Chapter 4

Nature of Dalit Leadership in Uttar Pradesh

In this chapter, we have discussed the nature and social composition of Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh. Based on our sampled data, we have examined the nature of Dalit leadership in the state in terms of the issues that the Dalit leaders generally address both in and outside the State Assembly or Parliament, and their style of functioning or the way they interact with the people of the Scheduled and non-Scheduled Castes from their constituencies. In other words, we have tried to examine here the heuristic generalizations about the less effective functioning of the Dalit leaders in the Assembly or Parliament and their alleged excessive favour extended to the people of the non-Scheduled Castes from their reserved constituencies in the joint electorate system.

At the outset, it may be said that most of the Dalit leaders not only in the state but in the entire country hail from rural background. It is so as nearly 80 per cent of India's total population still lives in the rural areas and also around 90 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population in the country is rural (Joshi 1982:22). A large majority of both Dalit and non-Dalit leaders continue to live most of the time in the rural areas and maintain close ties with their parent families, which are generally joint in composition. Sometimes, their families can have more than 20 members. The Dalit leaders visit the State/National capital during the sessions of Assembly or Parliament. Otherwise, they mostly remain confined in their rural constituency which often leaves them without day-to-day knowledge about the fast changing world (ibid: 63). Many supporters both Dalits and non-Dalits not necessarily from their respective constituencies, who need the assistance of the Dalit leaders for solving their problems, accompany them and also stay with them in allotted
hostel room for the latter. So also, the Dalit leaders located in the urban centres of the state are not as dominant as are the rural Dalit leaders. This is evident from our data that only a few Dalit leaders have been able, in all these years, to occupy any important position either in a political party (except BSP) or in the Government. Similarly, the urban Dalit leaders have neither contributed, in any significant manner, to the progress and development of the Dalit masses nor promoted their various types of movement in the state. It may also be said that they usually do not have any strong following in the cities so as to get elected comfortably from the urban constituencies.

We have already analysed, in chapter 2, the concept of a leader or leadership. Here, we shall briefly look at who is a Dalit leader in the opinion of our respondents. In the present study, we found that any ordinary worker who listens to and helps the masses in solving their problems is treated as a leader. A leader is one who may or may not be an elected member of Parliament or State Assembly. But to be a Dalit leader, one should have a clear programme of activities for upliftment of the Dalit masses. He should raise the Dalit issues at proper forum and should not get bogged down under any pressure. In other words, merely taking birth in a Dalit caste or community is not sufficient to become a Dalit leader, though our respondents have remained divided on this issue. But majority of them have asserted that to be a Dalit leader one has to take birth as Dalit. In their opinion, one who is born as a Dalit can truly empathise with the pain, agony, deprivation, humiliation, suppression and day-to-day oppression of the Dalits. He can also effectively work out plan for eradication of these. The respondents have quoted time and again the difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar and also a Hindi proverb from the countryside to prove their point:
In the present study, the Dalit leadership has been defined on the basis of certain important features. These are: nature of issues or demands the Dalit leadership has raised during different periods for amelioration of the Dalits, the form of its functioning and the style of its mobilization of the masses. If the issues were socio-religious and did not have meaningful impact on political system, the stratification system or the caste order then it is termed as socio-religious in nature. The Dalit leaders addressing such issues basically wanted to liberalise the orthodox nature of religious belief of Hinduism and change the Dalit society or community from within, as stated in chapter 1. On the other hand, if the demands of the Dalit leadership were directed towards the state and not against any particular community or the social system as such demanding political and economic rights for the Dalits then the leadership has been termed as political. However, both these categories have, to great extent, not been mutually exclusive.

Second, taking the form or style of functioning of the Dalit leadership, it has been enquired into whether it is assertive or oriented towards direct mass action with confrontationist attitude, or is it persuasive with petition and prayers submitted to the rulers as in the pasts. Third feature deciding the nature of the Dalit leadership has been their style of mobilization of the masses. The Dalit leaders have tried in recent years to mobilize the Dalit masses overtly through organising open meetings and using even harsh language against the exploitative social order or the upper castes and classes whenever and wherever they have wanted, or mobilizing them covertly and clandestinely through close door meetings in insights of the followers. Hence, on the basis of these
features the Dalit leadership may be called socio-religious, persuasive and covert in nature, or political assertive and overt in nature.

**The organic linkages of Dalit leadership in U.P.**

The contemporary Dalit leadership in U.P. specially the leadership of the RPI and the BSP emerged as an inherent outcome of a much wider ongoing Dalit movements in different parts of the country including the state of U.P. For our convenience, we have divided here the Dalit leadership in U.P. in different phases. However, these phases are interrelated and influence each other in more than one ways. In all, we have six epochs or phases of the Dalit leadership at all India level, i.e. before 1920, 1920-1937, 1937-1947, 1947-1970, 1970-1984 and 1984 onwards. As briefly mentioned in chapter 1, in the first phase before 1920 prior to Babasaheb Ambedkar, Dalits were not having any constitutional or political rights what so ever. Though they had got some social rights because of the British intervention, they were not consulted for bringing any reform in their community. Politically, they were represented by the upper castes in the legislative councils at the centre and state level (Zelliot: 1986). This was equally applicable in the case of the Madhya Desh or Central Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the present day Uttar Pradesh.

But during the second epoch, Dalits started consolidating their strength with their different types of organization and socio-political groups. Some Dalits were nominated to the Central Assembly and councils in different presidencies. The most important event of this epoch was the emergence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the horizon of Dalit liberation who had testified before many British commissions and committees constituted to safeguard the interests of the Dalits and suggest various ways and means for their upliftment. Ambedkar had organized and energised Dalit masses
by waging number of movements as stated in Chapter 1. Not only that but he also won a number of political and economic rights for them. For instance, he had won the separate electorates for the Dalits which were changed to the reserved constituencies in the joint electorate system, under the Poona Pact in 1932, through his forced negotiation with Mahatma Gandhi. With his highest level of education, vision, tactical moves and dedication, he became the true and sole representative of the Dalits in India.

This had also influenced the Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh. Dalits in the state started recognizing him as their leader. According to Lynch, "The struggle between Ambedkar and Gandhi over the issue of separate elections for untouchables was known to the Agra Jatavs. They along with other untouchable groups wired London to insist that Ambedkar, not Gandhi, was their leader. The political importance of this telegram was tremendous. It signalled that Jatavs had become aware of national implications of their problems and activities through a process of analogical identification. That is, their problems, insofar as they were matters peculiar to Agra, were local and unique; but insofar as they were a matter of untouchability, the problem were national and general" (Lynch 1974 :81). In 1936, Ambedkar established the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and directed its campaign against the Indian National Congress for its lip services to Dalits. He had thought of the ILP to be the vehicle through which the constitutional and political provisions for the benefit of the Depressed Classes would be realised (Gokhale 1993:131).

During the third epoch, the Independent Labour Party contested the Bombay Legislative Assembly elections Act 1935. For the first time in Indian society, a political party established by Dalits had won 15 out of the 17 seats (ibid:135). But to what extent the ILP was welcomed by the Dalits in U.P. is not authentically known at this stage. Yet, Ambedkar established
the Scheduled Castes Federation in Maharashtra in July 1942 which had also influenced the Dalit leadership of Uttar Pradesh particularly the leadership of the Jatavs in Agra. "In 1944-45...the formation of the Scheduled Castes Federation (in Agra) was linked to Dr. Ambedkar’s All India Scheduled Castes Federation. It was a major turning point in the Jatvas’ definition of their social situation. Consequently, their reference group of identification now became the Scheduled Castes with whom they identified as the oppressed, unenlightened and deprived section of the population. These characteristics of the Scheduled Castes became the basis of new Jatav self-image; it was a striking about face from their march to Kshatriyahood (Lynch 1974:86).

The fourth epoch came with the political Independence of India in 1947. The country got its own Constitution with the parliamentary democracy in which Dr. Ambedkar had played the pivotal role as framer of the Constitution. He also became the first Law Minister of the country in the Nehru’s cabinet but resigned in 1951 in absence of the assured support for adoption of the Hindu Code Bill piloted by him in the Parliament. But the most dramatic event of this epoch came when Ambedkar converted to Buddhism along with lakhs of his followers in October 1956. These changes affected greatly the Dalits in U.P. also. In the words of Lynch, "First of all in 1956, most of the Agra Jatavs followed Dr. Ambedkar into Buddhism ... Buddhism presented an alternative to the caste system in which Jatavs attempts at social mobility had been unsuccessful" (ibid: 92-93). It is also true that this process of conversion to Buddhism was rampant in other parts of the state (Mendelsohn & Vicziany 1998:116).

Further, Ambedkar’s sad demise in December 1956 also occurred during this epoch creating a dearth of All India Dalit leadership. The crisis threw Jagjivan Ram, a Dalit leader from Bihar, as the dominant Dalit
leader of the Indian National Congress. In fact, he had opposed Ambedkar during this period on the issue of latter's conversion. He went to Agra in 1956 and tried to persuade the Jatavs for not converting to Buddhism and remain in Hinduism and with the Congress Party (Lynch 1974:145). But contrary to this, the Dalit leaders during this epoch transformed the Scheduled Castes Federation, which was electorally unsuccessful in 1946 and 1952, into the Republican Party of India (RPI) after the Lok Sabha elections of 1957 (Gokhale 1993:215, Mendelsohn & Vicziany1990: 212). The RPI, according to Ambedkar, was to be a political party based on the principles of "liberty, equality and fraternity" (Keer 1997-489), and was to represent the downtrodden and disadvantaged class of Indian society irrespective of caste or region.

The formation of the RPI in Maharashtra yet again influenced the Dalits of U.P. as they were already in contact with the SCF. Hence, the Republican Party of Agra was formed in 1958 as a branch of the Republican Party of India confirming the belief in the leadership of Dalit leaders in Maharashtra (Lynch1974:95). But in the long run, the RPI became the story of splits, after splits sometimes on the issue of its membership, sometimes on the clash of interests in leadership especially between the older and the younger generations and sometimes because of its support extended to the Congress Party (Gokhale 1993:219-255). Yet, it is a fact that the Republican Party of India Agra branch was always aware of the programmes of the RPI and its leaders had participated in the struggle launched by the later at the national level. "In 1964 march on the Lok Sabha in New Delhi, the party (RPI) claimed that one lakh of people had joined March, which was led by Gaikward, Khobragade and B.P. Maurya, a RPI MP from Aligarh" (ibid: 231). Further split took place in the RPI in 1969, which weakened it more as many of its leaders including the RPI leaders in Agra joined hands with the Congress Party. The Congress Party even highjacked the issues of the RPI and the latter became an
appendage to the former. Hence, the Dalit leadership in the state got divided into two streams: of the dependent and independent Dalit leaders. This was practically the end of the fourth epoch of the Dalit leadership in U.P.

The emergence of Dalit Panthers in the early 1970s marked the beginning of the fifth epoch of the Dalit leadership, which continued till 1984 with the emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Moreover, the beginning of this epoch coincided with the hectic social engineering done by Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India and leader of the Congress Party. Before going into the general elections in March 1971, she took many significant decisions to woo the Dalits. For instance, "In the fall of 1969, Buddhists became eligible for Scheduled Caste post-matric scholarships. In December the Constitution was amended again, by unanimous vote, to extend reserved seats for another ten years. In January 1970, government proposed to stiffen the Untouchability (Offences) Act. In April, reservations for direct recruitment to the central services were raised from 12.5 to 15 per cent for Scheduled Castes" (Dushkin1998: 208). With these moves, Indira Gandhi successfully won the support of the Dalits and led her Congress Party to an overwhelming victory. This, in turn, left the Dalit leadership without any significant agenda. The RPI leadership in Uttar Pradesh was also subsumed by the Congress Party, which created a vacuum in the Dalit leadership.

The Dalit Panthers movement did galvanize the Dalit masses in Maharashtra during 1972-1979 but it also succumbed to the divisive tendencies inherent in the organization besides failure of its leaders in organizing the masses in the rural areas. A good proportion of the Panther leaders got reabsorbed into the Congress Party (Gokhale 1993: 293, Omvedt 1998:156). Though there is no documentary evidence to prove that the Dalit Panthers movement was also active in some regions of Uttar
Pradesh but it is a fact that a few Dalit activists came with the Dalit Panthers organization in Kanpur city and had launched some protests there. In our respondents the present study, Dalit leaders have accepted that the Dalit Panthers movement was active in central U.P. even in the rural areas in Lucknow, Malihabad, Mohanlalganj, Barabarki, Pratapgarh, Sultanpur, Faizabad, etc. and it lasted for 5-6 years (from 1980 to 1985).

A different beginning was made by the Dalit leadership in the state with formation of the Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) on 6th December, 1978. Kanshi Ram emerged as the important Dalit leader during this period. He wanted to develop the BAMCEF as the major support organization for a political unit to be set up latter (Omvedt 1998:163). Later on, he established the Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DSS) again on 6 Dec.,1981. Not satisfied with these organizations, he launched the (BSP) Bahujan Samaj Party on 14th April, 1984 with a clear political identity, dalit base and militant ideology (Pai, 2000:77). Omvedt has called its formation as "deliberate and not reactive...It has consistently refused a "reactive" agitational stance which has meant, in practice, staying out of many major Dalit struggles" (Omvedt1998:162). During this period, the Congress Party was on the decline and there was an emergence of Rightist forces. Another significant aspect of this epoch was that, unlike the previous movements, which rose in Maharashtra and then came to Uttar Pradesh, this time Uttar Pradesh gave the leadership. And till date, the Dalit leadership of the BSP is dominant in Uttar Pradesh changing the course of Dalit action and assertion. Further, many other important events occurred during this period which affected the Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh also. For instance, the BSP started contesting elections on its own or in alliance with a few other political parties in U.P. and neighbouring states. "BSP contested Lok Sabha elections in December 1984 and U.P. Vidhan Sabha elections in March (ibid: 94). From then onwards, it has been progressing
in positive direction in terms of percentage of its votes, number of seats won both in the Parliament and State Assemblies. The greatest loss in terms of the support base in Dalits and minorities in U.P. was suffered by the Congress Party with such progress of the BSP* (Hasan1998, Omvedt: 1998).

In the sixth and the last phase of the Dalit leadership since 1984 till date, the BSP has established and stabilized itself as the major Dalit political party in U.P. and a few neighbouring the states. It has become the hallmark of the Dalit leadership in Indian polity also as it has established itself as a national political party. The BSP has been in the Government thrice (1993, 1995, 1997) albeit for brief periods in U.P. It has also created history by elevating Mayawati, a Dalit woman, to the Chief Ministership twice (June 1995 and April 1997) of the most populated state of the country. Not only that, every political party - the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress (I) Party have been forced in the recent years to enter in the electoral pact with the BSP. This suggests a qualitative change in the polity of the state as well as in the Dalit politics. Another two important events of this epoch are that the space vacated by Congress Party in the country as well as in U.P. has increasingly been filled in by the BJP through the communal mobilization of the voters (Hasan1998: 242). Secondly, the Other Backward Castes or Classes (OBC) have also come in the dominant political position. It has been stated that, "OBC driven political change has radically altered the framework of superordination subordination in UP's power structure ...The trend towards, greater representation of the OBCs is strikingly manifested in the 1991, 1993, 1996 state assemblies" (Hasan 1998:162).

Thus, all the six epochs have remained eventful in the case of the Dalit leadership both at the national and regional levels which directly or indirectly have affected the nature of the Dalit leadership, the issues
pursued and the strategies adopted by it for the purpose. Therefore, it is necessary to locate the Dalit leadership in U.P. in the existing socio-political reality to understand and analyse its various moves made in the different epochs. In other words, we shall briefly look here at the various types of issues addressed by the Dalit leadership specially in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

**Issues addressed by the Dalit leadership in U.P.**

As it was difficult to easily locate a living respondent who was born before 1920 to respond to some of the questions relating to the issues addressed by the Dalit leadership since the 1920 till date in the state. Hence, we had to rely exclusively on the written documents about the issues raised by the Dalit leadership and the styles of its functioning in the earlier times. As stated earlier, there were no economic, political and social rights accorded to the Dalits before 1920. In absence of the Dalit leaders in the modern sense of the term, the traditional caste panchayat leaders organised and raised certain issues related to the Dalit community. In fact, the social status and socio-cultural practices within the Dalit community were the core issues. The caste leaders put bans on eating of carrion beef, boycott of meat and liquor, and motivated people for Sanskritisation of their way of life and change their identity. In the case of the eastern Uttar Pradesh, Cohn (1992:278) writes, "At least two generations ago Jaisvarga Chamars in the vicinity of Madhopur (in Jaunpur district) began to outlaw the eating of beef and the carting of manure in what proved a futile attempt to gain greater respect for the caste...Thirty years ago in opposition to their own Thakurs, some Chamars of Madhopur declared also that they would no longer carry manure to the Thakurs' fields...Chamar women in general took further step; they refused any longer to make dung cake for the Thakur's household". This act of self-purification was not limited in the eastern
U.P. only but was also prevalent in central U.P. "Thus at a Sabha held in October 1920, the Chamars of Bareilly (central U.P) had decided to forsake meat as well as liquor and other intoxicants; but they were also very forthright in their refusal to do begar (unpaid bonded labour) for the district officials on tour and submitted a petition to the Governor" (Amin 1999: 13). The same trend of status enhancement and self-development of a Dalit community could also be observed in the vicinity of western U.P during the same period. For instance, the Jatavs with the help of Swami Atma Ram began to assert in 1900, though unsuccessfully, a claim to the kshatriya status (Lynch1974: 68). Further, the Jatavs' younger generation specially students started organizing their caste people. "In 1917, they banded together and formed the Jatav Men's Association (Jatav Vir Mahasabha). Later the Jatav propaganda circle (Jatav Pracharak Mandal) was formed. These societies were intended to motivate the Jatavs towards education, sanskritisation of their way of life and change of their identity. Education was considered of primary importance" (ibid: 69).

The process of reforms within the Dalit communities was also observed in the urban centres. For instance, in her study of Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Lucknow, Gooptu has recorded the self-assertion of the Dalits in the form of the a Bhakti movement. In her own words, "bhakti came to be practiced more extensively by the urban untouchables, from the early twentieth century, as a form of denial of caste distinctions. For the untouchables in the towns, the message of caste equality in bhakti gave them a means to question the discrimination and disabilities that they continued to face" (1996:284). The Dalits in the urban centres reconstituted caste panchayats, left non-vegetarian foods, called themselves as bhagats, added the suffix or surnames like Kabirpanthis, Shivnaryani, Raidasi, etc. Regular Satsangs (religious congregations) and
Bhajans were held in the temples constructed after the names of their Gurus. With all these cultural and religious practices and traditions, they tried to establish a new life-style which was different from their brethren in the countryside. They also tried to improve their caste status without questioning the caste system as such.

The aforesaid issues of self-purification and status enhancement raised earlier by the Chamars and or Jatavs also spread among the other Dalit or untouchable castes during the second epoch (1921-1937). As far as social issues among the Untouchable castes other than Chamar and or Jatavs are concerned, a correspondent from Naugrah in Basti district wrote in Sandesh (a Congress Party weekly paper published from Gorakhpur) on 6, Feb 1921, p.8 that, "The Sweepers, Washermen and Barbers of this place met in panchayats of their various biradaris (brotherhood) on 27 January 1921. They have decided that anyone who partakes of meat, fish and liquor would be punished by the biradari and would have to donate Rs.51 to the gaushala (the cow sheds). The Dhobis and Barbers have also decided not to wash the clothes and cut the hair of any of their patrons who partakes of meat, fish and liquor" (Amin 1999:12-13). Similarly, Cohn wrote in 1952 that, "Chamars are not alone not trying to elevate their caste status. Fifteen years ago representatives of most of the Bhars of Kerakat Tahsil (in Jaunpur district) met to plan ways to raise their status. Several Bhars who were government officials addressed the meeting and told them that they were lowly and despised because they raise pigs. The Bhars gave up pig-raising, yet it is difficult to say they are held in better regard than the Khatiks and Pasis of the area, who still herd Swine" (Cohn 1992:279).

Yet, it is worth mentioning here that during this period, the self-assertion of Chamar community was becoming more frequent and very open in eastern, western and central parts of the state. "By early 1922
indications of a growing restlessness among them (Chamars) ... arising out of the general spirit of revolt were reaching the police head-quarters in the districts. The movement for 'self-reform' now revealed 'a tendency to forsake hereditary callings' as well" (U.P. Police Abstracts of Intelligence, 1 April 1922). The eight resolutions passed in January 1922 at a large meeting of the Chamars of Azamgarh (in eastern U.P.) followed the standard patterns of social reform about the prevalence among them of child marriage and co-habitation out of wedlock. They also imposed the interdictions on taking toddy and liquor, and on animals sacrifice. What is perhaps equally significant is that they also pledged themselves not to trade in hides and skins, and to discourage their young boys from taking up their ancestral profession (Sandesh 8, Jan 1922, p.6). In the western and central U.P. also, Chamars were refusing to skin carcasses and perform begar for the landlords and even the government officials. The U.P. Police Abstracts of intelligence (1 April, 1922) also reported that the Chamars refused allowing their women the liberty of movement, an euphemism for the withdrawal of female labour from the homes of the Upper castes" (Amin 1999:13-14).

On the whole, the leaders during this period had adopted the three dimensional approach for social mobility of the Dalit masses. These approaches were: sanskritisation, construction of new history vis-à-vis social order for the Dalits and the use of political means. In the first case, the Dalit leaders tried to imitate the life-style of the dominant caste of their region. For instance, in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh, the Chamars and Jatavs imitated the life-style of Kshtriyas (Cohn 1992), Lynch1974) as stated earlier. Cohn has written that in 1952-1953, "Chamars in nearby villages of Jaunpur district and also in Azamgarh district have started wearing sacred threads, calling themselves 'Harijan Thakurs', but so far Chamars of Madhopur have not joined them" (1992:279). Lynch wrote, "However, the Jatavs did not identify with the Arya Samajists. Their
reference group of identification was the Kshatriya Varna...The crucial task was to prove an acceptable genealogy which would legitimise their claim. It was asserted that the Jatavs were of Yadu Race (Vansh) and thus were really of Kshatriya Varna" (Lynch 1974:70-71).

In the case of status purification, self-assertion and caste mobility, the Dalit leaders led by Swami Achhutanand in Kanpur district tried to construct a new history and social order for the Dalits. The Adi-Hindu ideology was formulated in the 1920s by a new generation of literate untouchables. "Bhakti resurgence thus produced a generation of literate untouchables who emerged to be the leaders and ideologues of the Adi Hindu movement. Swami Achhutanand (1879-1933), one of the most prominent Adi Hindu leaders in the 1920s and 1930s, was brought up at a military cantonment, where his father worked, and later settled in Kanpur...Ram Charan (1888-1938), an Adi Hindu leader of Lucknow, was born in a slum at Gwaltoli in Kanpur. His parents were casual labourers" (Gooptu 1996:286). Some of the literate Dalit leaders concerned with caste uplift had earlier joined the Arya Samaj, which was promising to uplift the Dalits by allowing them to undergo a process of 'Shuddhi' (purification). But since the 1920s, they realised that the Arya Samaj was acting as the 'army of high caste Hindus' whose only intention was to rally the Hindu community against the Muslims, and that the Samaj's attempt to uplift the lower castes was merely a part of this strategy (ibid: 287). Swami Achhutanand in a speech claimed that the Samaj aimed 'to make all Hindus slaves of Vedas and the Brahmans' (Jigyasu 1968:9-10).

In the meantime, the British government had also introduced some political reforms. These twin reasons forced Dalit leaders to think that the entry of the untouchables into the Hindu hierarchy through the Arya Samaj would not further their interest (Gooptu 1996:287). Hence, in search of a new ideology to repudiate the Vedic Hinduism and the caste
system they drew upon the *bhakti* religion and formulated the ideology of Adi Hinduism as mentioned above. "The Adi Hindu leaders claimed that there had been ancient Adi Hindu Kingdoms, capital cities, forts and a thriving civilization. They alleged that when the Aryans invaded the country, they conquered these Adi Hindus variously by brute force, repression and treachery... Having defeated and subjugated the Adi Hindus, the Aryans forced them to perform 'low' jobs. They then devised the caste system and oppressive social laws, embodied in the Vedas and codified in the *Manu Smrti*, in order to relegate the Adi Hindus to untouchable status and to deprive them of their rights in society. Hinduism, with its caste system, was argued to be a political creation of the Aryans, who called themselves the higher castes" (Gooptu 1996:292). It is further stated, "The Adi Hindu leaders projected the past not only as a period when the forebears of the untouchables were the rulers, but also as a golden age of social equality. In the Vedas and other Hindu religious texts, there are accounts of warfare between Hindu gods and *asuras* or *rakshasas* (demons), in which the latter appear as evil and oppressive, and vanquished by the gods. The Adi Hindu leaders interpreted these stories as references to the process of the conquest of the pre-Aryans by the Aryans...Adi Hindu leaders held that the Aryans deliberately vilified the pre-Aryan rulers as demons in order to justify their conquest of the original races...They then proceeded to condemn the higher castes of the twentieth century as upholders of the tradition of injustice of their Aryan progenitors, for not acknowledging the rights of the untouchables and for continuing to exclude and deprive them" (ibid: 292, 293). Lynch (1974:76) has also mentioned about the Adi Hindu movement prevalent throughout Uttar Pradesh.

Hence, the Adi Hindu leaders tried to construct a separate history for the Dalits and propagate the idea that Dalits could develop themselves if they went outside the Hindu society. Further, they wanted to forge a
greater alliance with the Adi movements that were going on in other parts of the country at that point of time. A conference convened by Swami Achhutanand in Delhi in 1926, was attended by the leaders of the Ad Dharma of Punjab and the Adi Hindu leaders of Andhra Pradesh. The purpose of the meeting was to bring unity among the Dalit activists from different parts of the country (Juergensmeyer 1982:38). The meeting displayed a certain amount of agreement on the need for establishing a separate Dalit organization. Though some attempt was made to forge a united front, there was disagreement over the name of the organization and its significance. According to Ad Dharma leaders, Achhutanand wanted the 'Adi' movements to spread all over India whereas the Punjab Dalits thought it proper to attain the regional strength under the separate name and then unite.

Apart from these attempts of social reforms and self-purification, the Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh used political means to uplift the Dalit masses, as stated earlier. For instance, for the first time after gaining limited political rights the Jatav Men’s Association of Agra lobbied for the inclusion of one of their members in the State Legislative Council. Thus in 1920, Khem Chand Bohare was nominated as member of the Council in the state in which he served two terms (Lynch 1974:78). Later on, Bohare was appointed to the District Board of Agra from 1922 to 1930 and served the Municipal Board of Agra from 1926 to 1928 (ibid:78). Another important political move of the Dalit leadership during this period was that the Dalit leaders testified before the Simon Commission Electoral Committee in 1928. Swami Achhutanand, Khemchand Bohre, Chaudhari Shyamlal and Babu Ram Charanj were a few prominent leaders who were at the forefront of this movement (Kshirsagar 1994:175-346).

Political consciousness was growing among the Dalits of western U.P. at this point of time. The following resolutions passed by the
conference of the Jatav Yuvak Mandal (League) in Agra in 1937 and 1938 respectively are testimony to the fact, "The conference takes decision that the aim of league in the future will be to attain political freedom by suitable constitutional and peaceful means. This conference would impress upon the Jatav members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies that regardless of the political party to which they personally belong, they should vote unanimously on any issue concerning the interests of their community" (Yadvendu 1942:163). The Dalit leadership during this period showing signs of political maturity had supported Dr. Ambedkar's claim and not of Gandhi as their leader at the second London Round Table Conference held at London (Lynch1974:81).

On the other hand, Dalits mainly the Kabirpanthis entered the upper caste dominated politics in Benaras, eastern Uttar Pradesh. Though the Indian National Congress Party was dominant party and a few Dalits also had got entry into it, the Dalits organised their own independent political party. "Increasing realization of their own strength took a new turn, when in 1934, certain Kabirpanthi members of Benaras formed a party called Kabir Dal which was to contest elections to realise the egalitarian values in keeping with Kabir's ideology. This party was equally concerned for the independence of India" (Purendu 1999:154). The influence of this party spread to Bihar also where they contested election in 1935 for the District Council. However, their endeavour to establish an alternative to the Congress Party could not succeed and slowly died out. Similarly, the Congress leader Jagjiyan Ram was instrumental in mobilizing the Dalits against the call of Dr. Ambedkar for getting converted to some other religion as stated earlier. Even, "In conference of the untouchables held at Lucknow on 22 may 1936, it was however decided at Babuji's initiative that mass conversion of untouchables as proposed by Dr. Ambedkar be postponed for an indefinite period (Kshirsagar 1994: 312).
It may be emphasized here that the Dalit leadership mobilized the Dalit masses on the political terrain to enhance their social, economic and political status. In eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Thakurs' (Kshatriya caste) suppressed their tenants and even successfully evicted the latter who had legal rights to permanency over the land cultivated by them. "in 1938 the Chamars made their first large-scale attack upon the Thakurs' position of power. They did so by supporting some Noniyas rather than their own Thakurs" (Cohn1992:275). Similarly, in western U.P. the Jatavs pressurised the government to list them as a separate caste in the Census. In 1936, their "movement went into full operation with three demands: (1) that in all government papers the caste be listed as Jatav and not as part of the Chamar group of castes; (2) that the caste be listed separately as Jatav in the Census; and (3) that the Uttar Pradesh Government recommend to the British Government the acceptance of the Jatav community as a separate caste in the list of Scheduled Castes...The political manoeuvres undertaken in the push for recognition of their status were not unsophisticated...A deputation of Jatavs put their claims before Govind Vallabh Pant, then premier of the Uttar Pradesh Government. One of the two Jatav members of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly (elected in 1937) questioned in the Assembly the Uttar Pradesh Minister of Education on the same problem. In addition, a memorial letter, said to bear six thousand Jatav signatures, was sent to the Secretary of State for India in London" (Lynch 1974: 82-83). As stated earlier, the Dalits had limited electoral rights during 1920-1937 because the electorate system was closely limited by the criteria of property and education (Cohn 1992:274). Hence, very few lower caste people were entitled to vote. Later on when the Dalits got the voting rights under the Govt. of India Act, 1935, they had to wait till 1937 general elections to use that and only after their use of the adult
franchise, the consciousness started dawning on them to make its use to gain political power.

A new phase of Dalit leadership ushered with the general elections of 1937, as under the Poona Pact seats were reserved for the Dalits and only they could contest elections from the reserved constituencies. As stated earlier, it became mandatory for every political party to give representation to Dalits, which was a new experience to both Dalits and upper castes. Many Dalits contested Assembly elections for the first time in the Indian electoral politics. "Manik Chand Jatav (1897-1956) contested as an independent candidate and won the elections from Agra constituency, Karan Singh Kane contested as a Congress candidate and won. Shyamlal (1894-1959) from Allahabad and Khemchand Bohare from Agra contested independently but both got defeated (Kshirsagar 1994).

It is, however, evident that the Dalit leadership did not have any independent political organization, which could have given to the Dalits a networking throughout the state. There were a few independent organisations here and there but as stated earlier, "In 1944-45 these political undercurrents crystallized into the formation of the Scheduled Castes Federation of Agra which was linked with Dr. Ambedkar's All India Scheduled Castes Federation" (Lynch 1974: 86). This organization tried to unite the Dalit leadership in different regions of Uttar Pradesh under one umbrella. The scattered Dalit leaders got one platform and one leader in Ambedkar. The Dalit leadership, thus, moved steadily from indirect political influence to the direct or active political participation. During this phase of the Dalit leadership, they also raised the issue of reservation to be given to the Dalits in the Government jobs, which was altogether a new type of demand added in the armoury of the Dalit leaders. But it was heard more in western U.P. The second issue for the Dalit leaders was denunciation of Poona Pact. Ambedkar interpreted the
Pact as a betrayal of the Dalits by Gandhi, an interpretation which was and still is accepted by a sizable number of Dalits in the state (Lynch 1974:88). Acharya Moti Ram Shastri of Chandauli tehsil of Varanasi district who was an active social reformer and political leaders during the 1950s-70 told that the social and not the political issue had dominated in the eastern region of Uttar Pradesh during 1937-47. Babu Gajadhar Prasad and Babu Bechan Ram from Varanasi were a few prominent Dalit leaders from Chamar community fighting for the Dalit cause. On the other hand, the general elections were held in 1946 and the Scheduled Castes Federation was routed. To certain extent “The defeat of the Scheduled Castes Federation candidates was undoubtedly due in part to its internal factions, lack of organization and lack of money” (ibid: 88). But it did galvanise the demoralized Dalits. The elections further divided the Dalit leaders into the Congress Dalit leadership and the Scheduled Castes Federation Dalit leadership.

After India got Independence in the year 1947, the Dalit masses were also full of expectations along with the socio-political and economic rights bestowed on them with the constitutional safeguards. The changes started occurring at a relatively faster speed. Number of Dalit leaders had emerged by now raising the issues related to the wretched conditions of the Dalits. Acharya Moti Ram Shastri, Ramdhan, Gajadhar Prasad Sankatha Prasad Shastri, Narendra Kumar Shastri, Changur Ram Chaudhry Shyamlal, etc. were important leaders in the early 1950s. It is worth mentioning here that these leaders were active mainly in the rural areas of Azamgarh, Varanasi, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Allahabad, Akbarpur and a few other districts in the eastern region. Occasionally, they visited the districts like Lucknow, Unnao, Sitapur, Bareilly, Barabanki, etc. in central U.P. and made their presence felt by the Dalit masses. Besides, the Dalit leaders like Manik Chand Jatav, Sundar Lal Sagar, Chaudhary Nandlalji, Dharm Prakash, Babu Ram Chandraji, Mahadev Prasad, etc.
were prominent leaders who led the Dalit masses in their struggles mainly in districts of Agra, Meerut, Bulandshahar, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, etc. in the western Uttar Pradesh.

The social issues raised by the Dalit leadership during this epoch were not very different from those raised in the earlier periods. These included abolition of untouchability, leaving the eating of carrion, giving up the Hari Begar (the mandatory unpaid or underpaid works demanded by the Thakurs), giving up the Dai Janai or Nar Biana (asking Dalit women to assist upper caste women at the time of their delivery and cleaning their dirts), raising their voice against the atrocities committed on the Dalits, demanding their rights to enter temples and other public places, attending the common educational institutions, using public wells, etc. Based on his study in 1954 of village Khalapur in the district of Saharanpur, western Uttar Pradesh, Mahar has reported that, "One disability shared in common by ...untouchable castes has been refusal of the village Brahmans, Barbers and Washermen to serve them. Consequently, marriage rites and other ceremonies, performed by Brahman priests for the other castes, have been performed by caste elders within each untouchable group" (Mahar1998: 22). He also informed that the use of gold was forbidden to untouchables (ibid: 23).

Dalits also wanted to change their caste names, which often carried abusive connotations. In the words of Cohn, "the Chamars of Madhopur prefer to designate themselves by other name. Some Chamars call themselves 'Raidasi', taking the name of their most famous Saint, Raidas. Other Chamars, of whom there are many in the next district of Azamgarh, style themselves 'Harijan Thakur's" as stated earlier (Cohn1992: 264). Similarly, in western U.P. Jatavs started using 'Singh' as their surname to run away from their caste stigma even though they
had left the process of sanskritisation. The sweeper community also took 'Valmiki' as their surname, after the famous sage Valmiki or Balmiki.

The above-mentioned social disabilities of the Dalits gave ample scope to their leaders to wage a multidimensional struggle for improving the status of their masses. The successful use of political power acquired by the Dalits during this epoch started with the passing of the Uttar Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1947 which replaced the officially appointed panchayats members. Now, members of the Gaon Sabha (village council) and Panchayti Adalat (rural court) were to be elected through the universal adult suffrage. The Dalits organized themselves to oust the dominant caste Thakurs and other castes and captured power in certain areas. "Elections for these new panchayats in 1948 provided the occasion for the first successful of all the lower castes of Madhopur against Thakurs... Chamars were elected to both bodies. The traditional village leadership of the Thakurs had been completely routed from formal control of Madhopur" (Cohn1992:276-277). In another incidence in Saharanpur, the Dalits adopted a different strategy to assert their demand. For instance, "in 1955, members of the shoemaker caste stated that they would support a candidate for village Pradhan only if he promised to remove the yard used for the disposal of dead animals from their compound to a side outside village settlement. Other Untouchables voiced their desire to acquire more land for housing from an area contingent to their compound that was under the jurisdiction of the village council" (Mahar 1998: 29). With the passage of time, the Dalits were benefited with political power of right to vote which gave them a new status of equal citizen compared to others. Lynch has observed, "By exercising the rights given to them in these new statuses the Jatavs are now trying to gain further entry into the opportunity and power structures of India. Through them, also they are trying to make the politically ascribed status of citizen, and not the religiously ascribed
status of caste, the dominant status in cases of conflict or contradiction between interacting Indians" (Lynch1974: 90).

With the first general elections after Independence in 1952, a change ushered "in the social psychology of people and their social, cultural and political self-awareness. Social scientists have rightly called the elections in India as a measure of 'silent revolution'. It activates new social solidarities, structuration of people's aspirations...It also subordinates the administrative and professional authority to the authority of people's representatives making the system more responsive to needs" (Singh1996: 25-26). This whole process of peoples' representatives with the political patronage and formal institutions of power to cater to the demands of the people relegated the social reformers to the peripheries. Dalit society was no exception to this phenomenon and, hence, the socio-religious Dalit leadership was completely replaced by the Dalit political leadership. The Dalit political leadership was mainly represented by the Scheduled Castes Federation in the state but some of the Dalit leaders were also in the Congress Party as stated earlier. We have also mentioned that in the two general elections of 1952 and 1957, the Scheduled Castes Federation was routed and the Congress Party gained an upper hand in capturing the Dalit votes in the reserved constituencies.

With the conversion of Ambedkar to Buddhism in 1956, the Dalits of Uttar Pradesh especially of Agra region also took the path of religious conversion. Hence, with the passage of time new problems related to conversion emerged. Therefore, one who openly professes to be Buddhist is (was) not eligible for the special help given by the government to the Scheduled Castes under its "Protective Discrimination" policy. A Buddhist in Uttar Pradesh cannot stand for reserved seats in an election, nor can he apply for government jobs reserved for Scheduled Castes. His
children cannot claim eligibility or remission of fees, grants and scholarship given to the Scheduled Castes for educational purposes" (Lynch 1974:147). These along with the persistently pursued issues were taken up by the Dalit leadership during 1956-1969.

The Republican Party of India, Agra branch emphasized the economic, political and social plights of the Dalits in the state. The general policies of the party at the national level were set out in its Election Manifesto, which gives a clear indication of the issues pursued by its leaders during this period. A charter of ten demands was presented to the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. These demands were:

2. Let the land of the nation go to the actual tiller of the land.
3. Idle and wasteland must go to the landless labourers.
4. Adequate distribution of food grains and control over the rising prices.
5. Lot of slum dwellers should be improved.
7. Extension of all privileges guaranteed by the Constitution to those Scheduled Castes have embraced Buddhism.
8. Harassment of the Depressed Classes should cease forthwith.
9. Full justice be done to them under the Untouchability (Offences) Act.
10. Reservation in the services to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes be completed as soon as possible, not later than 1970.

(Manifesto of the Republican Party of India (Hindi), 1964, and also in Lynch 1974:104).
In addition, the Agra branch of the party included the demand that taxes on shoe-markets should be remitted. This demand reflects the concern of the party with Chamar group of castes, particularly those of Agra and Kanpur as they were involved in this business (ibid:104).

The above-mentioned demands were confirmed by some of our respondents during the interview with them in western Uttar Pradesh. It astonishes here that though these demands were also raised in the eastern Uttar Pradesh, these were scattered, as there was no political party like the Republican Party of India, Agra branch. On the other hand, the Dalit leadership in the Congress Party was not so vocal to raise these issues openly as was revealed by some of the respondents. As such, it may be said that the issue of unity among all the Dalits became the dominant one of the Republican Party of India, Agra branch in the western Uttar Pradesh. "The aim of the Party is to unite all Scheduled Castes against Congress Party" (Lynch 1974:108). This gave birth to a process of horizontal mobilization of the Dalit castes in different regions in the state. By 1962, the Republican Party of India, Agra realised that Dalits could be electorally successful if they organized themselves well. In Aligarh city B.P.Maurya, a firebrand leader from the Jatav community, who was later imprisoned under the Defence of India Rule (DIR) at the time of Chinese intrusion into India, won the Parliamentary elections from a general constituency. Along with him an RPI candidate also won the MLA seat. This means that the Dalits' independent organizing was taking its roots at least in the western part of Uttar Pradesh.

But the independent organizing of the RPI was short-lived and in the 1967 general elections and the 1969 mid-term elections for the State Assembly, the party could not gain any success (Joshi 1982:105). In fact, the Congress Party during this period created factionalism in the state unit of the RPI on the one hand and formulated certain policy to directly
influence the Dalits at the national level on the other hand, as stated earlier. But the immediate effect of factionalism was that the RPI became leaderless in Uttar Pradesh. "In a way, Congress snatched agenda of RPI during 1969-70" as revealed by Gulab Shehra, one time Deputy Speaker of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly and Social Welfare Minister of the state during 1984-1989 in the Congress Party regime. "By 1971, Maurya and his major opponent within the party, Ramji Ram, were both returned to the Lok Sabha under the banner of Indira Gandhi's ostensibly left-oriented branch of the Congress. This was the effective end of the Republican Party as a force in Uttar Pradesh" (Mendelsohn & Vicziany 1998:213) as well as the end of this epoch. Today, the RPI exists in Uttar Pradesh mainly into two factions one of Prakash Ambedkar's Bhartiya Republican Party and other of Ram Das Athavale's Republican Party of India. Thus, we may see that this was one of the longest epochs of the Dalit leadership starting from 1947 to the demise of Republican Party of India in 1969.

In effect, with the demise of the Republican Party of India a new epoch of the Dalit leadership emerged which was dominated by the Dalit leaders of the Congress Party. Specially in the eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Congress leadership gave prominence to the Chamar caste and leaders like Ram Dhan, Ganpat Ram, Jai Prasad, Ram Pyare Suman, Baddal Ram, Mata Prasad, Dharamveer and Mahasay Masuriya Din emerged on the scence. Similarly, in the central Uttar Pradesh, Kanhaiyalal Sonkar, Ram Kinkar, Gaya Prasad Prashant, Tilak Chand Kureel, Chaudhry Buddha Dev, Bhagauti Prasad Kureel and Mewalal Sonkar were leading the Dalit movement under the banner of the Congress Party. Finally, in western Uttar Pradesh, Jatav leaders like S.P.Gautam, Ram Lal Rahi, H.L.Azad, Kamal Dariyabadi, B.P.Maurya and Chaudhry Dharam Singh, with the exception of Rameshwar Dayal Valmiki were leading the Dalit politics.
On 5 Dec 1980, the Dalit Panthers movement was born in Lucknow besides in Kanpur as stated earlier. Shymlal of Jaunpur was its President and D.K. Anand of Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow was its General Secretary. Anand further revealed that a presidium was set with Bharat Singh of Agra, Rahulan Rao Ambavadekar originally from Azamgarh but settled in Kanpur and Satya Priya Manav from Itawa as its members. The Dalit Panthers in Uttar Pradesh were militant and specially rose against the atrocities on the Dalits since the 1980s when the Congress Party came to power again after a brief gap of two and half years of the Janata Party Government. The main demands of Panthers were that, "in case of a death of the Dalit due to atrocity, he/she should be paid Rs.5 lakh as compensation along with 5 Bighas of land, one weapon (a pistol or gun) and service to one person in the family". There is no evidence to prove at this stage whether they had succeeded in forcing the government to pay such compensation. But one thing is clear that the demand itself looked impractical and the Panthers were not in great numbers to amount the required pressure on the government for getting their demands realised. Also, some of their demands were already raised by the RPI in the state, which though promised were not fulfilled by the Congress government, particularly the demand of land to tiller. Later on, the General Secretary of the Panthers was booked under the National Security Act (NSA) because of his provocative speeches and violent demonstrations organized at the district headquarters in 1986. Thus, with his arrest, the Panthers movement faded out paving the way to the gradual emergence of the BAMCEF in 1979 in Lucknow, the capital of the state.

The BAMCEF emerged after its formal inauguration of the Delhi office on 6th December, 1978 with Kanshi Ram as its Convener. Raj Bahadur, G.R. Khanna, Chhotelal Rahul, Ram Chandra and others helped in developing this organization in Lucknow and adjoining area.
Raj Bahadur, the then Convener of the BAMCEF in Uttar Pradesh, told that as he was employed in the department of telecommunication, he could use the government facilities in spreading the message of the organization. The main aim of the organisation was to pay back to the society particularly the Dalit community. Basically, it was an effort of the educated Dalit employees who had benefited from the policy of the 'Protective Discrimination' or reservation on the basis of their caste or community background. A very significant issue raised by the organization was that the Indian society could be divided into two major categories of the Bahujans who constitute nearly 85 per cent of the total population in the country and the upper castes or the Manuvadis with 15 per cent of the population. It was emphasized that the Manuvadis had captured and monopolised every institutions-economic, political, social, bureaucratic, religious and cultural both in the country as well as in the state. Besides holding its annual conventions, one of the most important programmes of the BAMCEF was "Ambedkar Mela on Wheels" which was organised to spread the mission of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. "During the 2 months period, starting on 14th April, 1980, the Mela used to move for two months from place to place in the north Indian states surrounding Delhi and get over on June 14. Thus, covering in all 34 important places of this region through such Mela the BAMCEF was hopeful of removing ignorance about Ambedkar to a great extent. It had also hoped that such activity would help the demoralized Ambedkarites of this region to pick up courage and move ahead enthusiastically" (Oppressed Indian, April, 1980). Further, in November 1980, 'Humanity Convention' was organised to demand change in the curricula of education, to appeal to the press to be neutral and to bring about structural changes in the police force (ibid).

As the BAMCEF was non-agitational organization, Kanshi Ram was unable to launch struggle against various types of problems faced by the
the Dalits, OBC, Minorities and Tribals. He had raised the problems of poverty, landlessness, illiteracy, and non-implementation of laws specially these relating to reservations and physical protection of the aforesaid categories of people. He had argued that these could not be tackled by BAMCEF only, but "The constructive effort of BAMCEF can strengthen the non-political roots of the oppressed and the exploited society and the rest must be left to the others (Oppressed Indian, Dec, 1981). He criticized the Dalit leaders in the different political parties and argued to launch another organization to prepare the dedicated Dalit leaders to save the society. "It is with this hope of producing such missionaries that Dalit Shosit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti i.e. DS4 has been (was) launched from Delhi on December 6th, exactly 25 years after Babasaheb Dr. B.R.Ambedkar left us almost orphaned" (ibid). Immediately after launching the DS4, the process of building up of organization was started in a big way.

The denunciation of Poona Pact was another programe undertaken by the DS4 to critizie the 'Reserved Seats' arrangement imposed by Gandhi on Dalits. The one-month programme started from Poona on 24 September, 1982 ended at Jalandhar on 24 October 1982. The programme's impact was felt by the Dalits of Agra as reported by some of our respondents and a mammoth rally was organised in the Ambedkar Park in which students, youth and women participated in large number. On 14th October 1982, the DS4 took up an ambitious but significant programme of 'People's Parliament'. R.K. Chaudhry from Faizabad district in central U.P, the present General Secretary of the Bahujan Samaj Party, four times cabinet minister and former leader of the upper house of Assembly narrated that, "In a caste ridden society 4 to 5 per cent Brahmins seem to have acquired a grip over the National Parliament through more than 30 per cent MPs they get elected. Our National Parliament does not represent the aspirations of the Dalit and deprived
masses". Similarly, many other issues were also debated in this people's parliament in the rural and urban areas in the state.

One can easily draw conclusion from these two programmes that these were organised just to make Dalits and OBCs conscious of the fact that the Congress and other political parties were not effectively taking up their issues. And specially the Congress Party was their real enemy. The last programme of the DS4 was 'Struggle for Equality and Self-Respect' launched on 6th Dec. 1983. Under this, "Social Action propagating the message of struggle for equality and self-respect from Kanyakumari and four other corners of the country, viz. Kargil, Kohima, Puri and Porbandar" (was initiated) (Oppressed Indian, 1984). The first phase of social action programme ended on 15th March 1984 that was virtually winding up of both the organizations namely BAMCEF and DS4 and emerging of the Bahujan Samaj Party at the centre stage. This can broadly be seen as end of another epoch (1969-84) of the Dalit leadership in the state.

After galvanizing the sleeping masses of the deprived sections for over a decade (1971 to 1984) through his two organizations, Kanshi Ram launched his political party, the Bahujan Samaj Party on 14th April, 1984, on the birth Anniversary of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar to fulfil the political aspiration of the Bahujan Samaj. Thus, a new epoch (sixth and ongoing) of the Dalit leadership started in Uttar Pradesh from 1984 with the formation of an independent political party where Dalits can play a dominant role. It came to fill the space created by the demise of the Republican Party of India, Agra branch, and incapacity of the Dalit Panthers and other leaders like Ram Dhan, Ram Vilas Paswan, etc. to tap the emerging consciousness among the Dalits in the state. Raj Bahadur, the first President of the Bahujan Samaj Party of Uttar Pradesh told that the two main programmes undertaken by the party in the
beginning were agitation for implementation of the Mandal Commission Recommendations and the political actions like anti slavery struggle in India'. He told further that, "for this the party launched Anti-slavery Struggle in India on the 15th August, 1984 from all the five corners of the country. The objective behind this was to explain the masses all over the country as to what was their fate after thirty-seven years of independence. Was the Bahujan Samaj really free in this country?"

Gandhi Azad, another BSP leader and now a Rajya Sabha member, told that "to attract the imagination of the Dalit masses, we used to raise the issues of educate, agitate and organize' and tell about their glorious history". In fact, this version of history is only the history of the 'Adi-Hindus' as narrated earlier in this chapter.

With the establishment of the Bahujan Samaj Party, the BSP has built up a strong Dalit movement making assertion for identity and consciousness of Dalits as its basis in the state which still has a rigid and conservative social structure, and has experienced no anti-caste movement specially in the post-independent period. Still, it has not succeeded in its avowed goal of displacing the Manuvadi forces and introducing social change despite a considerable politicisation of Dalits in the state (Pai 2000:119). Yet, with the emergence of the BSP even the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has felt problems. For instance, Balasaheb Deoras named the BSP as one of the real problems for the RSS in north India (Illustrated Weekly, August 14, 1988). Spelling out its success, Kanshi Ram wrote; "The measure of its success in uniting such victims of Brahminism can be assessed from the fears of the RSS. The annual reports of the RSS released on 15th March, 1985 devoted a full Para to such a success of the BSP in uniting the oppressed and exploited caste groups and securing brotherhood amongst them...In the eyes of the RSS, such a success of the BSP is the greatest danger to the Hindu fundamentalist" (Oppressed Indian, April 1985).
With its strategy and organizational set up, the BSP contested, for the first time the December 1984, the general elections to the Parliament and qualified for registration in three states including Uttar Pradesh. It officially got elephant as its party symbol and blue colour as its party flag. The Dalit leadership specially the BSP leadership has become further assertive since 1985 with its politics of horizontal aggregation of the lower castes. The BSP first made headway with weaning away the Dalits from the Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh. As stated earlier, the Dalits had a special relationship with the Congress Party in the 1962, 1967, 1971 Parliamentary elections. The shift in the Dalit voting-patterns since 1977 shows, however, that they had voted indiscriminately. The Congress Party since then has not enjoyed a monopoly in representing them (Rudolph & Rudloph 1987: 187-99). This helped the BSP to attract the Dalits towards it as they could easily identify it as a Dalit party playing the dominant role for their amelioration. Their attraction could easily be seen in a bi-election in 1985 for the Lok Sabha seat from Bijnor in which its candidate was Ms. Mayawati. “Her opponents in Bijnor included Ram Vilas Paswan and Meira Kumar, Jagjivan Ram’s daughter, representing Congress. Rajiv Gandhi was at the height of his popularity at the time and Meira Kumar won the seat” (Mendelshon & Vicziany 1998:224). But our respondents specially from the BSP described it as their moral victory as their candidate gained 61,000 votes even though BSP was an unknown party. *India today* (Jan 15-31,1986) described the “BSP rising with the sign of a shooting star”.

The respondents also told that Kanshi Ram, the BSP supreme, became much after sought person. After this, every leader of the national political parties and the national daily wanted to rub their shoulders with him. “All this hysteria does not merely reflect the rise of BSP, but basically the fears of the big leaders of the national parties. Why should
they be afraid of BSP, a little known party? Because the big leaders of all these parties know that the victims of India's social system are rolling around BSP to effect real socio-economic changes in India. These big leaders-the beneficiaries of India's social system know that if real socio-economic changes take place in India, they and their privileged castes will no longer remain rulers of India" (Oppressed Indian, Jan.1986). The BSP leaders further told that the "success came because the trained party workers hailed from all parts of the country as it was a bi-election and they were free from political activities in their home states/region. Had it been a general election, it would have not been possible for them to get free from their respective constituency".

By now, the Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh led by the BSP and Kanshi Ram understood the real basis of social transformation. Kanshi Ram gave the ideology to the party of "economic emancipation and social transformation through capturing political power", as was revealed by most of the respondents. Mendelsohn & Vicziany wrote the same and explained, "Kanshi Ram's strategy and his larger understanding of social change are now considerably evolved. He no longer believes in the primacy of social reform. Rather, expenditure of effort on any object other than the capture of government is seen to be superfluous. It is administrative power that will bring about desired change, not vice versa" (Mendelsohn & Vicziany 1998:223). By 1989, the BSP had put in five years of solid organizational work in Uttar Pradesh and also in neighbouring states of Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi and Haryana. The cadre camps were organized to educate the Dalits about the existing socio-political reality of the country and about the programmes of the BSP. This had the tremendous effect on them. The Dalits from different political parties specially the Congress Party joined the BSP's movement "There was a concerted move in 1988-89 to win back scheduled caste voters who were increasingly being alienated from the Congress which
faced serious competition from the BSP which was actively mobilizing Dalits, particularly government employees, who were increasingly captivated by the BSP's agenda. The rise of the BSP was a matter of great political significance and one, which affected the Congress most deeply. But the party failed to evolve a tangible strategy to counter the BSP, mainly because it did not have a single reputable Dalit leader with a significant mass base. Moreover, the Scheduled Castes were disenchanted owing to their gross under-representation in the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet" (Hasan 1998:147).

The issue of capturing political power eluded the leadership of the BSP till 1993 during which it shifted its strategy and entered into an alliance with the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh. According to R.K. Chaudhry, the main issue of alliance was that "The BSP wanted to stop the communal march of the BJP because minorities were also part of the Bahujans. The communal forces comprising of Manuvadis are common enemies of Dalits and Muslims because they have reduced both of them to their present oppressed situation". Hence, a new issue of communalism was attached to the long list of the issues addressed by the BSP. But soon the agenda changed and priority was given to stop the atrocities perpetrated on the Dalits. For instance, Mendelsohn & Vicziany (1998:227) wrote, "There was also concern at the number of 'atrocities' perpetrated against Scheduled Caste people some of them by Yadavs... Accordingly, in June 1995 Kanshi Ram and Mayawati brought the government down". The goal of capturing political power to implement the Dalit agenda soon brought the Dalit leadership in a position to take support of the BJP. It is interesting to note that Kanshi Ram had earlier termed the BJP as "Manuwadi" and even then he took its support to form the government in the state. This shows the preference given by the Dalit leadership to the administrative and political power. In June 1995, Mayawati became the first Dalit woman

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Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and thereby of any state in India. But soon the support was withdrawn by the BJP because the BSP was implementing its own agenda. In March 1997, Mayawati again became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh with the BJP support.

During the second term of her Chief Ministership for 6 months, Mayawati again tried to implement her party agenda instead of raising any demand for the Dalits. Both the times, she became a fearful administrator and proved the point that the Dalits could also govern. It has been stated, "Within the larger administration of the state Mayawati made energetic resort to the device of transfers and disciplinary actions against officers found delinquent in one aspect or another...Quite deliberately she created a climate of fear in order to motivate officials to work to her agenda. She dealt particularly severely with officials judged to have failed to protect the most vulnerable people in a particular district, the Dalits above all. Overwhelmingly condemned in the press, her actions appear to have evoked a sense of satisfaction among people routinely subjected to official arrogance and callousness. And a number of commentators both within the administration and outside believed that Mayawati had administered a powerful and long overdue lesson to bureaucrats that their place was as servant, not master of the people" (ibid: 229).

Anyway, the BSP contested on its own the 1998 and 1999 Parliamentary elections. In 1999, it surprised everyone by winning 14 Parliamentary seats with 22 per cent of votes polled. This success of the BSP proves the consolidation of the Dalit votes by it. One of our respondents told, "they (the BSP leaders) are heading towards a process of participatory democracy in place of the representative democracy because now they themselves are involved in organizing their party and selecting their candidates for contesting elections". Hence, with the
different types of achievements in political and administrative realms, the Dalit leadership has grown its strength in Uttar Pradesh. It has monopolized the Dalit votes, and it is very difficult to find any Dalit leader of repute with substantial mass base in other political parties either at the national or state level. In brief, this is the greatest achievement of the BSP leadership particular and the Dalit leadership in general in the contemporary Indian political system.

**Style of functioning of the Dalit leadership:**

The Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh, like in other states, has a diverse history of its functioning. It used to be persuasive in the 1920s and 1930, as stated earlier, by submitting petition to the upper castes and the respective governments to improve their lot. Our respondents from the eastern Uttar Pradesh have told that such persuasive style of the Dalit leadership prevailed till the 1960s. But as already stated, the assertion of the Dalit leadership in the western Uttar Pradesh had started in the 1920s and the caste like Jatav “gave public demonstration of its offensive stand” (Lynch 1974:82). Again, by the 1940s the Jatav leadership had become assertive and started demonstrative for their demands “The second aggressively defiant act was a parade through the street of Agra. Its main attraction was a wolf symbolizing the Poona Pact...The wolf was publicly burned, and the heat of Jatav anger was not lost to the eyes of the Agra’s upper castes who saw themselves symbolically consumed in the flames of long smouldering resentment” (ibid:88). Yet, the Dalit leadership became more assertive after independence. Now, the Dalit leaders could organize their own meetings. Some of the respondents from this region have stated, “earlier, our parents used to go to the Thakurs with folded hand for any type of demand and now with the government’s help the Thakurs are no more the rulers over us”. 
The formation and the consolidation of the Dalit political parties have also strengthened the pressure group strategy and capability of manoeuvring of power of the leadership in the state. With their own mass political base, they can now easily gherao any office and police station if something wrong happens to their people. This trend has increased with the emergence and consolidation of the BSP. Our respondents belonging to the BSP stated that, “now they (Dalits) are respected by most of the village officials, and their applications and complaints are taken up seriously. Today, they (officials) are afraid that tomorrow our party can again come to power and then their position will be delicate”. They said further, “earlier our applications use to lie and gather dust. In police station, they never used to write our complaints. But now, things have changed and the police officials even give us seat whenever we go to their office”. Thus, the Dalit leadership specially the BSP leadership in the state had addressed social issues and being persuasive in nature in the beginning has now become assertive. The leaders pursue vigorously the political issue leading ultimately to capture power.

Our respondents have further answered that they now do not raise, from the party platform, the social issues like leaving the caste customs, traditional caste occupations, and traditional caste habits like non-judicious expenditure, superstitions, witch-craft, etc. These issues, in effect, were and one are addressed by the caste panchayats or caste associations like Pasi Jagriti Mandal, Jatav Mahasabha, Rajak Sudhar Samiti, Balmiki Mahasabha, Sonkar Samaj Vikas Samiti, Kureel Samaj Sabha, etc. In fact, the traditional panchayats leaders still have hold on many communities. They pass the codes to stop the traditional food habits and impose fine on the caste members who violate the caste rules.
But the leaders usually raise the issues like asking the Dalit masses to pursue their independent livelihood with no inferiority complex. In public meetings, they often argue that 'to be a Dalit is not shame for us'. In the words of a Dalit leader, "For our degraded position the hole Hindu civilization should feel shame, because the Hindus boast that they have given the world a unique civilization but they don't tell it is this civilization which has produced crores of people who are not even treated as human beings". Contrary to this, some of our respondents have admitted that they do not ask the masses to leave their traditional occupations because they have no alternative. But they insist that in the long run, Dalits should leave their traditional occupations and become the rulers of this country. The BSP leadership is also very critical of worship of God. The respondents from the BSP have narrated many stories and they question the very existence of the various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon.

**Political nature of the Dalit leadership**

It was revealed by some of the respondents that the contemporary Dalit leadership in U.P. has turned political in nature. This is evident from the issues the leaders specially from the BSP raise. More often than not, they raise the issues of political rights of the Dalits such as their representation in the various Government organizations, institutions, statutory bodies and committees, various boards, corporations, etc. For achieving these goals, they have tried to unite all the exploited people through their alliance with different socio-political forces and different political parties.

As stated earlier, some of our respondents are of the view that the prime object of the contemporary Dalit leadership in the state is social transformation and also economic emancipation of the Dalits. We have
also already noted that such transformation is to be brought through capturing political power. Through such power the Dalits may become the ruling lot and enact laws or social legislations according to their needs, besides those of others, such as laws related to distribution of the surplus land which has remained undistributed even after 45 years of the Zamindari Abolition Act. They can also distribute the quota and licences to the Dalits who have largely remained neglected till date and can encourage them by honouring some of the Dalit personalities who had worked for upliftment of the Dalits at large in the past. In sum, once coming to power, the Dalit leadership can easily adopt agenda, and frame and implement the policies and programmes to ameliorate the conditions of the Dalits. One of our respondents Gulab Sehra, who was the State Convenor of the Nationalist Congress before his death recently, has argued that, “At the grass-root level, the impact of capturing power is very very effective. We do not have to beg for small things from the administrative authorities. One of the most acute problems at the village level is the false implication of the Dalits in the perennial feuds between the upper castes and Dalits, on one hand and between the backward castes and the Dalits on the other. As of now, the Dalits are beaten up and then implicated in false cases. Ironically, the police do not lodge even their FIRs. This was effectively checked when Mayawati was the Chief Minsiter of the state”.

Though sometimes the Dalit leadership has acted independently but in the recent years it has entered in the strategic and opportunistic alliances with the different political parties for capturing political power, as stated earlier. The Dalit leadership led specially by the BSP during 1993-94 aligned with the Samajwadi Party (SP) that represents mostly the backward sections of the society such as Yadavs and Muslims. In 1995, it aligned the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), a political party said to represent the so-called upper castes and classes specially Brahmins and
Banyas. Similarly, in 1996 it aligned with the Congress Party, the oldest party in the country and once represented the upper caste Brahmins. Lastly, it again aligned in March 1997 with the BJP to form the government in the state under the six months formula, as stated earlier.

We have already mentioned that the different political parties have Dalit leaders contesting from the reserved constituency. The Dalit leadership in the state has, thus, always aligned with the dominant socio-political forces of its time. Moreover, the Dalit leadership in the different political parties has been remained averse to forge alliance with the BSP. This may be so as the Dalit leaders from different political parties are afraid of their political existence, though even otherwise it is not much distinctively visible in their respective party. It is important to note here that today every dominant political party is desperately to forge alliance with the BSP. But to reach to this status, the BSP had to wage a relentless battle on its own. This is evident from the fact that the BSP leaders contested many bi-elections and general elections independently, the latest being of the 1999 elections to the Parliament.

The answer to the question whether in the case of alliance with other socio-political forces should the Dalit leadership keep the reigns in their own hands is affirmative. A sizeable number of our respondents have argued that if our leaders do not control the reigns then they cannot guide the government and administration according to their needs and desires. It is all the more important to do so because only they can empathise with the problems specially of the Dalits and other poor masses, and can accordingly formulate the effective and implementable policies and programmes. Their experiences and insights can enrich the day-to-day functioning of the government from the grass-root to the highest level. But Reena Chaudhury, the Dalit Member of Parliament from the Samajwadi Party revealed that, “instead of having opportunistic
alliance with the political parties, the Dalit leadership should have alliance directly with the different communities having similar socio-economic and political status. Moreover, they should organize themselves first and become strong enough so that the dominant forces may not be able to break them”. She further suggested that, “the independent organizing of the Dalit leadership is necessary because it is not yet prepared to defend itself against the cleverness and unscrupulousness of the dominant socio-political forces”. Similarly, Kamal Jayant, the journalist turned politician from Kanpur district lamented that, “the RPI was decimated only because it aligned with the dominant Congress Party and the upper castes captured the important positions of the party organization”.

Again, the respondents had divergent views on the issue whether the alliance of the Dalit leadership with socio-political forces of the dominant upper castes and classes has diluted their agenda specially in the light of the BSP’s alliance with the BJP. The respondents from the BSP vehemently argued that there was no dilution of the Dalit agenda even after its being allied with the BJP. The party pursued, to great extent, its own and policies programmes without any influence of the BJP. For instance, despite much opposition of the BJP leadership the BSP government organized ‘Periyar Mela’. It is worth mentioning here that Periyar had garlanded Lord Rama’s (the much revered Hindu God in the north) statue with shoes in Tamil Nadu. Lord Rama is supposed to be very dear to the BJP with the demolition of the Babri Masjid and construction of the Rama Mandir tangle at its core in Ayodhya in the state. Similarly, the SC/ST (Prevention of the Atrocities) Act, 1989 was, for the first time, effectively implemented in spite of the BJP’s protest of its abuse. Some was the case with Ambedkar village development scheme. One can quote several such examples to bring the point back
home that the BSP's agenda was not diluted with its alliance with the BJP.

Some of our respondents - Dalit leaders from other political parties have argued that, on the one hand, the BSP used to abuse the BJP in the past as Manuvadi party, a party of upper castes representing the status quoits forces but, on the other hand, it aligned with it only for the sake of power. This has created confusion among the Dalits masses regarding where should they go? Ram Pher, member of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Working Committee (UPCWC) and the former Corporator from the Lucknow Cantonment, explains that, "it is difficult to digest and explain the enigma that once you abuse a political party as Manuvadi and then also share the power with it. In effect the impact of the BSP got lost". The difference of opinion was so much diverse on the party line as no satisfactory answer could be ascertained about the alliance of the BSP with the Dalit leaders drawn from the other political parties.

Most of the respondents have agreed unanimously that in the contemporary period, the Dalit leadership has generated greater degree of caste consciousness among the Dalits in the state. It has succeeded in conscenitising the Dalit masses about the real enemy for and cause of their degraded conditions. They have also revealed that this consciousness has been termed by the upper castes as caste-hatred which has often been highlighted by the media and a few social scientists. As stated earlier, the Dalit masses have come to realize that there is nothing wrong to be a Dalit because it is none of their fault. Moreover, they know where their salvation lies now. As the confidence among Dalits has grown, they are ready to face day-to-day challenges. Most of our respondents have further informed that upper strata blame the BSP leadership that the speeches of its leaders have created great divide between Dalits and the upper castes. It is more dangerous in the
countryside because Dalits are still dependent on the upper castes for their livelihood and survival. The Dalit leaders specially the BSP leaders cannot afford to abuse the upper castes so openly as they will take and they do take revenge from the innocent Dalit masses. Under these conditions, nobody can protect them as they are still not fully organized and are in minority in villages.

As far as the issue of creating casteism among the Dalits themselves is concerned, majority of the respondents have again unanimously replied that this is unfounded. The political mobilization of the Dalits has created relatively more solidarities among the various castes that never used to interact previously. Most of them now sit together, discuss about various issues and chalk out their strategies. Prior to this, only the Dalit political leaders and educated persons used to have commensal relations among themselves. But now even the general masses of these castes have started commensal relations among themselves. Moreover, the Dalit politics is creating more and more Dalit leaders. The BSP leadership in its deliberate attempt has started giving representation to different even numerically smaller Dalit castes rather than relying on and promoting to only the numerically dominant castes like Chamar and Jatav.

Besides, the BSP leadership is very hopeful that whatever success it has achieved in Uttar Pradesh would definitely influence the Dalit politics in other states in the country. But what is needed is that the BSP leadership in these states should be ready and fully equipped to organize itself in the same manner as it has done in Uttar Pradesh. One of our respondents Deenanath Bhaskar, the former Minister in the BSP-SP coalition government in U.P. during 1993-95 and now the Chairman of Scheduled Caste Cell of the Samajwadi Party, tells that, “The SP-BSP alliance in Uttar Pradesh has sent a message throughout the country
that if the Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes form an all India alliance, they can rule the nation. They have numbers in their favour as well as effective organizations in other states”. Similarly, another respondent Indrajit Saroj, the sitting MLA from the BSP, proudly proclaims that, “with the emergence of the BSP as the strong party representing Dalits, other political parties have started giving due respect to the Dalit members. You see, the BJP has elevated Suraj Bhan as the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, though he comes from Haryana; Congress has made Mata Prasad and Mahavir Prasad as governors of Arunachal Pradesh (now he has relinquished the charge) and Haryana respectively. Even the elevations of K.R. Narayanan to the post of the President of India and now G.M.C. Balayogi to the Lok Sabha Speaker fall in the same line”. In addition, other leader respondents argue that the happenings in Uttar Pradesh may guide the Dalit leadership in the country as a whole to get organized and capture power for the development of the Dalits. Moreover, it has broken the myth within the Dalit community and among the general masses that the Dalits cannot rule. It can educate the Dalit masses that they can also form their own government and rule efficiently.

Contrary to this, some of the respondents drawn from other political parties have criticized that whatever has happened in Uttar Pradesh specially the opportunism of the BSP has sent a wrong message at both the state and national levels. It has created a suspected image of the Dalit leadership in general and of the BSP leadership in particular, and the people might think that every Dalit leader is vulnerable and can sell the movement for gaining power. Kaushal Kishore, the General Secretary of Lucknow unit of the CPI explains, “there will be no effect of the BSP in other parts of the country because no effort has been evolved to provide new system of governance in U.P. The Dalit masses here are treated in the same way, as in the past, during Mayawati’s regeime. The
Dalit ministers forget easily that earlier they themselves were like the Dalit masses. But yes, on the emotional line, Dalits can relate themselves to the achievements of the BSP otherwise there is no other reason for them to celebrate”. Ravi Gautam, a BJP MLC from Agra, reminds that, "The BSP succeeded in Uttar Pradesh because there were strong independent organizations here led by the Jatav movements, the Scheduled Castes Federation and the Republican Party of India which are missing in other states except in Maharashtra. Therefore, I doubt that the BSP will have any substantial impact on the other parts of the country". Some respondents have stated categorically that the BSP would have no effect in places like Maharashtra where the RPI is still strong and Ambedkar's grandson is still very active.

It is a well-known fact that since Babasaheb has an all India acceptance, the Dalit leadership in general and the BSP leadership in particular pursues the various issues pertaining to the Dalits within the overall framework of the legacy of Ambedkar's leadership and his ideology. In the light of this, our respondents have opined that the Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh is part of the national leadership. To prove this point, they have stated that the BSP has become an All India Party. It is present in every state and has won the seats in the State Assemblies in Bihar, M.P, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, U.P., etc. Not only that Kanshi Ram has been accepted as the national leader by the maximum number of Dalits. The following slogans framed by the BSP tell about the strong association of Kanshi Ram and Babasaheb, and, secondly, of Kanshi Ram's effort in making the people conscious:

1. Baba Tera Mission Adhura
   Kanshi Ram Karenga Pura (Babasaheb, Kanshi Ram will complete your unfulfilled Mission).
2. Babasaheb Ka Duasra Nam
Kanshi Ram Kanshi Ram, (Kanshi Ram is the second name of Babasaheb)

3. Kanshi Teri Nek Kamai
Tune Soti Kaum Jagai (Kanshi Ram, you have done good job by waking up the sleeping Quom {community}).

Though Kanshi Ram’s success has been located primarily in Uttar Pradesh, it has also transcended the territorial boundary. Kanshi Ram himself calls Uttar Pradesh as his laboratory (his speech on 14th April, 1999 at Mavlankar Hall Ground, New Delhi) and tries to practices the Uttar Pradesh formula in other states. The biggest advantage of the BSP is that it talks more of Ambedkar’s ideology and projects that its leaders are the carriers of Ambedkar’s movement. Rest of the Dalit leadership found in other political parties cannot take this liberty. But Acharya Moti Ram Shashtri, Gulab Sehra, Mata Prasad, Ram Dhan and other senior leaders do not accept that there is any association of the BSP leadership in Uttar Pradesh to the national leadership. They reflect that nobody has waged a mass movement like Babasaheb; hence, how can one claim to be of an all India status. To become a part of the national leadership or to be recognized as national leader, a party or the leader has to be recognized at the grass-root level in each state. They also accept that the Dalit leadership both at the state and national levels is divided on the primordial identities like caste, region and language. Ram Nath Kovind, a Rajya Sabha M.P. and President of the Anusuchit Jati Morcha of BJP argues, “In Uttar Pradesh itself, the Dalit leadership is divided because of the socio-political reality of different movements in which they have emerged”. But Gandhi Azad, Rajya Sabha member from the BSP differs with this and narrates that, “though the Dalit problems differ from region to region but the Dalits suffer more or less same problems in every parts
of the state/country. And, therefore, there is an underlining unity among the Dalit leaders of different parts of the country. It is the lack of the social and political acumen of the Dalit leaders, which create this hurdle for their unity. Moreover, their ego also stops them to accept someone who is not from the same region, as their leader. After all they are also human being."

In sum, we find Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh divided into different political parties. It is clear from the above analysis that the earlier Dalit leadership in the state was mainly persuasive and had always relied on the upper castes and classes for its political existence. As a result, the earlier leaders irrespective of their party affiliation neither asserted nor sincerely represented the interest of the Dalit masses. As the political leadership as such in the state took a qualitative turn since the 1970s, so also was the case of Dalit leadership. It is quite clear from our discussion made in this chapter that the Dalit leadership specially the BSP leadership in the state has become quite assertive. Its leaders openly and boldly articulate the interests of the Dalit masses and have become the symbol of aspirations and expectations of the latter. What shape would this leadership take in future may be only a conjecture at this stage that we have not probed in this study.
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