different cultures and races come together to carry on common life. Shastree’s findings indicate that the Neo-Buddhist at present landed in situation of ambiguity, divided loyalty, lack of unity, contradictions, frustrations and has led to a series of consequences. A similar type of concept has forwarded by George Simmel, which he has called the "Stranger"\(^4\), whose relationship includes both nearness and remoteness at the same time.

U. Shastree has collected data for her research work on Neo-Buddhist as a marginal group in India, during the year 1978. She has submitted her doctoral thesis to University of Poona in the year 1981. Her book has been published in 1996. It appears that our findings related to the variables of religio-cultural life of the respondents differ from the findings presented by Uttar Shastree. Our findings depicts different picture where in the Neo-Buddhists do not live in two worlds and are not in situation of ambiguity, divided loyalty, contradictions and frustration. It seems that the Neo-Buddhist elite is no more a marginal man. He is rather
becoming 'modern man'. (Alex Inkeles, 1968: 141-144). Ambedkarisation has led him towards modernisation. Modernisation involves changes in the social, political and economic spheres. (Bhoite, U.B., 1987: 260). "Modernisation at the personality envisages changes resulting in the promotion of rationality, individualism, scienticism, and secularism, which are considered as the major components of the modernised personality." “This term has always been associated with something superior to already existing in the society.” (Ramanamma A., 1983: 8). The present trend of change is in favour of rationalisation and modernisation. (N.D. Kamble, 1983: 283) our data and observation compel us to draw an inference that the so-called marginality has been uprooted.

End of Marginality

A. Bopegamage has prophesied that, "marginality in the life of the Neo-Buddhists could continue for generations together because of the perpetuation of the reservation policy by the government and the exploitation of the so-called untouchable castes by the political parties." His argument supporting the continuation of marginality is based on two points. One, the legal position where in the Neo-Buddhists are denied the privileges or concessions under the reservation policy of the government because they cease to be the members of scheduled castes after conversion to Buddhism. Two, exploitation of the untouchable castes by political parties. His first argument has become superficial and invalid, since the government of India has promulgated orders in the year 1990 to extend all concessions to the Neo-Buddhists, being the member of erstwhile untouchable community. Order No.1206/28/90-SCD (R. Cell), Govt. of India, Bharat Sarkar, Ministry of Welfare / Kalyan Mantralaya, New Delhi dated 20th November 1990, (Das, Bhagwan, 1998: 85). In order to get concessions it is not necessary for them to remain Hindu and follow their beliefs and practices. They are not forced to present themselves as scheduled castes for concessions. The denial of concession as a root cause of marginality has been abolished. In the same vein, the exploitation
of these ex-untouchables by political parties does not constitute an essential prerequisite of marginality. Therefore, the Neo-Buddhist do not require to occupy the position of marginality. Thus on both the levels, we do not find any strong and concrete cause for the continuation of marginality among the Neo-Buddhists. Both Everett Stonequist and A. Bopegamage have agreed upon the transitional or passing phase of marginality. It cannot perpetuate for generations together. One must be most cautious when one deals with the perpetuation of marginalisation of the Neo-Buddhists. When we analyse the existence & perpetuation of marginality of the Neo-Buddhists we can infer broadly that the marginality might have existed up to three-four decades after conversion, however it has ceased to operate in the current years. The new converts have identified themselves as a matured Buddhists.

In the Indian context the concept of marginality needs to be examined keeping in mind the following points:

1. that the Indian social system is beset with an inbuilt mechanism and paraphernalia of marginalisation in a caste-based milieu.

2. that the marginalisation is never self-inflicted but inflicted from outside by the dominant castes.

3. that the Indian marginalisation has ethnic overtones and it functions more or less like social colonisation.

4. that the marginalisation inflicted by the dominant castes has been extended to other religious minorities such as Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs in different forms.

5. that the present Neo-Buddhists have achieved their present status after going through a long-drawn struggle. They are a militant social group and it can be said unequivocally that any future marginalisation from outside will be met with a mighty protest.
that the process of Ambedkarisation has started encompassing non-Buddhist marginalised communities in India.

Structural Change

According to Yogendra Singh, Sanskritisation and Westernisation are primarily focused to analyse cultural changes and have no scope for systematic explanation of changes in social structure. M.N. Srinivas also asserts this point. He believes that Sanskritisation and Westernisation describe the social changes in terms of culture and not in structural terms. An analysis in terms of structure is much more difficult than an analysis in terms of culture. He further adds that Sanskritisation involves 'positional change' in the caste system without any structural change. Commenting on this, Owen M. Lynch has mentioned, "Sanskritisation results only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural change." To him, Sanskritisation is a culture-bound concept and as such is useless for comparative structural analysis of mobility movements. (Lynch Owen, 1969 : 6). However S. Patwardhan outlines two broad trends of change such as positional and structural. She compares the changes which are positional shifts, occurred in the chamhars and Mangs, with the changes occurred in the case of the Mahars. "Social change such as that occurring among the Hindu scheduled castes like the chamhars and Mangs seems to be positional and well within the value system of Hindu society; whereas the Mahars have rejected mobility within the framework of Hindu values and ethos. Such change is more radical and thus the changes that have occurred can be said to be structural." The Mahars alone have shown and pursued a different direction. They have rejected status mobility within social and cultural framework of Hindu society. They have converted to Buddhism which does not recognise status ascription by birth in certain caste. They have accepted Dr. Ambedkar as culture-hero and followed his doctrines. They have changed their way of life as per the instructions of Dr. Ambedkar. The conversion to Buddhism initiated by Dr. Ambedkar is not merely a change of lable
from Mahar to Nav-Bouddh. The Neo-Buddhists have rejected caste, the caste system and Hinduism. They have adopted Buddhism and egalitarian society based on individual achievement and equal opportunity for all. The process of Ambedkarisation has brought fundamental changes in the way of life of the new converts. These basic changes include changes in their roles, cultural values, norms and reference group which are identified by Harry Johnson as changes in structural elements. Thus Ambedkarisation incorporates cultural as well as structural changes also.

It may be stated in general that Sanskritisation encompasses positional change whereas Ambedkarisation leads to both positional structural change. Moreover it is a process which motivates the formation of casteless and classless society. Ambedkarisation is multi-dimensional concept which interprets social, cultural, religious changes and political mobilisation among the Neo-Buddhists.

To Summarise, it can be said that Ambedkarisation promotes status mobility among the Neo-Buddhists and structural change also.
REFERENCES


47. Johnson, Harry M., 1966, Sociology : A Systematic Introduction, (Sixth Indian Print), Allied Publishers, Delhi, p.48, 49, 626.

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