Chapter Three

Dalit Consciousness, Movement and Literary Expression

- Meaning and Nature of the term Dalit Consciousness including the word Dalit
- Meaning of the term Movement
- A Brief History of Dalit Movement in India
- Dalit Literature and Aesthetics
Meaning and Nature of the term Dalit Consciousness including the word Dalit

The very first question that comes to our mind while studying Dalit Liberation Movement is who is a Dalit? The confusion centres on the connotations of the word 'Dalit' which was originally used as a Marathi & Hindi translation of the British term 'Depressed Classes'. There are varieties of nomenclatures such as Untouchables, Harijans, Depressed Classes, Dalits, Servile Classes, Weaker Sections, Panchamas, Atishudras, Avarnas, Antyajas and Scheduled Castes. The term 'Depressed Classes' refer to those castes, which belong to the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy and whose touch and proximity is considered polluting by the Caste Hindus. This was a British innovation from an article written by Dr. Annie Besant in the Indian Review, February 1909 with the caption 'The Uplift of the Depressed Classes'. Further, the term 'Depressed Classes' was mentioned in the Census Report 1921, but the castes constituting the 'Depressed Classes' were not defined. The term 'Depressed Classes' was used before 1930, but since the enactment of Government of India Act 1935, they are consistently referred to as 'Scheduled Castes.'

In 1901, Risely, then Census Commissioner of India, attempted to classify the Hindu castes. The term 'Scheduled Castes' appeared for the first time in the Government of India Act 1935. The Simon Commission coined this term in 1928, later on, the British Government issued the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1936, specifying certain castes and tribes. This category of the Scheduled Castes was known as Harijans, i.e., Children of God- a term coined by Narasimha Mehta and adopted by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933. Some leaders of the castes consider Harijan nomenclature pejorative and they prefer to be called 'Dalits' i.e., oppressed.
The word *Dalit* is referred to broken, ground down people who become subject to deliberate act of exploitation by those above them in a hierarchical social system. The *Dalit* Panthers, once a militant organization had used the term in its Manifesto. It says, “Members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless poor peasants, women and those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion are called *Dalits*.” It further elucidates, “We do not want a little place in *Brahman* Alley. We want the rule of the whole land. We are not looking at persons by a system. Change of heart, liberal education, etc. will not end our state of exploitation. When we gather a revolutionary mass, rouse the people, out of the struggle of this giant mass will come the tidal wave of revolution.”

Thus, “the Untouchables of India had themselves chosen ‘a new identity’, ‘a revised self image’ that of *Dalit* to indicate their lack of belief in being polluting, their sense that their condition was the fault of the caste system, and their inclusion in the Ambedkar movement of all those subordinated by their religions, social and economic status.” Through this ‘new identity’, *Dalit* Movement directed itself “towards status - improvement vis-à-vis social mobility among *Dalits* and shaping their agitational sensitivity and assertion for achieving their rights of equality and equal opportunity, self - respect and a respectful identity.”

Thus the Marathi word ‘*Dalit*’ was chosen by the community itself and is used proudly, and even in the English Press, this word has to be used without translation. “None of the normal words Untouchable, Scheduled Castes, Depressed Classes, Gandhi’s euphemism, Harijan - had the same connotation. *Dalit* implies those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way.
There is in the word itself an inherent denial of pollution, *Karma*, and justified caste hierarchy."⁶ Professor Gangadhar Pantawane, founder-editor of *Asmitadarsh* (Mirror of Identity), the chief organ of *Dalit* literature, defines the word as follows, "To me *Dalit* is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul, and Holy Books teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. *Dalit* is a symbol of change and revolution."⁷

These are the changing perceptions about the community, which was subjected to 'institutionalized deprivation' for centuries and its struggle for Liberation. It started with very reformative kind of attitudes and passed through several radical and revolutionary phases. There were dynamic changes occurred at definitional level of the movement and today in socio-political system the word 'Dalit' is widely acceptable and used. But, not much of elucidation is available about the introduction of the term ‘Scheduled Castes’ either in the Constitution or in any laws or rules. It was in 1901 that the then Census Commissioner of India, Risley tried for the first time to classify the Hindu castes. Then in 1911 an enquiry was made to identify which of the castes and tribes were discriminated against on religious and social grounds. In 1921, these castes and tribe were called the ‘Depressed Classes’ and J.H. Hutton, the then Census Commissioner, systematically categorized the Depressed Classes.

The expression of the term ‘Scheduled Castes’ first was coined by the Simon Commission and was placed in the Government of India Act, 1935. Prior to this Act, they were known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes or exterior castes. In April 1936, the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order issued by British Government
specified certain castes, races, and tribes as Scheduled Castes in different Provinces of India and the list was continuation of the earlier list of Depressed Classes. Further, the list drawn in the Constitution of India (1950) was a revised version of the above-mentioned Order of 1936. The test applied was the social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the historical customs of Untouchability. Certain specific provisions were made to fulfil the assurance of 'JUSTICE, social, economic and political' that has been held out by the Preamble of the Constitution.

There is no definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the Constitution itself. But the President is empowered to draw up a list in consultation with the Governor of each States, subject to revision by Parliament (Articles 341-342). Here it is proper to mention the Constitutional provisions with reference to Scheduled Castes.

In the Preamble it itself we have the pledge to secure to all citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith of worship;

EQUALITY of status and opportunity

whereby the concept of disabilities arising out of the practice of Untouchability in earlier period find no place. Then, there are various Articles safeguarding the Scheduled Castes, like Articles 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 25, 29, 38, 46, 164, 330, 334, 335, 338, 341, and 366. Further, the Parliament passed the Untouchability Offence Act (UOA) to make the practice of Untouchability a cognizable offence punished under the law. This Act came into operation in December 1956 and amended in September 1976, and is known as 'Protection of Civil Rights Act' (PCRA). Thus Untouchability is no longer existent legally though many still bear stigma of the past in social sphere.
We find a long history of struggle for Dalit Liberation where they have gone for conscious attempt to redefine their self-image and many dynamic and landmark changes have occurred at the definitional level during the course of the movement. Today the word Dalit is widely acceptable and used all over the country; many social scientists have started referring to the Dalits and ex-Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes interchangeably. We have also used the term Dalit, in this work, for the ex-Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes who by articulating their self-realization and their struggle against the caste oppression and by their "will to act against exploitation, a rise from oppression, from death to life, from darkness to light" are continuing their Movement.

An understanding of the development of term ‘Dalit’ itself reflects changing nature of the community and provides meaningful insights to analyse the nature and scope of Dalit consciousness. In fact, Dalit consciousness is political consciousness that is expressed politically during the course of the Dalit movement. Political consciousness is a complex concept as we discussed in the second chapter and it is a very comprehensive concept playing a ‘catalyst role’ in the articulation of Dalit community. It is participative having significant impact on the political system and its actors both subjectively and objectively. It connotes self-image vis-à-vis other individuals and communities, their relationship with socio-political locations and their linkages/connectivity with socio-eco-political and cultural structures of society. Political consciousness characterizes an individual’s of community’s cognitive comprehensibility of its objective conditions as well as its subjective awareness that, in turn, forms through social experiences, political struggles and cultural traits.
To understand *Dalit* consciousness is a complex process as it incorporates several complexities like political consciousness. It includes the understanding of the *Dalits* politics, processes of political socialization and political culture among *Dalits*, its impact on the construction of political consciousness and its different ways of expressions including literature. An effort has been made to understand *Dalit* movement in India in the following section along with the understanding of *Dalit* aesthetics.

*Dalit* consciousness is guided by the Ambedkarite ideology, programs, leadership and organization and incorporates both institutionalised and non-institutionalised individual and collective actions initiated and adopted by the community to achieve desired goals. Leadership provided by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had powerful impact on the community and subsequent course of *Dalit* movement draws inspiration and strength from his vision. We would discuss his impact on the *Dalit* movement in the next section.

Political consciousness is informed through the multiple factors: level of political education, articulated political opinion, amount and quantum of suppression, marginalization of a particular community, urge for radical changes and many more. It is to be noted that the greater amount of political consciousness would increase and enlarge the level of political participation. It would be observed, in the course of this study, that the greater amount of articulated political consciousness among the *Dalit* community has increased and broadened the level and scope of political participation, particularly since Dr. Ambedkar throughout the country. In fact, there exists a proliferation of consciousness that is felt politically and expressed politically among the *Dalit* community.
We can identify a progressive pattern in the expression of political consciousness is formed through processes of political socialization, political participation and political culture, thus, making it 'a functional catalyst' providing general participation orientations, community mobilization and identity building processes. We have identified in the last chapter that political consciousness performs the following tasks:

1. Subjective understanding of the self;
2. Transmission of knowledge from one generation to another;
3. Objective cognition of the socio-eco-politico-cultural conditions;
4. Critical relationship with other communities and the structures of powers and economic controls; and
5. Transforming society consciously with a visionary movement.

Accordingly, we find that a new self-image with overall general political participation is being cultivated by Dalits through assertion of their rights and continuation of their movement for social change and for the establishment of an egalitarian society.

Meaning of the term 'Movement'

Here it is pertinent to narrate a brief history of Dalit movement in India and its relationship with the literary criticism. We will start this section with the very definition of the term 'Movement'.

We find various concepts such as 'social movement', 'revolt', 'agitation', 'political action', 'collective action', 'reform' and 'revolution', which have major thrust
to bring about changes in socio-political system. But it needs a serious attention to define these terms, particularly, the term ‘movement’ with special reference to Dalits.

There is no precise definition of the term ‘social movement’ accepted by scholars of all disciplines or even scholars belonging to the same discipline. “Like many other terms, such as, ‘democracy’, ‘masses’, ‘popular’, ‘equality’, the term ‘movement’ is often used differently by different social activists, political leaders and scholars. Some scholars use the term ‘movement’ interchangeably with ‘organization’ or ‘union’. Some use it to mean a historical trend or tendency. It is fashionable for political leaders and social reforms to call their activities ‘movement’ even though their activities are confined to the forming of organizations with less than a dozen members. Same claim to launch movements by issuing press statements on public issues. Like many other words, the term ‘movement’ is still regarded a ‘Hurrah’! word to use T.D. Weldon's memorable classification.”

It was during early nineteenth century that the term ‘social movement’ gained currency in Europe. This was the period of social upheaval and change where political leaders and authors were concerned with emancipation of the exploited classes. But there was not a consistent definition of the term ‘movement’, and it was during second quarter of the last century that attempts were made to define the concept of social movement. We will discuss some of the related concepts before going into details of the term ‘social movement’. One of the most important terms synonymous to movement is Collective action that may be of two kinds:

A) Institutionalised collective action

B) Non-institutionalised collective action
“The action that is legally permitted and ‘widely accepted as binding in society or part of society’ at a given point of time is institutionalised action. Such action includes petitioning, voting in elections, and fighting legal battles in courts of law...Non-institutionalised collective action takes several forms, such as, protest, agitation, strike, Satyagraha, Hartal, Gherao and riot. Agitations or protests are not strictly speaking social movement, though a social movement develops in course of time, and it beings with protest or agitation, which may not have the ‘organization’ or ‘ideology’ for change.”

Ghanshyam Shah classifies movements as revolt, rebellion, reform and revolution to bring about changes in the political system. Reform does not challenge political system per se. It attempts to bring about changes in the relations between the parts of the system in order to make it more efficient, responsive and workable. A revolt is a challenge to political authority, aimed at overthrowing the government. A rebellion is an attack on existing authority without any intention of seizing power. In a revolution, a section of society launch an organized struggle to overthrow not only the established government and regime but also the socio economic structure which sustains it and replace the structure by an alternative social order.

According to the Marxist scholars, the causes for social movement could be identified in the economic structure of society. Antagonistic interests between the propertied and labour classes are inherent in the class-based society, which generates contradictions. Subaltern studies group has begun to study ‘history from below’, emphasized on cultural factors, and also viewed a linear development of class-consciousness. As per the Marxist ideology, the propertied classes in a class-based
society use the coercive power of the State, as well as of the other institutions, including religion, education, mass media, to expose their ideology on society and to control the exploited classes, whereas, the labour classes resist, protest and occasionally revolt or launch organized and collective action against the dominance of the propertied classes. It is their effort to bring about revolutionary political change by overthrowing the dominant classes in power. Though to Marxists structural causes of conflicting economic interests are central to their studies, a number of Marxist scholars have begun to pay attention to ethnic, religious and other cultural factors. Some of them have attempted to analyse the nature of the consciousness of the exploited classes.

Further Ghanshyam Shah noticed that there is another line of argument that asserts that mass movements or protests are redundant in the Indian culture and civilization due to its ‘multilinear character’ and all ‘pervasive hierarchy’. Because of the Brahmanical ideology and hierarchical social structure the oppressed classes have become docile, obedient and fatalist. But scholars who point to a number of struggles by the oppressed classes in pre and post Independence India refute such assertions. Some explain these protests as a result of the conflict between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. According to them parliamentary democracy has been transplanted in India, where there is no tradition of voluntary effort. People have developed an ambivalent attitude towards authority, they take advantages offered by the political authority but at the same time do not legitimise it.

Morris-Jones argues, ‘Even after Independence government is relied upon and at the same time spat upon and abused. The same man who is looking to government one moment may in the next take part in demonstrations involving violence and on a scale
that threatens to make any government impossible."¹⁴ This is the outcome of the
costant conflict between traditional values and modern institutions.

According to Rajni Kothari, democracy in India has become a playground for
growing corruption, criminalization, repression and intimidation of large masses of the
people. The role of the State in ‘social transformation’ has been undermined. People
have started asserting their rights through various struggles: “There is discontent and
despair in the air still highly diffuse, fragmented and unorganized. But there is growing
awareness of rights, felt politically and expressed politically, and by and large still aimed
at the State. Whenever a mechanism of mobilization has become available, this
consciousness has found expression often against very odds, against a constellation of
interests that are too powerful and complacent to shed (even share) the privileges. At
bottom it is consciousness against a paradigm of society that rests on deliberate
indifference to the plight of impoverished and destitute who are being driven to the
threshold of starvation by the logic of paradigm itself.”¹⁵

Kothari feels that mass mobilization at the grassroots level is both necessary and
desirable. He asserts that it is in the state of “vacuum in the traditional superstructure of
the liberal polity that was supposed to render it humane despite powerful trends that the
real counter trends are to be found not in the party system, not in the area of electoral
politics and of State power, not in the typical confrontation between the so-called haves
and have-nots within the conventional economic space dominated by trade unions. In
their place there is emerging a new arena of counteraction, of countervailing tendencies,
of counter-cultural movements and more generally of counter-challenge to existing
paradigms of thought and action.”¹⁶
Thus, after analysing the above typologies, it is evident that to define a social movement is a difficult and complex task. However, a working definition of the social movement is necessary to examine the Dalit movement. Paul Wilkinson gives the following working concept of 'social movement': "A social movement is a deliberative collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence illegality, revolution or withdrawal into utopian community. Social movements are thus clearly different from historical movements, tendencies or trends. It is important to note, however, that such tendencies and trends, and the influence of the unconscious and irrational factors in human behaviour, may be of crucial importance in illuminating the problems of interpreting of explaining social movements. A social movement must evince a minimal degree and organization though this may range form a loose, informal or partial level of organization to the highly institutionalised and bureaucratised movements and the corporate group. A social movement's commitment to change and the raison d'être of its organization are founded upon the conscious volition, normative commitment to the movement's aims or beliefs, and active participation on the part of the followers or members."¹⁷

There is some consensus among the scholars regarding element of volition and normative commitment. For instance, "Heberle conceives of these belief systems, as an expression of the collective will of the people among whom they are accepted. He is emphatic that it is the element of volition that makes the beliefs socially effective. It is the conscious volition of individuals acting collectively that brings about the embodiment of ideologies in social movements."¹⁸
Thus major ingredients of social movement consist of objectives, ideology, programs, leadership and organization, which are co-ordinated and inter-dependent. We will examine the Dalit movement with the above working concept of the social movement where efforts are to seriously examine the important components and their effect on the Dalit movement in its search for ‘new self-image’ and new identity-building process.

**Brief History of Dalit Movement**

The third issue, which needs attention, is that of the beginning of the Dalit movement. This is also a complex issue and there are many contending views where some scholars trace the beginning right from the Bhakti movement or even back while many others consider the Mahar movement in Maharashtra as an important milestone in the movement. There seems a consensus among scholars that Dalit struggle during the colonial period, particularly after the arrival of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, gained momentum where the main issues were gaining recognition, representation and power within the changing political order.

We will trace a brief history of the Dalit movement dealing with the important issues raised during the course of the movement and finally with the identity building process. Ghanshyam Shah[^19] has classified Dalit movement into two broad categories, viz.,

A. Reformative Movement

B. Alternative Movement

[^19]: Ghanshyam Shah
Whereas the Reformative movement attempted to reform the caste system to resolve problem of Untouchability and the Alternative movement makes an effort to create an alternative socio-cultural structure where caste domination is eliminated and social justice is ensured to every person with a dignified human life. The Reformative movements are further sub-divided into the following categories:

i. *Bhakti* Movement

ii. *Neo-Vedantic* Movement

iii. *Sanskritisation* Movement

The Alternative movements are also sub-divided into the following:

i. Proselytization Movement

ii. Secular Movement

*Bhakti* Movement (12th to 18th centuries) attempted to purify Hinduism of its evils and fought against the tyranny of Caste System. This movement, after the Buddhism, left a great appeal for the establishment of an egalitarian society and produced saints like Chokhamela and Eknath, whose poetry become instrumental in the *Dalit* awakening. Both of them offered models for contemporary change in regard to Untouchability. The lives of both are known by legend, devotees on the pilgrimages and in *Bhajan* sessions sing their songs. Chokhamela was a Mahar, the only important *Bhakti* figures in Maharashtra from an Untouchable caste. Eknath was a *Brahman* from the holy city of Paithan who wrote about Chokhamela, ate with Maharas, allowed Untouchables into his *Bhajan* sessions and wrote poem in the persona of a Mahar who was wiser in spiritual matters than the Brahmans.
Saint Chokhamela was born in the second half of the thirteenth century, probably about the time that Dnyaneshwar, who is considered the founder of the Bhakti sect in Maharashtra, was born. He died in 1338 in Mangalvedhe, a town in Sholapur district. Chokhamela and his family seem to have followed the traditional duties of a Mahar.

There is an inherent element of protest against the concept of Untouchability in Chokhamela's Bhakti songs, though his songs also reveal the traditional devotion and piety of the Bhakta. Chokhamela questioned the very basis of the caste system, which preached purity:

The only impurity is in the five elements.
There is only one substance in the world.
Then who is pure and who is impure?
The cause of pollution is the creation of the body.
In the beginning, at the end, there is nothing but pollution.
No one knows anyone who was born pure.
Chokha says, in wonder, who is pure?21

Abhanga 11 in Chokhamela Abhang Gatha, 1950

The central argument of Chokhamela's poetry was protest and questioning supremacy of the Brahminal order, though he lived in his traditional role as a Mahar and with its traditional limitations. The spirit of most of the abhangas is delight in the Lord, delivery from life's sufferings through devotion. Even though agony is there, the central message is that Chokha, even though a Mahar could experience the grace of God.
Next important figure of the Bhakti Movement is Shri Eknath Maharaj (C.1533-1599) whose background was completely different from that of Chokhamela. He belonged to a Brahman family of considerable fame and the political world around Eknath was also dissimilar to the fourteenth century world in which Chokhamela lived. Chokhamela was probably a very young man when Alla-ud-din-Khilji stormed Devagiri in 1296; his time also witnessed the raids of Muhammad Tuglaq, who shifted his capital to Daulatabad in 1327, but Chokhamela died before the stable Bahmani kingdom was created in 1347. It is also noticeable that the political life is missing in Chokhamela's works. But Eknath lived at the time of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate, whose influence can be seen in the number of Persian words that Eknath used in his writings, in the Muslim terms for administration, which he wove into the poetry, which used obligations to government as an analogy for debts to God.

Eknath's most important contribution of Bhakti tradition is for the Untouchables. He wrote some three hundred bharuds, drama and poems meant to be acted out and of these almost fifty are written as if an Untouchable were the author. Forty-seven bharuds seem to come from the mouth of Mahar men or women; one is written in the name of Mang, one of the three important Untouchable castes.

The poems in which the Mahar is the speaker are Johar poems, beginning with the greetings used by Mahars to their superiors. Most are very different from the poems of Chokhamela; in Eknath's bharuds, the Mahar not only preaches to others about morality, the necessity of a Guru and the company of the Sants, but also of the calamity of the rebirth that is inevitable for those who do not follow the Bhakti path, and of the false lives of the pseudo-pious.
Eknath's writings make it clear that there is no caste distinction in the sight of God, as he puts in the following song:

God baked pots with Gora,
drove cattle with Chokha,
cut grass with Savata Mali,
wore garments with Kabir,
coloured hide with Ravidas,
sold meat with butcher Sajana,
melted gold with Narahari,
carried cow-dung with Janabai,
and even become the Mahar messenger of Damaji.22

Thus, with the growth of nationalism and the awakening interest in the upliftment of the depressed classes, Bhakti movement, still very much alive, came to serve a new purpose. Mahadeo Govind Ranade, a member of the reformist religious group, the Prarthana Samaj, as well as a leading nationalist, wrote in 1900 of the historic importance of the Bhakti movement: “... like the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century, there was a Religious, Social and Literary Revival and Reformation in India... This Religious Revival was not Brahmanical in its orthodoxy; it was heterodox in its spirit of protest against forms and ceremonies and class distinctions based on birth, and ethical in its preference of a pure heart, and of the law of love, to all other acquired merits and good works. This Religious Revival was the work also of the people, of the masses, and not of the classes. At its head were Saints and Prophets, Poets and Philosophers, who sprang chiefly from the lower orders of society-tailors,
carpenters, potters, gardeners, shop-keepers, barbers, and even Mahars-more often than Brahmons."\textsuperscript{23}

In Northern India, there was Bhakti resurgence from the late nineteenth century. In this period Untouchable ideologues, who spearheaded social movements against caste distinctions, challenged, in particular, social division of labour based on ritual status - this, they argued, prevented occupational diversification and in turn precipitated material deprivations, powerlessness and lack of education. In the early twentieth century, adherence to Bhakti tradition and veneration of Kabir and Ravidas became widespread among the Untouchables in Uttar Pradesh. We will discuss, in detail, the social context of Bhakti resurgence in the course of this work.

After Bhakti Movement, Neo-Vedantic Movement attempted to a re-interpretation of the doctrine of Hinduism so as to cleanse it of its evils and render it back to the original priestly purity. Exponents, like Dayanand and Vivekanand, played an important role during this period. These movements attempted to remove Untouchability by taking them into the fold of the Caste System. According to the pioneers of these movements, Untouchability was not an essential part of Hinduism, and for that matter, of the Caste System.

Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, believed that the Caste System was a political institution created by the rulers. He said, “in fact, any Brahman, who is disqualified for his work, becomes at once a Sudra de jure and a Sudra, who qualifies for it becomes at once a Brahman de jure...”\textsuperscript{24} The Arya Samaj started various educational and welfare programs for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes.
Satish Kumar Sharma's book Social Movement and Social Change (1985) is an important study, which examines the relationship between the Arya Samaj and the Untouchables. The study is confined to Punjab only but some of his observations are also applicable for the other parts of the country. Sharma observes that Arya Samaj was against the political movements of the Untouchables. It went against any move initiated by the Untouchables for their solidarity and integration.

Thus seen, the neo-Vadantic and non-Brahmans movements played "an important catalytic role"[^25] in developing anti-caste or anti-Hinduism Dalit movement in the country. The Satyashodhak Samaj and the Self Respect movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the Adi-Dharma and Adi-Andhra movements in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, are important anti-Untouchability movements, which were launched, in the last quarter of the nineteenth and early part of this century. We also get scattered references on the Adi-Hindu and Namashudra movements.

Mark Juergensmeyer's book Religion as Social Vision (1982) deals with the Adi-Dharma movement against Untouchability in twentieth century Punjab. It began in 1920s. The main plea of the movement was that the Untouchables constituted a quam, and their quam existed in India from time immemorial, i.e., before the Hindu arrived. According to Mark Juergensmeyer, "It had established a fact which previously had been unproved: that the Untouchable castes were capable of mobilizing for their own benefits, and of organizing in ways that permitted them to compete under the conditions that governed the socio-political area at large."[^26] Later on, the movement was absorbed in Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation.

Through *Sanskritization* movement, a section of Untouchables who could improve their economic condition, either by abandoning or continuing their traditional occupations, launched struggle for higher status in the caste hierarchy. The founder of this concept, M.N. Srinivas, defines the concept of *Sanskritization* as follows: “The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism or teetotalism, and by *Sanskritizing* its rituals and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmans and the adoption of the *Brahmanic* way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called *Sanskritisation*.27

In this way the lower castes followed *Sanskritic* norms and rituals. They tried to justify their claims to a higher social status in the caste hierarchy by inventing suitable mythologies. The Sharars or Nadars of Tamil Nadu have crossed the boundary of Untouchability. The Iravas or Ezhavas of Kerala have also blurred, if not completely destroyed, the line of Untouchability. The Nadar organised movements in the late nineteenth century against the civic disabilities they suffered. They entered the political system by first supporting the Justice Party in the early 1930s and later the Congress party. They have moved from the lower rungs of the ritual hierarchy to a position of status and power. Similarly, the Ezhavas formed their caste organization in 1903, known as SNDA Yogam (Association for the Maintenance of Dharma founded by Sri Narayana). The Association launched activities for *Sanskritizing* norms and customs of the Iravas. They launched a *Satyagraha* for temple entry in 1920s, as well as bargained
with the government for economic opportunities and political positions, thus, improving their status.

It is clear by now that the Dalit movement in pre-Independence period had achieved a respectable status. Though reformative in nature, the Bhakti movement, the Neo-Vadantic and Sanskritization movements have contributed very meaningfully for the proliferation of political consciousness among Dalits and it can be said that these movements laid down firm foundations for the Dalit Liberation movement whose agenda include recognition of human existence, social mobility, political participation, social change and establishment of an egalitarian society. Now we will discuss the Alternative movements.

Through Conversion Movement, Dalits offer a new alternative religion, Buddhism, in negation of Hinduism. It started with Ambedkar's personal conversion announcement in 1935 which was followed by a Mahar Conference in 1936 where Ambedkar declared:

Religion is for man; man is not for religion,
If you want to gain self-respect, change your religion.
If you want to create a co-operative society change your religion.
If you want power, change your religion.
If you want equality, change your religion.
If you want independence, change your religion.
If you want to make the world in which you live, happy, change your religion... \( ^{28} \)
Buddhism offered scriptural justification for worth achieved by mind and action, not by birth. So in 1956, Dr. Ambedkar took Diksha from the oldest Buddhist monk in India before a large audience in Nagpur and set in motion the conversion process that brought over three million Indians into the Buddhist fold in the next few years. The Conversion Movement gave new, changed identity, as Professor Gangadhar Pantavane, stated: "Bhimrao has placed us in the lap of a life giving religion and so has awakened psychological independence...This is the religion of Gautam, who with love won the world, and the spine of this religion is humanity." In this regard, Namdev Dhasal said, "Conversion to Buddhism... freed the Scheduled Castes from mental and psychological enslavement... Religion has an attraction for the common man and it was not easy to change his attitude towards it... The Buddhists have liberated themselves from old ideas of Karma and destiny and from worship of Hindu gods. To the extent this facilitated their adopting rational attitudes to their conditions in society, the chance of their actively striving to change their conditions were better." 

Thus, the Conversion Movement left an immense appeal to the Dalits, though its benefits are mostly limited to mental relax but its otherwise impact is remarkable. It rejected Hinduism, thus, the caste system. But the Conversion has one facet of a multi-level effort: economic improvement of the masses, exploitation free system etc., all must come through some other path. The Conversion seems to have helped to create the will to probe every possible means for remaining united and asserting independent identity. It also hailed the vision for an alternate society where all people are equal and enjoying a dignified life.
In the Secular Movements, which include economic issues also, we find an attempt to build an alternative socio-cultural identity for the oppressed classes. During this movement, Dalit literature flourished well and people started propagating their ideas by publishing their original writings such as poems, stories, plays which are used as a means of protest against Hindu intellectual tradition, the Hindu religion and Hindu ethics.

There occurred land grab movements in late 1960s where Dalit agricultural labourers participated at a number of places in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. These movements are still alive in numerous villages of the country. They have contributed in generating class-consciousness among the people living in a caste-structured society. These movements are also helping to develop consciousness among the oppressed classes regarding the socio-economic structure and cultural reality, which keep them subjugated.

Thus, all these movements represented "ample evidence of the Dalit Movement even prior to the enactment of the 1919 Constitution, growing in size and political significance through the 1920s and 1930s. Dalits may not have had a single organization parallel to the Muslim League or Hindu Mahasabha, but they did have grassroots organizations, a recognized leadership, pre-eminent among whom Dr. Ambedkar, and a common demand for political recognition, for representation of their own, as well as for dignity, equality and justice."31
Study of the awakening of the Dalits in the last century can be sub-divided as:

A. Era of struggle for the recognition of human existence and socio-political rights till Independence (1920-1950)
B. Era of restructuring through social mobility and political participation (1950-1985)
C. Era of actual sharing or exercise of power (1985 onwards)

As it is evident from the earlier analysis that long before the era of struggle for recognition of human existence and socio-political rights, attempts were made to emancipate Untouchables from the clutches of upper castes exploitation and degradation by various saints and social reformers. But they tried to do so on the basis of philosophical and religious not political grounds and supported, somehow, continuation of the Varna system. Basic challenge to this exploitative system came from the Conversion Movement, which rejected philosophical tenets of the caste system. But reform movements within the Hindu society continued to keep Untouchables at the mercy of good will of the upper castes people. None of them made any attempt to encourage these depressed and distressed people to stand on their own feet and assert as equal human beings.

From this point of view, the Dalits as politically conscious of their rights and privileges were not able to assert politically, however, some of them did succeed in making upward social mobility. It was only during the Freedom Movement that these castes started to assert in terms of socio-political awakening based on social mobility.
Analysing the periods of the Dalit movement of the last century, one finds that the level of socio-cultural awakening and consciousness was raised in the first two decades of the century, and with the arrival of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, this movement reached its zenith. "The years between 1930 and 1936 were a turning point in the history of the Dalit movement in India. These years witnessed the All-India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur in 1930; Ambedkar's attendance at the First Round Table Conference; his clash with Gandhi before and at the Second Round Table Conference, culminating in the Poona Pact of 1932; and the famous Conversion announcement in 1935, 'I have been born a Hindu but I will not die a Hindu.'"\(^{33}\)

The events of this period led to Ambedkar's final disillusionment with Hinduism and with the Congress leadership. At the same time these events revealed the power represented by Ambedkar and Dalit movement that had risen with him and confirmed him as an unparallel leader of the Dalits, forcing the Congress leadership to deal with his demands.

Thus, "Dr. Ambedkar played three important roles during his lifetime: that of a caste leader, that of an Untouchable spokesman, and that of national statesman. In his first leadership role, he was guide, guru and decision maker for his own caste, the Mahars of Maharashtra, from the mid-twenties of this century until his death. From the early 1930s onwards he was chief spokesman of the 'Untouchables. In his third role, he spoke on all phases on India's development, worked on problems of labour and law as a member of the Government, and even put aside some of his own theories to help create a viable, generally accepted Constitution."\(^{34}\)
It was at the time of Simon Commission that Dr. Ambedkar came forward with his demands categorically. He submitted, on the behalf of the Depressed Classes of Bombay, a Statement\(^\text{35}\) for asking some guarantees before Simon Commission, which are mentioned hereunder:

i. That the education of the depressed classes shall be recognized as the first charge on the revenues of the Province and that an equitable and just proportion of the total grant for education shall be earmarked for the benefit of the depressed classes.

ii. That the right of the depressed classes to unrestricted recruitment in the army, navy and the police shall be recognized without any limitation as to caste.

iii. That for a period or 30 years the rights of the depressed classes for priority in the matter of recruitment to all posts, gazetted as well as non-gazetted, in all civil services shall be recognized.

iv. That the right of the depressed classes to effective representation on the local bodies shall be recognized by the Provincial Government.

v. That the right of the depressed classes to appeal to the Government of India in cases of violation of these rights by the Provincial Government shall be recognized and the Government of India shall be given the power to compel the Provincial Government to conform to the law in these matters.

Thus, it became clear at the time of the Simon Commission that Dalits were becoming politically conscious and they had started agitation for the recognition of their socio-political rights. During the Simon Commission, it was announced that after the work of the Commission was over, the representatives of India be assembled for
discussion on the future Constitution of India. This was the background of the three Round Table Conferences, which took place in London from 1930-32. Dr. Ambedkar attended the First Round Table Conference along with M.N. Srinivasan of Madras to represent India's Untouchables, he was unequivocal that “Untouchables needed politically power and equally definite that this could only be gained within the framework of an Independent India. He stated: The point of view I'll try to put as briefly as I can. It is this, that the bureaucratic form of Government in India should be replaced by a Government, which will be a Government of the people, by the people and for the people... Arguing that the goodwill of the British is irrelevant, he went on: The Government of India does realize the necessity of removing the social evils, which are eating into, the vitals of Indian society and which have blighted the lives of the downtrodden classes for years. The Government of India does realize that the landlords are squeezing the masses dry and the capitalists are not giving the labourer a living wage and decent conditions of work. Yet it is a most painful thing that it has not dared to touch any of these evils. Why... These are some of the questions raised by the depressed classes... we feel that nobody can remove our grievances as well as we can and we can not remove them unless we get political power in our own hands. No share of this political power can evidently come to us so long as the British government remains as it is. It is only in a Swaraj Constitution that we stand any chance of getting the political power in our own hands, without which we cannot bring salvation to our people...”

At the Conference, he advocated a unitary state and adult suffrage with reserved seats and safeguards for Untouchables. It is to be noted that it was this Conference that shaped the 1935 Government of India Act; a Federal Constitution in which the Princely States could enter as an autonomous units; a slightly expanded electorate but hardly
adult suffrage; and responsible government at the Provincial level highly qualified by residual powers given to British-appointed governors. The Indian National Congress did not attend the First Round Table Conference.

Confrontation between Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar became apparent at the second Round Table Conference, when Gandhiji refused to accept separate electorate for the depressed classes and opposed any form of special representation involving reserved seats. Their earlier meeting just before the Second Round Table Conference ended in distress that led negotiations at the Conference difficult. “The situation was exacerbated by Gandhi’s questioning of Ambedkar’s bona fides: “I say that it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of Untouchables of India... I myself in my own person claim to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables…”

Subsequent declaration of the Communal Award of 1932 by the British Government was responded by Gandhiji to enter a fast unto death on September 20, 1932, which led to a compromise between Gandhi and Ambedkar, Known as the Yerreda or the Poona Pact.

But the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar surfaced, again, as soon as Gandhi started his League Against Untouchability (which was to become Harijan Sevak Sangh) and Ambedkar attempted to intervene. There were two important issues: whether the League would be controlled by caste Hindus or the Dalits would have at least have share in control, and whether it would seek only to abolish Untouchability or aim at abolition of Chaturvarna itself. Gandhi firmly held out for caste Hindu control on the
grounds that since Untouchability was an evil of Hinduism that had to be purged, Hindus themselves must do this; he also stressed that he was not against *Chaturvarna* as a system. In this way, it became impossible for Gandhi and Ambedkar to work together on the issue of *Dalit* emancipation.

Another important contribution that needs serious attention is the political initiatives taken by Dr. Ambedkar, who was instrumental in establishing three political parties: Independent Labor Party (ILP) in 1936, Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) in 1942, which led to the formation of the Republican Party of India (RPI) in 1956. These were the attempts to join Untouchables to larger group or in a solid mass to seek political power. The Program of the ILP was "mainly to advance the welfare of the labouring classes and the Party accepted with socialist flavour, the principle of state management and state ownership of industries wherever it may become necessary in the interests of the people. Aid to agriculturists through land mortgage banks; co-operative and marketing societies; technical education and the promotion of the new industries; reform of the tenants system; free and compulsory education and a pledge to bring about a fair mixture of caste in the administration were planks of the platform."38 This Party was able to secure 14 seats out of 18 it contested in the 1937 elections. Eleanor Zelliot writes on this: "With the Conversion announcement in 1935, the establishment of a political party in 1936, and to considerable success in 1937 elections, the shift from attempting to gain status in matters of religion to organizing political activity was nearly complete."39

Then, in July 1942, the All-India Depressed Classes Conference was held at Nagpur, which brought the ILP to an end and constituted SCF before a mass of 70,000 of which one third were women. There were two specific demands; one, for separate
village settlement of entirely Scheduled Castes villages away from and independent of
Hindu villages and the other was renewing the demand for separate electorates. Aside
from this, the SCF maintain most of the other specific demands of the ILP. In 1956 Dr.
Ambedkar made an attempt to transform the SCF into a party which would speak for all
the 'dispossessed' and thus, the RPI was created which, later, put its Charter of
Demands\(^40\) in details, some of the demands are as follows:

1. A portrait Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as Father of the Indian Constitution in the Central
   Hall of the Parliament
2. The Nation's land given to the landless tiller
3. Idle and wasteland given to landless labour
4. Full implementation of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948
5. Extension of Scheduled Castes privileges to the SCs members who have embraced
   Buddhism
6. Full justice under the Untouchability Offence Act

Thus, Ambedkar's contribution to the Dalit movement becomes its guiding force.
His was a committed personality for the emancipation of Dalits in particular and for the
nation-building and social transformation in general. His writings are full of serious
analysis of the caste-ridden Indian society and of the Hindu social system. He also gave
the most desired direction for modernization and development by framing the
Constitution of Free India and served as the first Indian Law Minister for sometimes in
the Nehru Cabinet. Finally, he offered an alternative vision of religion by embracing
Buddhism.
Now it becomes important to deal with several pertinent questions of Dalit movement in continuity. Here our endeavour will be to find out Dalits as a category of caste, class and religion, thereafter to recognize the important trends in the Dalit movement. First of all, we will discuss Dalits as a category of Caste.

Caste is the most striking feature of the Indian society and every one recognizes that Caste System determines the very texture of Indian politics. It has become part and parcel of the Indian Political System. Caste is “a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste.”

Castes have come out of ancient fourfold classification of society known as Varna scheme which justified the Caste Order on three grounds: the first is what may be called the secular aspect which includes the governmental aspect (Caste Councils, village arbitration procedures and so on) and the political aspects (within caste and inter-caste authority and status alignments). Second, there is the integration aspect. The Caste System not only determines the individual’s social station on the basis of group to which he is born but also differentiates and assigns occupational and economic roles. It thus gives a place to every individual from the highest to the lowest and makes for a high degree of identification and integration. Third, there is the aspect of consciousness, which leads to variation of Varna according to one’s level of understanding of the social system as a whole.
After analysing brief history of the Dalit movement, we can say that this movement started as non-Brahman movement, which led to anti-caste movement during the Bhakti period. It also attempted to purify Hinduism of its evils and fought against the tyranny of the Caste System. This anti-caste movement was, in turn, a part of a broader revolutionary movement that included the National Movement and the Communist and socialist led working class and peasants movements as well. Thus, the Dalit movement initiated struggle against the evils of the Caste System, broadened its horizons, addressed to, and affiliated with the working class and peasant struggles.

Coming to the next category of Dalits as a class, we find some important observations of the caste-class analysis. Sometimes, there is overlapping of the two social differentiations. One, based on caste is the legacy of the past that has been carried over into the present. The other is class differentiation, based on the development of productive forces and the commensurating production relations. Inevitably, the second is growing more powerful each day, and is breaking up the rigid framework imposed by the Caste System. Objective developments are strengthening class divisions and antagonisms and the struggle between the classes is becoming sharper. It is well established that caste based associations can no longer improve the social conditions whereas class consciousness and class struggle unite all sections of the exploited masses against their exploiters, while caste consciousness and caste struggle divide the exploited masses according to their castes while claiming to fight the exploiters. Building a counter-caste ideology of the lower or backward castes cannot fight the caste ideology of the dominant castes. The Dalit movement can achieve significant success where it will polarize itself on the class line and will associate itself with the larger struggles outside the caste framework.
The next category that needs attention is that of religion vis-à-vis Dalits. Hinduism, because of its several oppressive practices, which have infiltrated pains and atrocities on Dalits was rejected by them. They embraced Buddhism as it preaches egalitarianism and thus Dalit “liberated themselves from old ideas of Karma, destiny and from worship of Hindu gods.”[^42] It was the Conversion movement, announced by Ambedkar in 1936 that “galvanized Dalits throughout India and it was the choice of Buddhism that lay down the challenge for an alternative Indian identity.”[^43]

On the basis of this historical analysis, we can identify some of the trends of the Dalit Movement in India, that:

The Dalit Movement in the beginning was a Reformative movement, which attempted to purify Hinduism of its evils, and fought against the tyranny of the Caste System. During this period, saints, like Chokhamela, Eknath, Kabir and Ravidas played a very important role in the awakening of Dalit consciousness.

Second, with this Reformative movement, there were Alternative movements too, which attempted to create an alternative socio-cultural structure where caste domination is eliminated and every person can live with self-dignity.

Third, the Dalit Movement did not emerge only in Maharashtra as a result of Ambedkar's leadership there were similar trends, though of varying degree of strength, in all regions of Indian society.

Fourth, the Movement was genuinely anti-caste, not merely a caste reform movement. Internal reforms, like giving up drinking and rejecting customs, which marked the caste as 'low' in a Brahmanic hierarchy, were themes everywhere, along with demands of education and entry into employment and political institutions.

Fifth, Dalits as exploited workers, peasants and agricultural labourers were involved with economic or class issues everywhere, and these were expressed in demands, like land grab movement, made in all regions.

Sixth, Dalit Movement emerged as a great political force but much weaker in organizational strength and financial resources.

Seventh, the Dalit Movement has come up with new identity, rejecting Hinduism and embracing Buddhism to build an alternative equitable and egalitarian society.

Finally, “Untouchables of India had themselves chosen a new identity, that of Dalits -to indicate their lack of belief in being polluting, their sense that their condition was the fault of the caste system and their inclusion in the Ambedkar movement.” It is also evident that in the course of the Movement the connotation of the word ‘Dalit’ is broadened and now it is not confined only to the ‘ex-Untouchables’ but it refers to those also who are deprived of their socio-economic and cultural rights.

To understand contemporary Dalit struggle two approaches seem to predominate. One is that represented by Professor Nandu Ram who sees three types of contemporary Dalit Movements: “Movements against socio-economic exploitation and numerous

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types of atrocities committed on the Dalits; movements for better access to the opportunities and for realization of goals of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice; and finally movements for gaining self-respect and dignified social identity.  

The second approach seeks an underlying unity beneath this diversity, as represented by Rajni Kothari: “The Dalits’ expectations and strategy seem to be designed to challenge the dominant castes by means of education, employment and special rights, in short, a struggle against the system that begins with challenging injustices within it, thinking of a struggle against ‘domination’ and imperialism. Or as some of them would say, redefine nature of imperialism in essentially social terms both locally and globally.”  

Thus, in the post-Independence India, it is urgently needed that political context of the movement be clearly underlined. “At the time of Independence and after, Dalits have not become power holders themselves, the movement was not controlling events, and it was suffering a process of co-optation and incorporation. Repression continued and still continuing open and brutal in the villages, but it was overlaid in the co-optation, the winning over with the individuals with few crumbs and the erosion of movement organizations, accompanied by the overflowing paternalistic and benign rhetoric of the party which Ambedkar had described as the party of ‘Brahmans and the bourgeois.”  

Then, what seems the possible path to liberation? Dr. Ambedkar, in one of his works titled ‘What Path to Liberation’ had argued that a “necessary condition was to overthrow of ‘Hindu religious-ideological hegemony’. He had tended to see economic and social oppression as separate structures, taking up cultural change as the way to
challenge Hinduism; socialism as the way to overcome exploitation⁴⁸ and a combined struggle, dealing with economic and socio-cultural issues is always needed. Today, this combined struggle is needed greater than ever.

**Dalit Literature and Aesthetics**

The above analysis provides a working framework that manifests interrelations between literary expression and political consciousness among the Dalits. We have discussed in the last chapter nature and scope of literary expression and political consciousness in the community. It is evident that Dalit literature is a powerful medium of expression that keeps Dalit movement sustaining and provides an untiring zeal.

There are different views regarding the Dalit literature, most prominent among them is its critique that Dalit literature is a political literature. Of course, the Dalit literature is a political literature and it needs to be reaffirmed that the term Dalit itself is political identity representing the very denial of the Caste System. According the Prof. Tulsi Ram, “if we examine literature anywhere in the world critically, it would be self-explained that literary expressions represents contemporary political reality and has both: pro and against voices. There is a very close relationship of literature and politics and it is not confined to the expression of Dalit literature. For instance, literature written during the Vedic period is called religious literature but, in fact, that represents the political system of the Vedic Age…”⁴⁹ In this way, literature becomes political that expresses contemporary social and political reality. We have discussed various schools of the sociology of literature in the last chapter, which emphasized on close interaction between literature and political consciousness.

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Dalit literature can not be considered as 'caste literature' rather it is political literature as Kanwal Bharati asked a very pertinent question that literature is not divided on the basis of language only (as Bangali, Kannada, Tamil, Urdu Literature and so on) but it is also divided on the basis of ideology and 'isms', for instance, Hindutva, Islamic, and Christian Literature; Marxist and Rightist Literature, Gandhian and Nationalist Literature and Global Literature. Then why there cannot be Dalit Literature, which represents voices of the majority of this country?

Kanwal Bharati considers that only Dalits can write Dalit literature as they are the sufferers of multiple oppressions and they have felt trauma of caste atrocities. He regards that sympathetic upper caste authors cannot be the part of the Dalit literature as they won't be able to express trauma of the Dalit community because they have not felt it. Hence, he regards that Premchand, Nirala, Amritlal Nagar and Dr. Jagdish Gupta cannot be a part of the Dalit literature.

The guiding force for the Dalit literature becomes the Ambedkarite philosophy that represents a comprehensive worldview different from the upper caste hegemonic philosophy and incorporates Buddhism, Bhaktism and other protest traditions prevalent in the Indian society like verses of Shankaranand and Acchutanand (prevalent in Uttar Pradesh). Kanwal Bharati conclusively writes that the guiding ideology of Dalit authors cannot be centrist, leftist or rightist not even Dalitist but the Ambedkarite vision. We would discuss these issues in the subsequent chapters of this study while examining Dalit literature, its nature, scope and impact on the movement.
Highlighting the contribution of Dalit literature to the development of Indian art, culture and literature, Prof. Nandu Ram says that Dalit literature has immensely contributed for the development and preservation of the Indian culture but this contribution has not been acknowledged by the historians who are upper castes, whom focus has been limited to a particular view (upper caste hegemony) that has been projected as the representative of the Indian reality. But as a matter of fact, there are several cultural traditions, which are known by names of Dalit authors and artists, e.g., movements by Ravidas and Keshavnarain in UP, Satnami Movement in Chattisgarh; and movements by Phule in Maharashtra etc. He further elucidates that Dalit literature is anti-establishment and advocates a new social system based on equality, liberty and fraternity. Another Dalit litterateur, Jai Prakash Kardam resonates the same view that vision of the Dalit literature is to establish an equalitarian society that aims for the welfare of all.

Thus, the Dalit aesthetics draws its inspiration by the Ambedkarite philosophy and the Dalit literature makes it a guiding force. Sharan Kumar Limbale sets the following ‘tests’ for the formation of the Dalit aesthetics, viz.,

- Author experiences be authentic
- Those experiences be generalized/universalised
- Those experiences should not be just region specific
- Texts should instil inspiration for egalitarian social system

He further regards that the Dalit aesthetics manifests expression of the cardinal values of Independence, Justice, Equality and Fraternity and the Dalit literature be studied with this perspective rather than considering it ‘caste literature’ or something else.
that does not express in a very sophisticated form. This brings to our notice that the Dalit Literature needs to represent real picture of the community, its trauma and its struggle for social change. This also recognizes the fact that literary aesthetics have been transcended from a sophisticated perspective to a realistic (sometimes may, apparently, appear harsh, rude as some of the authors argue) and true aesthetic sense that attempts to demolish the supremacy of a structured forms of literary aesthetics. We would explore and analyse this characteristic in subsequent chapters of this study in relation to the Hindi Dalit Literature. We would observe that Hindi Dalit Literature is cultivating its own literary space with a very high level of thinking that possesses the sense of freedom, essence of realistic aesthetic, constructive soul and highlight the ground realities of the Dalit community. Its reading and study makes us restless and leads for social change and solidarity for the establishment of an egalitarian society.
Notes


2 *Manifesto of the Dalit Panthers*, 1972


8 *Constitution of India*, 1950


11 For complete reference to the definition and related debates on the term, ‘Movement’, please see Ghanshyam Shah, *Social Movements in India* (Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 13-27. It provides a comprehensive discussion on the subject and working definition of the term that has been adopted for this work also.


24 In Jorden, J.T.F. Dayanand Saraswati: His Life and Ideas (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978) p.62

25 Shah, Ghanshyam. Ibid. p. 109


27 Srinivas, M.N. Religion and Society among Coorgs of South India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1952) p.32

28 Quoted in Eleanor Zelliot, Ibid. p. 192

29 Ibid. p. 218


31 Webster, J.C.B. Abstract from the First Ambedkar Chair Lecture, 1995 (Centre for Study of Social Systems /School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi)


33 Omvedt, Gail. Ibid. p. 161

34 Zelliot, Eleanor. Ibid. p. 53

35 Indian Statutory Commission, 16, p.41


37 Zelliot, Eleanor. Ibid. p. 166

38 Ibid. p. 106

39 Ibid. p. 107


42 Dhasal, Namdev. Ibid., quoted in Eleanor Zelliot, Ibid. p. 219

43 Zelliot, Eleanor. Ibid. for further detail.

44 Ibid. p. v.

45 Ram, Nandu, Ibid. p. 31


47 Omvedt, Gail, Ibid. p. 326
48 Ibid. p. 338


50 Bharati, Kanwal (ed.) Dalit Jan Ubhaar (Lucknow: B.M.N. Prakshan, year not mentioned) p185 translation mine.

51 Ibid. translation mine.

52 Ram, Nandu. 'Bhartiya Samaj Aur Dalit' in Shyoraj Singh 'Baichan' and Devender Chobe, Ibid. p.13-21 for detail.

53 Please see 'Yudhrat Aam Aadami' (Hazaribagh: January-June 1998) for further detail.

54 Limbale, Sharan Kumar. Dalit Sahitya Ka Saundryashastra (Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2002) and also see Yudhrat Aam Aadami (Hazaribagh: January-June 1998) for further detail.