CHAPTER IV
THE BUDHISTS ETHNIC IDENTITY
PART II

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

In the previous Section we have seen that the Mahars maintain their new ethnic identity very strongly. The present chapter is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the advantages of maintaining new identity. The second section reports the role of Buddhist's institution in maintaining ethnic identity. The third section concentrates on the Buddhists contributions for the upliftment of its members. In the fourth section we have analysed the nature of economic hierarchy within the Buddhists community.

SECTION I: THE ADVANTAGES OF MAINTAINING NEW IDENTITY

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In this section we deal with the Buddhist's advantages of maintaining their new-identity. Maintenance of a new identity has awakened psychological independence among the Mahars. It has provided the Mahars new values which led to change in occupation, marriage ceremonies, religious rituals, reduction of internal barriers, their perspectives, and interpretation of action. It also created political consciousness and religious protest. [Pantavane (1975) Miller
4.2.1 The Advantages of New Identity:

In the present investigation, I observed that the Buddhists have gained several advantages by maintaining their new identity. In this circumstance the following questions were posed to the respondents so as to understand the advantages of maintaining the new identity.

"Is there any advantages of maintaining a new identity?. If Yes, what are the advantages"?

My findings indicate that all the (100%) respondents replied positively. They said, "Yes, the new identity has brought a number of advantages for them". The informants said that the following are the six important advantages of maintaining a new identity:

1. Almost all (95.9%) of the respondents said that they have broken their link with their past as polluted untouchables and freed themselves from the domination and inhuman practices of the upper caste Hindus by maintaining a new identity. Buddhism provided a new identity as a "Human Being" which was denied to them earlier. It has given a new set of cultural symbols. The most remarkable advantage of maintaining the new identity is that they have gained a sense of self respect, esteem, dignity, pride, tremendous
confidence, new values and approaches, humanity, equality, nomenclature. They feel mentally relaxed and comfortable because of all the above discussed things.

2. A large number (87.87%) of the respondents said that maintenance of a new identity created educational awareness among them, and that their level of education has increased which has resulted in the reduction of superstition, blind faith and black magic among the Buddhist community. It has also created political consciousness and their political ideologies have developed. They are prepared to fight for their civic rights.

3. Most (82.67%) of the respondents said that independent thinking has developed among them and they became firm about their ideas. Their intellectual level has also risen. Writers emerged from the Buddhist community and formed their own literature the Dalit literature, which has acknowledge their separate identity in Marathi literature.

4. Nearly three-fourth (70.47%) of the respondents said that they learned to think scientifically and logically because Buddhism based on the principles of equality, is rational, ethical, universal, logical, and eternal. They became rational by rejecting superstitions, blind faith and over emphasize on rituals.

5. Nearly three-fourth (70.4%) of the respondents were of the
opinion that they got an opportunity to reject all old things and traditional occupations. Now they are engaged in white collar and high status jobs. Their occupational status has improved and their standard of living has also increased.

The Buddhist elite say that they have experienced a rise in their status. They explained that, first, they got an opportunity to reject the old and degrading occupation associated with their untouchable caste status. Maintaining the new identity has becomes a matter of self respect for them. Cultural symbols play a very important role in raising social status of the people. They no longer feel that they are inferior to others in any respect. They have gained confidence and have developed a new approach in their life. They have left traditional things and have adopted new ones and thereby they say they are rational. There is a shift from traditional to rational and scientific. Maintaining the new identity implies notional change, or conceptual change, a change in one’s mental make-up, a change in one’s out-look, and was brought about by the rejection of caste and untouchability. They have experienced the thrill, the joy of freedom, mental satisfaction and peace. According to them the feeling of equality has now spread.

It is clear from the above findings that Buddhists gained many advantages in maintaining their new identity. They gained self respect, justice and mental satisfaction,
and created confidence, consciousness and awareness among them. They feel that their levels of education, occupation, and income have increased. In group their socio-economic status has been raised.
SECTION II: ROLE OF THE BUDDHIST INSTITUTIONS IN MAINTAINING ETHNIC IDENTITY

4.3 INTRODUCTION

In the previous sections I have discussed the different ways of maintaining the Buddhist identity and the advantages of maintaining that identity. In this section I shall deal with the role of the Buddhist institutions in maintaining a new ethnic identity.

Mathew (1986) and Zellopte (1992) stated that the process of the institution building began in a systematic way, even before the conversion to Buddhism in 1956. The objectives of these institutions were the educational and cultural regeneration of the Mahar community. After conversion, the original purpose of these institutions changed; they got new importance. The promotion of the Buddhists ideology became the main aim of these institutions. Gokhale (1993) studied two institutions: (1) People's Education Society and (2) The Bouddha Jana Panchayat Samiti, associated with educational and cultural aspect of the Buddhists. She stated that these institutions played important role in spreading and promoting higher education among the scheduled castes. These institutions provided financial help and other aid for the needy. They brought about changes in social and cultural practices by promoting
changes in religious practices among the Buddhists community. Patwardhan (1973) stated that the 'Bhartiya Baudha Mahasabha', religious institute, plays a crucial role in spreading the teaching of Buddha. It also formed an organisation of the Buddhist community and also gives Diksha of Buddhism, and provides religious guidance to masses.

In the present investigation, I have studied the functions and the role of the religious institute 'Trilokya Bouddha Mahasangha sahayak Gana' in detail. The following questions were put to the respondents in order to know their awareness about its existence and functioning and to find out the impact of this institution on the them.

1) Do you know about the following religious and educational institutions?

1) Trilokya Bouddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana.
2) Bhartiya Bouddha Mahasabha
3) People's Education Society

Almost all the respondents knew about the functions of the religious and educational institute working for them. Our data indicate that the 'Trilokya Bouddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana' is the most popular religious institute. Almost all (99%) respondents knew about it. Most of (90.7%) the respondents knew about Bhartiya Bouddha Mahasabha. A large number (78.5%) of the respondents knew
In order to find out the impact of these institutions the questions “Do you face any problems while performing rites and rituals of Buddhism? If yes; which problems do you face”? was asked to the respondents. Most (88.5%) of the respondents replied by saying that they did not face any problems of guidance in preserving and maintaining their identity. A few (11.5%) of the respondents said that they face some problems while following the rites of Buddhism. A few (8.9%) of the respondents said that there are books/libraries for the study of Buddhism but they do not get time to understand it because of poor economic conditions. They are following Buddhism because Babasaheb Ambedkar has told them to do so.

4.3.1 THE TRILOKYA BOUDDHA MAHASANGHA SAHAYAK GANA.

Trilokya Bouddha Mahasangha (TBM) and Trilokya Bouddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana (TBMSG) were founded in early 1979 in India by the Venerable Sangharakshita. He is of British nationality but, lived in India for twenty years. Dr. Ambedkar appreciated his work and he became known to many. He developed the Buddhist movement in U.K. in 1964. He established the Western Buddhist Order (WBO) in 1968, a community of men and women known as Dhammacharis and Dhammacharinis. This community is devoted to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. At the same time he founded The Friends...
of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) to promote the teachings and activities of Dhamma. Some of his Western followers came to India in 1978 to help develop Dhamma activities here. And in early 1979 he founded TBM and TBMSG in India.

4.3.1.1 THE FUNCTION AND ROLE OF THE TRILOKYA BOUDDHA MAHASANGHA SAHAYAK GANA:

At present, there are twelve TBMSG centres in India. These centres conduct regular classes for the study of Buddhism and Meditation. These classes are open to all. In addition to regular classes, special classes are conducted for those who want to devote themselves to Dhamma.

In Dapodi-Bopodi area the Dhammacharis visit the centre once a week for meditation and to study Buddhism. TBMSG also conducts different social projects for the welfare of the masses, and calls it "BAHUJAN HITAY".

TBMSG runs special training courses for those who want to work full time in this movement. These people are trained in particular areas like administration, social work, and Dhamma. They are given weekly lectures and tutorials on the theory and practice of Dhamma and social work.

A quarterly magazine, in Marathi known as 'Buddhayan' and quarterly series of Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures in
English - 'Dhammamegha', are published at 'Triratna Grantha Mala', TBMSG, Dapodi, Pune, periodically. In addition to this, other books and booklets on Ambedkar's life and thoughts, Dhamma, teachings of Bouddha, are also published here. Ven. Sangharakshita's writing have been published in Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati.

The activities of TBMSG in Dapodi include the establishment of Viharas, retreat centres, Hostels, libraries, pre-primary schools, Dhamma classes, and cultural activities. I have observed some of the following activities during the fieldwork. The data were collected with help of informal interviews of the staff of the TBMSG and from pamphlets of TBMSG.

On 26th January 1992 Saddhamma Pradip Meditation centre was inaugurated by Ven. Sangharakshita at Bhaja. This consists of an eight-sided shrine room directly facing the ancient Buddhist caves of Bhaja. Accommodation facilities are also available at Bhaja.

In 1992, 'Asvaghosa' cultural activities were started in Pune by Dhammacharini Jayamati. She is an experienced theater Director, from U.K. The objective behind starting such activities was to help people and introduce them about theatre's use in spreading Dhamma in order to communicate with the people in the slums and villages. These activities
have started in different centres also.

On 10th July 1992, Dhammachari Lokmitra inaugurated Dhammanusmriti at Buddha Nagar, Pimpri near Pune. In addition to this TBMSG runs six Pre-primary schools (Balwadis), one sewing class and one adult literacy Centre at Pimpri near Pune.

At Dapoli, on the land where Dr. Ambedkar lived during his childhood, a new hostel building, garden and a library called Dr. Ambedkar Memorial, were inaugurated by Ven. Sangharakshita in Jan. 1992.

At Bhor, near the dam, there is a Ven Hsuen Tsang Retreat Centre. This centre has eight buildings, including a large stupa-shaped shrine to accommodate 350 people. For this project most of the funds were received from nuns from Lung Fong Temple, Kaoshiung, Taiwan, and they have also given many gifts. Their objective behind this was to help the spread of the teaching of Buddha in India.

At Ahmednagar, TBMSG does not have a centre but every week it conducts three classes on Dhamma. In Aurangabad, regular Dhamma activities are conducted in Silod, Paithan, and Bhusaval. There is also one hostel and two Kindergartens. In Bombay, TBMSG does not have a Vihara because of scarcity of land but there is lot of demand for Dhamma activities, as large number of Buddhists stay in
Bombay. The Dhamma activities continue in Ulhasnagar, Ambarnath, Dombivali, Kalyan and Thane. In south Maharashtra, Dhamma activities have spread in Kolhapur and its surrounding villages and towns of Sangli and Satara. At Kolhapur there is a hostel. TBMSG's Dhamma activities runs in Solapur, Nasik, Malegaon, Dhulia, Nanded, Aurangabad, Yewatmal, Phulgaon and Hinganghat. There is a hostel and bookshop in Solapur and Nanded. At Nagpur, there is a hostel, a bookshop, an art and sport centre and seven pre-preliminary schools. TBMSG provides all the important services to the Buddhists. It also stages dramas to create awareness of social problems. Outside Maharashtra, TBMSG's Dhamma activities have spread in Ahmedabad, Baroda and other towns of Gujarat. It has also spread into Karnataka. In Uttar Pradesh, Hastinapur, Modi Nagar, Meerut, and Agra have centres of activity. Saranath, Goa and Hyderabad have also similar centres. (see Map on 3 & 4. p.127-127) - T.B.M.S.G and Bahujana Hitay Activities in India).

TBMSG received funds for its Dhamma activities from the following trusts:

1) Karuna Trust U.K.
2) Friends in Taiwan R.O.C.
3) Friends of the Western Buddhist Order FWBO
4) Local donations.
Map. No.3. Map of T.B.M.S.G. and Bahujan Hitaya Activities in India.
4.4 BAHUJAN HITAY PUNE PROJECT:

The Bahujan Hitay project was started in 1982 in Dapodi, Pune. Dapodi is a suburb of Pune, situated near the industrial Pimpri-Chinchwad area. Being an industrial area it attracts the unemployed and landless people. The project area has slum population, which is continuously increasing because people come in search of work from rural areas.

The aims of the Bahujan Hitay Project is "to provide educational, social and health facilities to slum dwellers through a network of locality centres, central building, pre-primary schools (Balwadis), children's library, medical unit, creche, cultural activities and Trust offices". (pamphlet - Bahujan Hitay) The project started a few pre-primary schools, in the slum areas. The project workers also inspire the parents to send their children to the pre-primary school.

The following projects were documented during the fieldwork at the Dapodi area.

1. Pre-Primary School:

At present, 'Bahujan Hitay' Project runs twenty pre-primary schools in Pune. Of these twenty, there are Six pre-primary schools, in Pimpri, ten pre-primary schools in Dapodi, two pre-primary schools in Nagpur-Chawl and in Pune-Camp and one at Lohagaon. I visited pre-primary schools at
Dapodi. There are around 20-25 students in one Balwadi. Teachers stay in this area. Sometimes they go to collect the children from their houses and also explain the importance of education to their parents.

2. Non-formal Education Class

The 'Bahujan Hitay' project runs the 'Non-formal education class at Dapodi for rag-picker girls belonging to age group of 6-14 years. These girls cannot attend school as they have family responsibilities. Twenty girls attend these classes. Seva-Sadan’s D.Ed. Teacher's Training College has provided help for running these classes.

3. Adult Literary Class:

'Bahujan Hitay' runs an Adult Literary Class at Dapodi with the help of the Indian Institute of Education. Twenty persons attend this class.

4. Supplementary Education Classes:

In Dapodi, 'Bahujan Hitay' runs six supplementary education classes and a library for children. This is because Dapodi area where the project is conducted, is overcrowded and in some houses there is no electricity. As a result children cannot study properly. For these children in addition to education, sometimes sports and art activities are organised after the school hours. Many children benefit
5. Hostel:

In Pune, 'Bahujan Hitay' founded the first hostel for the poor Buddhists students at Lohagaon in 1984. The objectives behind establishing hostel is that the students should continue their education after the fifth standard. Most of students leave school after their primary education because of bad economic conditions. They go out for work. They require a hostel for continuing their education. At present seventy-eight students are taking advantage of this hostel.

On 7th February, 1991, 'Bahujan Hitay' established a girls hostel at 'Vishrantwadi' Pune. This hostel was inaugurated by Mr. Sharad Pawar, the ex chief minister of Maharashtra. At present eighty girls are taking benefit of this hostel. Hostels welfare of the poor Buddhist students.

6. Sewing Classes:

In Pune, mainly in Dapodi-Bopodi area, 'Bahujan Hitay' runs seven government recognised sewing classes for poor Buddhist women. The objective behind this is that women should become economically independent. A large number of women take advantage of these classes. Those who have qualified in this class have got jobs in tailoring companies or factories. Some have started work at home. In addition to these classes, there is a Small Saving Centre in Dapodi.
In this Centre, they stitch traditional bedsheets, cushion covers, bags and export it. The students of a sewing class also get jobs here.

7. Creche:

'Bahujan Hitay' started a creche at Dapodi for the children of women who work at construction sites. This creche is also called the Child Nutrition Centre. When I visited the creche fifteen small children were there, but the creche can accommodate thirty kids. The aim of this creche is to take good care and protect these children from malnutrition. This creche provides therapeutic feeding to malnourished children. It also arranges demonstration of how to take care patients suffering from diseases such as diarrhoea, and gives information about family planning for mothers. Almost all the women staying in this area take benefit of this health demonstration. This creche is recognised by Central Social Welfare Board, Bombay.

8. Health Care:

In Dapodi, 'Bahujan Hitay' has its own medical unit, which runs health programme for the Buddhists and other lower castes staying there. This medical unit consists of one lady doctor, nurse and health workers. This medical unit is a clinic for mother and child. They provide basic medical care. The Pune Municipal Corporation supplies
medicine. The health workers look after children below five years staying in the Dapodi area. They have four health workers to look after nine hundred children. The health workers weigh these children and screen malnourished children. They are given regular doses of 'vitamin A', for preventing night blindness, which earlier, had a high rate of 10% in the five years age group. In addition to this, vaccination, iron supplement and regular doses of deworming medicine is given to these children.

9. O.P.D.:

'Bahujan Hitay' provides O.P.D. Services once in a week to the poor Buddhists and other lower caste people, living in Dapodi, at very low rates. The people staying in this area take advantage of this O.P.D. services.

'Bahujan Hitay' received the funds for their social work from the following Trusts and Governments.

1) Karuna trust. U.K.
2) British Government and European Community.
3) Central Government of India.
4) State Government of Maharashtra.
5) State Government of Gujarat.
7) Local donations.

(Information collected through informal interviews with staff members of 'Bahujan Hitay' and pamphlets-Bahujan
The following are Main TBMSG Centres in India:

1. TBMST, Dapodi, Pune.
2. Bahujan Hitay C/o TBMSG Pune.
3. Triratna Grantha Mala c/o TBMSG, Pune.
4. TBMSG, Pimpri.
5. Saddhamma Pradip Retreat Centre, Bhaja.
7. TBMSG, Bombay.
8. TBMSG, Ahmedabad.
9. TBMSG, Aurangabad.
10. TBMSG, Wardha.
11. TBMSG, Nagpur.
12. TBMSG, Hastinapur.

From the above discussion it is clear that the Buddhist institutions play a very important role in spreading the Buddhist ideology, inculcating the Buddhist culture and imparting the doctrine of Buddhism amongst the new generation. They also encourage and help to maintain Buddhist identity. In addition, to Dhamma activities, these institutions also run various programmes and social projects for helping the poor Buddhists. It has provided educational, social and health facilities to poor Buddhists.
4.5 INTRODUCTION

In the previous section I have discussed the role of Buddhist institution in maintaining the Buddhist identity among the masses and in the development of the weaker section Buddhists. In this section I shall deal with the Buddhists’ contribution for the upliftment of their fellow members.

The Buddhists have strong sense of community and affectionate feeling about their own community members. They work for the upward mobility of the community. The Buddhist elite act as the reference model for the community. The Buddhists show greater degree of group mobility. They have succeeded in achieving upward mobility because they were guided by the able leadership of Dr. Ambedkar which worked for the group as a whole. Patwardhan (1973) stated that the Buddhists show strong group commitment. Dr. Ambedkar’s leadership, group solidarity, conversion to Buddhism, maximum utilization of educational facilities, economic and political interest, are the factors responsible for the upliftment of community. Mathew (1986) reported that the Mahars are the fastest developing caste group in Maharashtra. They have utilized all the available...
facilities for their development. Today, the Mahars have achieved success in educational and occupational spheres only because of their leadership and organizational activity. Gokhale (1993) noted that the Buddhists have shown the upward group mobility under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. They established their own educational and religious institutions and political parties to create, and educate, the self-conscious Buddhist elite. They in turn, would serve as a medium of communication with the masses to educate and lead the community. They would transform the traditional social and religious habits and practices and spread Dhamma and maintain new identity for the overall development of the community.

4.5.1 THE BUDDHISTS' CONTRIBUTION:

Almost all the respondents reacted positively to the question, "Do you feel that you have some personal responsibility to work for your community upliftment? If yes, how would you fulfill it?"

Almost all (97.4%) of the respondents said that they know that they have some personal responsibility towards their community development. A very negligible (2.6%) said that they do not have any responsibility towards their community. They responded negatively because they themselves were very poor. They said that they could not
manage for themselves, then how could they work for the community. The following different ways through which they fulfill their duties towards community were reported by the respondents during the field work:

a) Spreading education:

Most (86.3%) of the respondents said that they attached importance to education. They considered education as an instrument for bringing about changes in social and economic system. Therefore, they tell others about the importance of education. I saw that four Buddhists families staying in the research locality at Yerwada, were providing school stationery to three poor Buddhists students staying in the slum area next to the research locality. They explained to me that these children are good in studies but their economic condition is very bad. They will help them till the 10th Standard of Schooling. Sometimes these children used to do their household work. In Dapodi and Bopodi areas I have observed that the gramsevikas and pre-primary teachers take lots of efforts to inculcate the importance of education among the masses. They visit each and every house and create interest about education among the masses.

b) Informal education through Discussion:

Many (85.2%) of the respondents feel that their
community is a victim of social rules or blind faith. They discuss with people about superstition, black magic, old values and beliefs, and traditional practices in order to reduce the blind faith and inferiority complex, and educate the community.

c) Solving family problems:

Most (81.9%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the progress of the family is most important and is the primary objective for the upliftment of the community. Therefore, they gave greater importance to family and solve the family problems such as educational, economic, family relations, social and psychological problems.

d) Propagating Ambedkarite thoughts:

A Majority (66.7%) of the respondents explained that they talk and discuss the teaching of Buddha and Ambedkarite thoughts with the masses. They instill these in the minds of the people. They create love and respect for Buddhism among the masses and propagate the doctrine of Buddhism. Half (52.6%) of the respondents told that whenever they go to their native place, they talk with the villagers and spread Ambedkarite thoughts and educate the villagers.

e) Financial help:

Nearly half (49.6%) of the respondents said that they provide financial help in the form of books, stationery,
clothes, money and sometimes food to needy young scholars and economically backward students. Respondents from Yerwada told us that when students first come to stay in a hostel, they do not have books and even clothes. To them, they give old clothes.

Most (79.6%) of the respondents said that they give economic help and sometimes physical help to community associations and organisation, who do social work for the upliftment of the community.

The Buddhist elite said that they believed it to be the duty of every right-minded intellectual to contribute to the upward mobility of the community and to the spread of the doctrine of Buddhism. At present a very small section of the community is educated and well to do and so it is the responsibility of this small section to guide others and help them to use or utilize the facilities made available by the government and also to enhance their standard of living and bring it par with that of higher caste.

The Buddhists elite have said that they associate with masses and rural and poor Buddhists whenever they go to their native place. Holding a dialogue with the villagers about day to day life, raise ideological and political questions, and elites try to solve their problems. They also give guidance about how to take advantages of
government facilities and schemes, establishment of housing societies, employment guidance, cleanliness, and create awareness among the masses. Some organizations like 'Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Vihara Prasarak Manch', and 'Buddhist Forum' arrange seminars and meetings, discussions, and publish books, articles and pamphlets.

The Buddhists elite also said that they give economic and moral support to community members whenever they are in need. The Buddhist elite from teaching profession write on Dalit emancipation, Ambedkar Vad, Dalit Chalwal, Dalit Vaicharik Sanskriti, Dalit Sahitya, Dalit Women and so on, and give talk on the above topics and conduct research on Dalits and Organize people's court on Dalit question and so on.

The indicator the Buddhists' contributions for the unliftment of their members has been cross-tabulated against education, occupation, income, and age of the respondents. It shows that almost all the respondents, irrespective of their level of education, income and age, feel that they have some personal responsibility for their community development. They show their sense of community through contributing for community upliftment. This feeling is strong among elite and white colour job holders of the community as they are aware of the oppression by the upper castes. It is a little less among the daily wage workers.
because of their poor economic conditions. (see Appendix II Tables 4.1 to 4.4).

We have seen that almost all the respondents try to uplift the community according to their capacity. They follow different strategies for development of their community. They educate the community by spreading and discussing Ambedkarite thoughts and teachings of Buddha. They try to reduce the superstitions among the masses. They provide financial assistance to young scholars and community associations. They have published books, articles, poems, and photographs for creating consciousness. In this way the Buddhists community contributed for the upliftment of its members.
SECTION IV: NATURE OF ECONOMIC HIERARCHY WITHIN THE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY

4.6 INTRODUCTION

I have shown that the Buddhists have strong sense of the 'community' and their organizational activities contributed towards the upliftment of their community. In this section I have examined the nature of economic and educational hierarchy within the Buddhist community.

4.6.1 Nature of Hierarchy:

In the Buddhist community, there are rich Buddhists and poor Buddhists, meaning that there is economic hierarchy. But the respondents feel that all the Buddhists are one. There is no economic disparity in their community. Patwardhan (1973) stated that the Mahar, who is highly educated and holding a respectable job still marries a poor Mahar girl, which shows their strong unity and not maintaining hierarchy. In order to understand the nature of hierarchy within Buddhist community the following questions were posed before the respondents.

"Is there economic disparity between rich and poor"? Is there any educational disparity between literate and illiterate in your community"?
Nearly three fourths (72.67%) of the respondents said that there is no economic disparity in the community. Further, they explained that there are rich and poor as well as educated and illiterate people in their community. But they do not maintain or follow this hierarchy. They try to provide all kinds of help to the poor and illiterate people of their community. They do not keep any distance from the poor and illiterate Buddhists. They always try for the betterment of the poor Buddhists. A small number (9.3%) of respondents were of the opinion that some degree of disparity is present in their community and (18.1%) respondents told that disparity exists to a great extent.

Most (75.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the Buddhist elite intermingle with the masses and try to solve their problems. They give proper guidance to them. I have observed in the Dapodi area at Mr. Sonawane's house that slum dwellers would tell their educational and personal problems to him. Mr. Sonawane is a lecturer at a college. He used to help the poor Buddhists staying surrounding him.

More than three fourths (80.9%) of the respondents said that the Buddhist elite marry within their own community. This observation was cross-checked during the fieldwork.
The data show that some of elite have married outside the community, although a majority have married within their own community. The details are explained in Chapter VI. There is no economic discrimination observed in case of marriage. Most (76.7%) of the marriages were between the rich and poor Buddhist families. The respondents said that there are very few families, who are financially well settled. So if the spouse belonging to a poor family is educated, marriage do take place. The respondents said that they see educational background and occupation of the spouse and not economic condition. Few case examples are presented.

1. Mr. Gaikwad, residing at Yerwada, is a retired scientist. His wife is a primary school teacher. His son is a doctor, who married a girl who is a doctor but from a very low economic background. This girl’s mother is illiterate and a widow. Father was a worker and her brother is worker in the Ammunition factory. Mr. Gaikwad’s son told me that he married the girl on account of her education and not based on her family income or background. Mr. Gaikwad belongs to a comparatively well to do family.

2. Mr. Kamble, staying at Yerwada, is a retired government Class I officer. His wife is a retired headmistress of a school. His son is an engineer, and he is married to a graduate girl from the village ‘pargaon’. The girl’s
mother is illiterate and she is a housewife. Father is a retired teacher. Mr. Kamble said that in his community marriage take place between rich and poor families. However, educational level is an important consideration.

3. Two University teachers were married to girls belonging low economic category from rural areas. However, both the girls were educated.

The above case examples demonstrate the fact that the Buddhists tend to emphasize on education during mate selection rather than on family income.

The Buddhist elite said that the maintenance of economic hierarchy has no room among the Buddhists. All are equal in all respects. A man from economically higher class, may prefer a girl or a boy from lower group. Marriages do take place among people who are rich and poor.

It is clear from the above discussion that the Buddhists under study do not follow economic hierarchy. They feel that they are all equal. They have a strong sense of 'we' feeling and belonging. Marriage do take place between rich and poor families. The elite mingle with other members of the community and give no place for hierarchy.
The Buddhist's religious institutions namely 'Trilolkya Bouddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana (TBMSG) played an important role in maintaining, promoting and strengthening the new ethnic identity among the masses. It conducts different social projects and provides educational, economic and medical facilities for the welfare of the masses.

The respondents feel that they have some personal responsibility for the betterment of their community. The Buddhist elite act as a reference model for the masses. Most of the respondents take efforts according to their capacity for their community's upliftment.

The Buddhists do not maintain strict economic disparity in case of marriage. They feel that they are all one and there is no place for hierarchy in their community.

The data on marriages among the Buddhist community show that the emphasis while selecting a mate is on education rather than income level of the families contracting the marriage. This is in tune with the attitudinal preference towards educational upliftment of the community from which the occupational and income mobility are derived. Another reason for ignoring the income differences between the families during marriage alliances is that the economic
levels of most of the Buddhist families were more or less at the lower level. Some who have achieved higher income through higher education are looking for mates who are educated. So that, the family income level would increase.