Equality, fraternity and liberty, the very principles of the French Revolution, were central to Ambedkar’s vision of the new society and culture. To achieve this goal he found religious solution. Is there a religious solution to problems, arising out of exploitation? ‘Yes’ says Ambedkar. Not only does he say ‘Yes’, but he goes further and asserts that the solutions achieved through religious means are better and more lasting than the revolutionary struggle this is achieved by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar through the process of conversion.

Conversion has been viewed as a socio-political breakthrough after which the scheduled castes can make a business like beginning for their career as citizens of a free and secular India. Hence in the present research study ‘conversion’ studied as a social movement of bringing socio-economic, political and religious change among the Dalits. The Dalits are the downtrodden sections of the society who suffered a lot in Indian history. These Dalits converted to other religions as a result of influence of Christian Missionaries and due to the sway of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

For Ambedkar ‘religion’ came to have a specific meaning. He said, “that which promises equal opportunity to all is the true religion. The rest are all false religions”. For him religion had significance only in so far as
it helped to establish a moral order characterized by equality, freedom and fraternity. And he was categorical that Budhism alone could create a climate, favourable to human equality. Hence Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism was for a purpose and intent. It was to provide a way to liberate himself and his people from the misery of untouchability and thereby bring about social change in the form of upward social mobility. It was not for the liberation of just one individual, but for people seeking equality and self-respect.

The social oppression suffered by the untouchable castes are very well known and our history stands as a mute witness to it. There are the sad condition and the demeaning limits of human relations and rights. These sufferings were not the result of the law of nature. These arose out of a social arrangement of vested interests of a socio-religious system presided over by a group of people who assigned for themselves a superior position. These were not self caused or self-imposed, but were thrust upon one people by another. The sufferings of the untouchables were ordained by men and institutionalized. They received their legitimation through Brahminism. Its unfortunate continuity made it a chronic disease of Hindu society. In Hinduism inequality is a religious doctrine adopted and continuously preached as a religious dogma. In fact, inequality has become the soul of Hinduism. This made them to embrace other religion.
In 1936, Dr. Ambedkar announced his resolve to abandon Hinduism. However, after his announcement he did not immediately convert to Buddhism. He only repeated his resolve to leave Hinduism, but gave no indication of the faith to which he wished to embrace. But he was confident that conversion was the only means to redeem the untouchables. The conversion was as important to him as Swaraj. There was possibility of facilities to the untouchables being affected by the conversion. But he knew that the facilities were not of permanent character. He believed that the real strength of the untouchables was in their social organization. Hence he felt imperative to emphasise the social movement. Therefore he opined that for untouchables the conversion was important for the sake of spiritual as well as material good. Moreover he was careful in choosing only such religion, which had its origin in India, which appears derogatory to the concept of composite Indian culture.

Ultimately in 1950 Dr. Ambedkar made a formal declaration of the decision to embrace Buddhism. The decision was not sudden because he had been reading works on Buddhism for many years. He was conceiving of it as an act in which a substantial number of his followers would join him. Thus while announcing the conversion programme he was aware of his own responsibility and the good of the untouchables. It is because Ambedkar was bent upon freeing the untouchables from the iron social framework of Hinduism.
In September 1950 Ambedkar made the first plea to his people to embrace Buddhism as a way out of their sufferings and declared that he would devote the rest of his life to the revival and spread of Buddhism. Ultimately embraced Buddhism on 14th October 1956 with his millions of followers. As a result day-by-day the conversions are increasing.

The conversions mark the inner change of the people from low moral conduct to a better one. It is the social change from a low to a high status. Conversions attempt to overcome the problems of untouchability leading to social ostracism, gross ignorance and degraded social status. Conversion serves as an antidote to the sad state of remaining the lowest forever. Through conversion it is possible to achieve social equality by the Dalits with wider community.

Conversions unite and develop a sense of oneness. There make one to feel something is different from that the original religion has been achieved. To the downtrodden, conversion is the only hope that society gives equal treatment, feel better and breathe freely. Thus conversions endeavour to establish equality.

Conversion brings about changes in their life. As a result they are enjoying equal social status with others. Today the higher education is more acquainted with them. Conversion helps to bring about changes in the social relationships with larger society. This is nothing but revolutionary achievement through social movement, because in the
present study the conversion is viewed as one of the greatest social movements. However, from the obtained results the following conclusions were drawn.

A. Results pertaining to socio-economic background of the respondents

1. In the present study the number of male respondents are more than female. Moreover a majority of the respondents belonged to the middle age, who have good experience about their present and the past life.

2. In the present study a majority of the respondents belonged to Buddhism. It is due to the influence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar most of the scheduled caste people of North-West part of Karnataka have converted to Buddhism.

3. A majority of the respondents are married and themselves are the head of their families.

4. The study shows that a majority of the respondents are following small family norm, by having only one or two children.

5. A majority of the respondents' original caste is Holeya. Most of the Holeya caste people have converted to Buddhism under the influence Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.
6. The present study has revealed that most of the converted Dalits even today still living with their own community neighbourhood.

7. In the present study, nearly half of the respondents are illiterate and a majority of the respondents are having only primary level education.

8. A majority of the respondents work as coolies or agricultural labourers and engaged in agriculture with small land holdings.

9. Since a majority of the respondents are coolies, the most of the respondent’s income is comparatively low. They belonged to lower economic strata and living in poor standard of life.

10. The present study has revealed that even today, irrespective of influence of modernization, urbanization and industrialization, the joint family structure is more powerful in rural areas. Since a majority of the respondents’ main occupation is either coolie or agriculture, they need more persons, which perpetuates joint family system in rural India.

The above results have proved our hypotheses “even today a majority of the converted Dalits are not economically advanced with the mainstream of the society”.
B. Results pertaining to the process of conversion

1. The study has revealed that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had a profound influence over the respondents. The secular ideas and equal preference to everyone irrespective of caste, creed and race found in Buddhism. Christianity and Christian missionaries have attracted a large number of respondents, who feel that the new system gives them an opportunity to maintain self-dignity and respect.

2. The study revealed that most of the parents of the respondents converted to Buddhism during the time of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He was the most powerful inspiration for their conversion.

3. In the present study the nearest relatives act as the main source of persuasion for conversion.

4. The present study has shown that a majority of the respondents have not changed their names and surnames. Only marginal number of the respondents has changed their names and surnames. They have opined that this change would provide them higher social status even in orthodox Hindu society, because today it becomes difficult to find out the real caste of the people on the basis of their names and surnames.
5. The converted Dalits of the present study tried to influence others by showing the superiority of the new religion. A majority of the respondents have made efforts to convert others.

6. Although there are many doctrinal differences between Hinduism and converted religion, everyone has to follow the rituals and principles of the converted religion, which gives them a separate identity. In this respect the present study has revealed that a majority of the respondents have strictly followed the rites and rituals of the converted religion.

7. The present study has revealed that there is no religious leader in every community. But they frequently visit and take care and deliver religious preachings.

8. While converting to new religion every individual has to take an oath of following of the principles of new religion strictly. Some ows are pertaining to discard the Hindu gods and to stop the worship of such gods. The study has revealed that most of the respondents are not worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses. Some are worshipping. To change human mentality completely is very difficult, which is very much influenced by many internal and external factors.

9. The study also revealed that a majority of the respondents are not visiting Hindu temples.
10. The present study has also revealed that a majority of the respondents do not celebrate only Buddha Jayanti and Christmas. But some respondents follow some Hindu festivals even after their conversion.

11. The present study has indicated that gradually harmonious relationships are being established between the converted Dalits and upper caste people. However, it indicates that practice of untouchability and casteism are declining gradually in modern society not only as a result of modernization and urbanization, but also due to the movement of conversion.

12. The study also indicated that most of the respondents after conversion have changed their traditional occupations and engaged in other hygienic occupations.

The above results have proved the hypothesis like "The unimaginable sway of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar forced the Dalits for conversion". The converted Dalits do not worship Hindu gods and goddesses and do not follow any Hindu festivals". "The converted Dalits strictly follow the rites and rituals of the converted religion in their life".

C. Results pertaining to the perception regarding their status

1. In recent past the conversion among the Dalits has gradually increased. As a result they are beginning to enter into the
mainstream of social, economic, cultural and political life. Consequently the status of the converted Dalits has been increasing. The results of the study have also supported this opinion.

2. The study has revealed that their social status has been improved, their identity through caste has been diminished and they found socio-economic changes in their life. Consequently today they are not being identified by caste and religion.

3. Basically the Dalits embraced to achieve equality and equal status with all the people in general and with caste Hindus in particular. The present study has revealed that the converted Dalits are enjoying an equal status with other Hindus. As for as income level of the respondents is concerned only the respondents of lower income level have not achieved equal status with upper caste Hindu. But remaining all the respondents has felt that they achieved equal status with the upper caste Hindus.

4. In India interdining between untouchables and other upper caste people was not possible and it was a taboo. But the present study has indicated that a majority of the respondents used to have interdining with other upper caste Hindus.

5. Prior to independence in India, untouchables were kept away from administration and politics. Political participation was a distant
dream for them. The present study has noted that today after conversion, the political status of the Dalits has increased lot.

6. The present study has suggested that majority of the converted Dalits are not facing any problem. They have adjusted with new circumstances some of the respondents were opposed by the people of their own original caste. But hardly few respondents were being illtreated by the original people of the converted religion.

7. The data has revealed that, after conversion the literacy rate among females has been increasing lot among the converted Dalits.

8. The study has indicated that the life style of the converted Dalits is changing due to conversion, modernization, higher education and urbanization. By changing life style they are raising their status in the society.

9. The present study has suggested that the converted Dalits have changed their religious practices.

10. The present study has shown that the reservation system is necessary even to the converted Dalits. A majority of the respondents have supported the perpetuation of such facilities to them.

The above results have endorsed the Hypothesis that, “There is change in the status among the converted Dalits”. “The converted Dalits
face the problems while adjusting with new religious environment”. “The converted Dalits have adopted modern life styles in their day to day life”.

D. Results pertaining to the changes among the converted dalits

1. Conversion has brought about a feeling of change in the life of the converted Dalits. The study has revealed that there are significant changes occurring in social, educational, cultural, economical and political fields among the converted Dalits.

2. The study has revealed that the marital relations between converted sub-castes are increasing. However, the respondents perform their marriages as per the rites and rituals of converted religion.

3. The present shows that a majority of the converted Dalits is putting the names as in converted religion and modern names to their children.

4. The study revealed that the rate of expansion of education among the Dalits after their conversion is not satisfactory.

5. The study revealed that the converted Dalits have given more liberty to women of their community. It shows their adjustment with the changing circumstances.
6. The study has indicated that the converted Dalits are ready to establish matrimonial relations with the people of their original caste.

7. Difficulty in adjusting with new religious environment has brought about un-uniform changes among the converted Dalits.

8. The present study has shown that the converted Dalits have some plans and programmes for their allround progress. They have their own organizations to satisfy their variety of needs.

9. The study has expressed that the converted Dalits never support any anti-conversion laws.

10. The study has noted that it is very necessary to create awareness among weaker sections of the society regarding the process of conversion.

11. There are various changes occurred in the opinions regarding widow-remarriage, love marriage, inter-religious marriages etc.

The above results have endorsed the hypothesis that – “The converted Dalits are enjoying equal status with upper caste Hindus”. “The inter-sub-caste and inter-religious marriages are common among the converted Dalits”. “The converted Dalits have made some plans and programmes for their self-development”.

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Thus the conversion bears tremendous impact on the scheduled castes. It has united and developed a sense of oneness. They are tying to establish a casteless society on the principles of the converted religion. They are extremely proud of their new religion and they are attempting to lead a dignified and honourable life in the society. They have got rid of their inferiority complex by obtaining a fresh identity and a newly acquired confidence. They are enjoying high social status.

Thus conversion is a strong religious movement, which is growing stronger with missionary zeal. It is a socio-economic and ethic oriented religious movement, wherein spiritual bliss and mundane prosperity are interwoven with each other so much, it is difficult to separate one from the other.