

**Dr. B.R. Ambedker's conversion to Buddhism: A study of the
crisis of identity**



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Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

The term Crisis is a perception or knowledge of an event or condition as an impossible difficulty that exceeds the person's present resources and coping mechanisms, and Identity is qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and expressions that make a person. This Identity in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self- respect or dignity. There is no necessary linkage between these things. In ordinary language, at least, one can use Identity to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category, and in some contexts certain categories can be described as identities even though no one sees them as central to their personal identity. The concept of crisis produces a feeling of desperation when people do not know what to do. A crisis is defined as a significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly. The crisis reflects poorly on an organization and will damage a reputation to some degree. It means crisis a perception or experience of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty, beliefs, personality, looks and expression that make a person. This Identity in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self- respect of dignity.

The question of identity is the most controversial issue in society. It can be regarded as the most important elements existed in all communities. Due to the circumstances of crisis issues and the problematic conditions that faced by the newly freed nations and countries in their search and formation of self-identity the crisis floated on the surface. The issue of identity is not a clear and fixed concept as it may imagine, that led to the crisis and became a phenomenon of identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis. In the modern world with the increase in immigrant numbers, hybrid nations, and Constitution of countries with different cultural diversities the question of identity came to the surface.

Ancient period:

For centuries, the untouchables were the lowest stratum of Hindu society. They remained socially degenerated, economically impoverished, politically deprived and permanently excluded from educational and cultural opportunities. Attempts to free Hindu society from the evil of untouchability was going on since the time of Buddha (500 B.C) and Mahavira, who emphasized the ideal of human brotherhood. Both of them stood against the corrupted and degenerated form of Hinduism, especially against the Brahmanical priesthood and its social supremacy.

It was the Buddha, who for the first examined the social laws of Hindu society. He rejected the theory of Chaturvarnas because of its inherent tendency to degenerate into castism, social tyranny and oppression. He demanded liberty and equality for the oppressed and the downtrodden. His powerful movement arose not only with a body of doctrine, but also with “the formation of a society bound by certain rules.” The creed of the Buddha was not only a protest, but also a challenged the whole of it in principles. Thus, the Buddha sought to raise the social status of the servile classes to bring spiritual reformers, which the poor, the fallen and the weak were seeking.

Medieval Period:

During this period, Islam came to India, which claimed to be characterized by a keen sense of equality. Many people who were victims of caste system accepted Islam. They found Islam as solution for their suffering. But ever in the Islamic period rigidity and age-old caste and untouchability continued. This was because of some ongoing grave social evils prevalent among the Muslim themselves from time to time, the protests were launched against the artificial behavior- patterns in Hindu and Islamic societies by saints like Ramanaand, Kabir, Nanak, Ravidas, Tukaram, the conditions of the servile classes the Sudras and the untouchables continued to deteriorate.

Modern Period:

Christianity had a massive appeal among Dalits, scheduled caste and schedule tribes. First, it brought them education and them, medical care and importantly the values of humanitarianism

like justice and equal opportunities in life. All these were to improve their living standard. Jesus message of for universal love, compassion, equality, fellowship and liberation of human society, from superstition and blind faith had a ready appeal and acceptance, as it touched the basic problems of the oppressed. Though it's said that Christianity is based on love, sympathy and democracy, the advent of Christianity did not, in practice, bring any radical change in the condition of the untouchables. The socio- economic condition of the untouchables remained stagnant and continued to be vitiated by custom and touch- me- not- ism up to the last hours of the British regime. Thus, the Christian missionaries totally failed to eliminate caste tyranny, economic exploitation and political slavery.

Despite the best effort made by the saints, seers and by the other reform movements, in the ancient, medieval and the modern period, the Shudras and the untouchables were denied the use of public wells and were condemned to drink filthy water wherever they could find some. Their children were not admitted to schools, attended by the caste Hindu children. Though these untouchables worshiped the some Hindu gods and goddesses and observed the same festivals, yet the Hindu temples were closed to them. The caste Hindu did not show any sympathy for them, even barbers and washer men refused to render service to them. They were denied admission to all government services including police and military service. Thus, being deprived of social, religious and civic rights, they had no opportunities of bettering their condition. In short, there was an utter lack of social humanism in the relations between the strata of the Indian society and the untouchables. They were born as untouchables, they lived as untouchables, they died as untouchables.

The India is one of the ancient lands where the civilization and culture flourished at the very early stages of human history. Unfortunately, India with the ancient culture is marked by social inequalities. Dr.B.R Ambedkar is a great liberator and revolutionary, when he was born many evils going in the society, his position is not respectable in the society, their identity was questioned in social stratification that waged a lifelong struggle in the emancipation of the suppressed and oppressed, labeled as outcasts and treated as untouchable. The untouchables had different parts of the country. They were called outcasts, untouchables, pariahs, panchamas, atishudras, and namashudras. Their social disabilities were specific and severe and numerous. Their touch, shadow and ever voice were deemed by the caste Hindus to be polluting. So they

had to clear the way at the approach of a caste Hindu. These untouchable Hindus were denied the use of public wells, and were condemned to drink and filthy water they could find. Their children were not admitted to schools attended by the caste Hindu children. Though they worshipped the gods of Hindus, observed the some festivals, the Hindu temples were closed to them. Ambedkar focused on the problems faced by him, his achievements, and dual with Gandhi, role in India's Independence movement and removing India's depressed classes, reasons for embracing Buddhism. He passionately believed in individual freedom and criticized caste society. His accusations of Hinduism as being the foundation of the caste system made him controversial and unpopular among Hindus. His conversion to Buddhism sparked a revival in interest in Buddhist philosophy in India and abroad.

Ambedkar considered the foundations of religion to be essential to the life and practices of society. According to him, religion was a part of one's social inheritance. He wanted religion, but he did not want hypocrisy in the name of religion. Religion, to him, was the driving force for human activity. He remarked, "Man cannot live by bread alone, he had a mind which needs food for the thought." Religion instills hope in man and drives him to activity. He considered the foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices in religion. So he cannot against religion. Ambedkar's wanted a change from a religion of rules to a religion of principles a change required before it could be a true religion.

Dr. B.R Ambedkar was a great man and unparallel leader of India who shines likes a luminous star in the galaxy of great men. His voice to establish equality, liberty and fraternity is an inspiration of present Dalits movement. He was born in a family of untouchables, originally hailing from Konkan a part of the present state at Maharashtra. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born on 14 April 1819 of Mahar (Hindu untouchable) parents Ramji Maloji Sank pal (Father) and Bhimabai (Mother) at Mhow (Mahu in ex-Indore state). He was the fourteenth child of his parents. Dr.B.R Ambedkar, himself an untouchable by birth, Ambedkar shaped his personality in a unique way. The latest and most heroic of these attempts made by Dr. B.R Ambedkar who came to the conclusion for the untouchables within Hinduism and that they would have to change their religion.

During his school days, in an educational institution, he was treated differently by down-trodden Hindu teachers and fellow students in his early childhood, he started thinking on his brutal and inhumane treatments which were being given to him and his fellow being in the name of caste and religion. At Satara, Bhim completed his primary education during his school days. Dr. B. R Ambedkar realized painfully what the stigma of untouchability meant. Once he and his brother took a train for Goregaon since their father had not come to the station they took a bullock cart for Goregaon. When the god – fearing caste Hindu cart man came to know that the two brothers were the untouchables, he asked the brother to get off the cart, took them back only after they had paid him double the caste Hindu walked behind the cart with Ambedkar’s brother driving it. This was the first rude and shattering shock to the budding minds of Bhim. A few days the earlier impression got confirmed when he was drinking water stealthily at a public watercourse, got caught, and was beaten black and blue. The barber refused to cut his hair. Such insults must have engendered in him a burning hatred for Hinduism. He naturally identified himself with the spiritual environment of his family and protested against the inhumane treatment being given by the social environment throughout his life. In recognition of his claim as a leader of the depressed, he was nominated as a delegate of the three round table conferences in London and served on some of the committees till 1934. Dr B.R Ambedkar studied Buddhism in all his life. Around 1950, he devoted his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to attend a meeting of the world fellowship of Buddhism while dedicating a new Buddhism Vihara near Pune, where Ambedkar announced write a book The Buddha and the Damma. He twice visited Burma in 1954, the second time to attend the third conference of the world fellowship of Buddhism in Rangoon. His conversion to Buddhism in the 14 October 1956 at Nagpur is unquestionably a great event in the history of the movement for upliftment of the scheduled classes in this country. His conversion to Buddhism religion reflected many Incidents in his life. Humiliation came when Dr. Ambedkar was member of viceroy executive council in the pre-independence days. At the request of viceroy and his wife, Dr. Ambedkar went to see the ancient architecture of the prominent temple in Eastern India. As Dr.Ambedkar put his foot on the very first step of the temple the priest of the Hindu temple came down running and allowed the viceroy and his wife, coming from thousands of miles beyond the seas, to enter the temple but prevented entry to Dr. Ambedkar on the plea that he was an untouchable . Finally, he embraced Buddhism and advised his followers to accept the new faith himself give Deeksha. In October

1956 he and half a million of his followers therefore became Buddhists, thus bringing about the Renaissance of Buddhism in India and initiating a religious and social of major significance .The conversion was as important to him as the swaraj. He felt imperative to emphasize the social movement. As a champion of the down – trodden he waged relentless struggle against the oppressive features of Hindu society. Throughout his life, he strove for the establishment of a new social order based on the principles of liberty, equality, justice and universal brotherhood .The Indian to his radical and humanitarian approach for solution of the problems of the backward classes.Thoughts and teaching of great men like. Dr. Ambedkar will always serve as a beacon light for the new generation. When it was announced that Ambedkar was to embrace Buddhism, savarkar did not refrain from criticizing him.

Like Sikhism, Buddhism was also regarded as a branch of Hinduism. However, Buddhism spearheaded a serious attack on Hinduism and because of this Ambedkar's decision of embracing Buddhism might have upset savarkar. Ambedkar was confident that conversion was the only means to redeem the untouchable. The conversion was as important to him as the swaraj. There was a possibility of the facilities to the untouchable being affected by the conversion. But Ambedkar also knew that the facilities were not of a permanent character. The real strength of the untouchables was in their social organization. He felt imperative to emphasize the social movement. Therefore, he told the untouchables about the need of conversion for the sake of spiritual as well as material well. Ambedkar criticized that Gandhi was not prepared to hurt the sentiments of the Swarna Hindu but he paved the same way in changing his faith. Had he accepted Islam or Christianity, he would have to sever his relations with the Indian culture. Ambedkar was careful in choosing only such religion which had its origin in India. While announcing the conversion programmers Ambedkar was aware of his own responsibility and the good of the untouchables. For the removal of untouchability religious conversion was extremely necessary. Ambedkar was bent upon freeing the untouchables from the iron social frame work of Hinduism. But he did not want to cut relations with the Indian culture. He desired to raise their spiritual and economic status. He was to retain the facilities which the untouchable were to gain. But he did not want them to become a nation. And for this it was necessary for him to keep untouchables at safe distance from Islam. Had he become Christian, it would have helped the British Government. In such situation he had limited choices

of Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. These religions were not treated as independent religions by the Indian people. These religions originated in India and had close relation with the Indian culture. The Indian culture absorbed these religions. Ambedkar noted that the Swarna Hindus treat non-Hindu on par in social behavior and hence conversion was necessary. He almost chose Sikhism because of its close relation with Hinduism. The Hindutvawadis influenced Ambedkar's decision. As such, they tried to take credit of conversion.

However, in post-independence period, Ambedkar considered converting to Sikhism, Which encouraged opposition to oppression and so appealed to leaders of scheduled castes. But after meeting with Sikh leaders, Ambedkar left the idea of embracing Sikhism. This period witnessed a communal frenzy. The riots were on between the Hindu and Muslims and the Sikhs and Muslims. In this background his decision of choosing Buddhism was fairly wise. He would be embracing Buddhism and arrangements were accordingly made for the ceremony to be held in Nagpur. On 14 October, 1956 the untouchable leader took the three refuges and five precepts from a Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa from Sri Lanka in the traditional manner and then in his turn administered them to the 380,000 men, women, and children who had come to Nagpur in response to his call. After further conversion ceremonies in Nagpur, Ambedkar returned to Delhi knowing that the wheel of the Dharma had again been set in motion in India. In the press conference held by him on the eve of his conversion, he explained that he had specially chosen Buddhism for conversion because it was a religion born on the Indian soil and had become in the course of time, an integral part of the Indian culture. In Nagpur, after leaving the Hindu religion and accepting Buddhism in 1956, Dr. B.R Ambedkar, on the morning of 15th October, 1956, made an explanatory, spirited, inspirational, and historic speech. Dr. B.R Ambedkar gave revolutionary and welfare programs for equality, morality, intellectual and happiness as a Deeksha in Buddha Damma. He remembered Lord Buddha and then embraced Buddhism after completing all rituals and became a Bhikshu for the rest of his life. Ambedkar had a firm belief that neither God nor soul can save the society from troubles. Buddhism does not accept castism which is responsible for high and low division in society, untouchability gives an opportunity to all for their proper development. It was his full faith that depressed classes, sufferers and exploited can remove their sorrows and sufferings only by accepting Buddhism. Like Gautama Buddha, Ambedkar believed that sorrow is the main problem before human being.

He was not at help to depressed classes and downtrodden people at all. Therefore, he was of the view that society which does not believe in democracy may not provide a rational human relationship to live a life of happiness, peace and prosperity. The compassion in Buddhism impressed him most, and eventually he decided to become Buddhism. He gave a very important message to the Dalits before embracing Buddhism. He said that he was embracing Buddhism because it promised equality to all and was a path of this very soil with many common features and thereby not taking the Dalits against the culture of this country.

India is a land of diverse culture and civilization, but this land of early civilization and diverse culture is marked by inequalities. Decades come and go, but what remain are the impression and great acts of the social reformer. To overcome these inequalities a number of social reformer struggled, 'India' is privileged to have a number of great souls like Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Swami Vivekananda, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Kabir. They managed to bring revolutions by making radical changes in the society. Some of the reformers took up the challenges of breaking the jinx of the prevailing caste - system while some fought for the introduction of girls- education and widow remarriage. The contribution, made by these, simple yet eminent souls towards humanity is really extraordinary. Their activities and thoughts guided the nation to a new beginning. Among them, Dr. B.R Ambedkar was one of the eminent reformers. He spent his entire life against social fighting for discrimination and Hindu caste system, He viewed as Messiah of Dalits and downtrodden in India. He was the chairman of the drafting committee in 1947, Bhimrao experienced caste discrimination right from the childhood. He was the first who reduced the bridge between tribal & non- tribal as a great liberator and revolutionary. When he was born many evils were prevailing in the society, lower caste people were not considered respectable in the society, their identity was questioned in social stratification that waged a lifelong struggle for the emancipation of the suppressed and oppressed labeled as outcasts and treated as untouchable. Baba Saheb was a great social reformer who combined revolutionary fervor with a liberal attitude. Back in India, Ambedkar devoted himself to improving the lives of the untouchables. He soon found himself in conflict within Gandhi, who had declared himself an untouchable by choice. The disagreed at both the symbolic and the practical level. Both men recognized the power of abandoning the term untouchable. Gandhi proposed Harijan as patronizing, preferring the term Dalits. Gandhi wanted to improve the lives

of untouchables by appealing to caste Hindus to abandon untouchability. Ambedkar recognizes that it was easier to change people's hearts and heads. He preferred to lead Dalits in campaigns designed to improve access to education and to secure basic civil and religious rights, including the right to use the public water system and to enter temples.

The cause dearest to his heart, which consumed his whole life was the uplifting of the untouchables and depressed classes of India. His vision about uplifting their position was not limited only to their social respect and material aspect alone, but also aspired to make them a perfect human being in every sense. Ambedkar for this laid more stress on social democracy than political democracy and in this debate between him and the congress leaders; he gave priority to the former whereas congress thought, the opposite. For Ambedkar social democracy was a precondition for a stable political system. Ambedkar was critical of Gandhi and congress leaders' soft approach towards the upliftment of untouchables which just labeled them as 'Harijan' within the Hindu fold and argued that political democracy and consciousness would automatically improve the condition of Harijans in Indian society. Being, himself the conscious and educated member of the untouchable community. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as Babasaheb, was a jurist, political leader, Dalits leader, philosopher, thinker, anthropologist, historian, orator, economist, women emancipator, human rights profound, an eminent and erudite scholar, editor, revolutionary, and a revivalist for Buddhism in India. He was also the chief architect of the India's Constitution. Ambedkar, the Dalits icon, was unquestionably the first untouchable leader of India who had faced discrimination throughout his life. Although he was such a great personality as discussed above and has countless of unpublished edition of his writing to his credit, but there are many studies regarding his life, work and thoughts like "The Annihilation of caste" & "Who were the Shudras?" in which he analyzed Hindu society before starting his struggle against untouchability and the caste system.

His first name was Bhimrao Ambavadekar. His family was on the Marathi background of the town of Ambavade in the Ratnagiri district of modern- day Maharashtra and Ambedkar's real name, Ambavadekar came from there. Ambedkar's was a victim of caste discrimination all his childhood. As his parents hailed from the Hindu Mahar caste, which was viewed as untouchable by the upper class, he had to face severe discrimination from every corner of the society. The discrimination and humiliation haunted Ambedkar even at the army school, run by the British

government, fearing social outcry, the teachers would segregate the students of lower class from that of Brahmins and other upper classes. The untouchable students were often asked by the teacher to sit outside the class. After shifting to Satara, he was admitted to a local school, but the change of school did not change the fate of young Bhimrao. Discrimination followed wherever he went. A small incident here brings a clear picture of discrimination faced by young Bhimrao. Once, Bhimrao and his brother, who was studying at school, went to see their father. They alighted at the Masur railway station, engaged a cart and continue their journey. They went some distance, then the cart driver came to know that they belonged to the Mahar caste. He at once stopped the cart and raised one end of it, the poor boys tumbled down and fell on the ground.

The boys were thirsty. They begged for water, but no one would give them a drop. The hours passed still no one gave them water. They were not allowed even to go near tanks and wells. Bhim felt unbearable thirst. He drank water from a well nearby. A few people gathered and beat the boy mercilessly. On another day, when he was going to school, It was raining heavily. He took shelter near the wall of a house. The lady of the house saw this. She was very angry and pushed him into the rain. He fell into the muddy water. All his books fell into the water too. His mind became a volcano of bitter feelings. At the high school he received a wound he could never forget in his life. Ambedkar spent his life fighting against the system of Chaturvarna and the Indian caste system. He is also credited for having sparked the Dalit Buddhist movement. Dr. Ambedkar had only one goal in life i.e. removal of caste discrimination. His whole life was an experiment to achieve that goal. He had studied much on castes and tried many ways to solve it. He did not find a way inside Hinduism, though he was a believer of Advaita Vedanta and Upanishads. So to achieve the vision of liberty, equality, fraternity and a democratic society, he opted for Buddhism. Ambedkar focused on his problems faced by himself, his achievements, and debate with Gandhi, in the depressed class movement. He passionately believed in an individual's freedom and criticized caste based society. His accusations of Hinduism as being the foundation of the caste system made him controversial and unpopular among Hindus. The biggest barrier in his life was a caste system adopted by the Hindu society according to which the family, he was born in considered 'untouchable'. He shaped his personality in a unique way. His life works, and ideas were shaped by personalities like Kabir, Jyotiba Phule and the Buddha, he ascribed status as untouchables and lastly the liberal- democratic idea identification and

institutions of the west. The latest and most heroic of these attempts made by Dr. Ambedkar who came to the conclusion for the untouchables within Hinduism and they would have to change their religion. His conversion to Buddhism sparked a revival in interest in Buddhist philosophy in India and abroad.

The role played by Dr. B.R Ambedkar, himself an untouchable, in the cause of Harijan uplift was especially significant. He believed that unless the untouchables enjoy political power they will not be able to raise themselves up. He argued that the depressed classes should be entitled to special protection more than any other religious minority in the country. While framing the constitution of India, Ambedkar who was one of its architects, secured necessary constitutional guarantees for the uplift of Harijan. He was more aware of their plight and hence his straight forward approach at times smacked of aggressiveness and casteism. Ambedkar's works and approach to uplift the condition of the untouchables in India and especially the Mahars of Maharashtra and ultimately their conversion to Buddhism can be seen in four phases. The first phase on Ambedkar's straggle (1919-1929) was to untouchables within the Hindu fold by trying to smash the bastion of public places and utilities where the untouchables were discriminated. The second phase (1929-1935) ways of soul searching and mentally preparing to leave the Hindu fold and convert to some other religion. Although he gave such indication in May 1929 in Jalgaon yet at the conference of the Depressed Classes on 13th October, 1935 he made a positive statement with the historic declaration that circumstances beyond his control had placed him in the untouchable community but he would certainly not die as a Hindu for sure. The third phase (1935-1950) was about securing political rights and advocating the cause of untouchables at various political forums and commissions. He was deeply involved in securing political, social and economic rights for the Scheduled castes which finally led to various provisions in the drafting of the Indian constitution. The conversion question remained suspended and education as a means of upliftment was given preference. On the whole it was a phase when forces of modernization and securing rights gained prime place. The fourth phase (1950- 1956) saw the reawakening of the conversion issues and final conversion to Buddhism, which he along with a large number of 14th October, 1956 about two months before his death on the 6th December, 1956. In the last phases of Ambedkar's life, he made a great resolve to raise the banner of Buddhism.

The kind of inequality inherent in the caste system is called 'graded inequality' by Ambedkar in a very perceptive way. In untouchables or the children of the India's ghetto, he contrasts it with other various forms of inequality which were not so difficult to abolish or correct. In the Ancient regime, the third state was able to raise itself against the aristocracy and the monarchy. In industrial societies, the working class can raise itself against the bourgeoisie. The type of inequality from which the caste ridden society suffered is of a different kind because its logic divides the dominated groups and therefore prevents them from overthrowing the oppressor. In a society of 'graded inequality' the Bahujan Samaj is divided into the lower castes and the Dalits and the untouchables and Dalits themselves are divided into many gates. One of the main objectives of Dr. Ambedkar was first to unite the Dalits and then, the Bahujan Samaj and, second, to endow them with a separate identification that would offer them an alternative route out of sanskritisation. In order to achieve this two-fold Objective, he implemented five different strategies in the course of his almost four – decade long public career.

Dr. Ambedkar decided to leave the Hindu fold and convert to some other religion in 1935 but actually did it in 1956 which seems a long drawn process stretched over two decades. The resolution made it clear that he was adamant to leave the Hindu fold, but to which religion was undecided various factors and their impact were evaluated by him. The options open for religions conversion to Ambedkar were Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism or a new sect of his own. The conversion to any religion had to have a mass base and suited to the present and future needs of the untouchables, and especially his own caste, the Mahars. The bases of evaluation of the prospective religion were, absolute equality, rationalism and intellectual creativity, the possibility of converts continuing their newly won special advantage from the government as Depressed classes a connection with militant group which could offer protection but allow them to retain their own leadership and direction, a birthplace in India and a position of respect there. Ambedkar's resolutions made various religions leaders to chase him and his followers towards their own religion, but no current religion met all his demands. Religion conversion to Christianity and Islam involved greater risks to his caste unity and would have made the whole exercise less successful. Although preaching equality, love, fraternity and humanity in principle, Islam till then had showed undue militancy on national science and also somewhat hierarchical discrimination in their community life. Christianity also showed class and rank strife and

discrimination like the Hindu fold. Further, being a nationalist to the core of his heart conversion to Islam and Christianity for Ambedkar, would have meant denationalization of the scheduled caste people and contrary to national interest. It would have thrown them on the wrong side of the national politics with more risk to face and less gain to be achieved. Ambedkar considered converting to Sikhism for a time being because it met most of his demands, but at the same time he felt a certain amount of responsibility for the fate of Hindu whom he was disgusting. But this involved the risk of foregoing the privileges accorded to untouchables in reserved parliamentary seats and special concession granted by the British government. Ambedkar was much inclined towards Buddhism to which he was exposed since 1920's, but had to face the risk of losing the political concessions. At the same time, despite its revival on the intellectual plane, it was not considered as a vital established religion compared to other religions.

Ambedkar sought conversion after two decades to Buddhism, which he had postponed earlier. We can enumerate some of the factors responsible for this phenomenon. Firstly, Ambedkar himself was a religious person to the core his heart. He considered morality as the new god, the binding and the moving force of society comprised of religions and morality minus its ritualism and superstition. Secondly, he knew that the untouchables were deeply religious people whose spiritual hunger had to be satisfied only by offering them an alternate system of religious precepts, values and rituals if they were not to be transformed into a rootless mass. Thirdly, his vision of progress of human beings and especially the untouchables were not just calculated in terms economic advancement, social equality or political bargain, but a complete development of heart and mind to the fullest possible extent. Fourthly, he desired a separate identification, for the Depressed classes in modern India society so that with the passage of time they would not relapse into the same hierarchical Hindu fold and bear its scaffold. This would negate the achievements in social- economic terms and again pushed them back into the final seal of approval of a separate identity for the untouchables encircled by Hindu society. Fifthly, conversion was not to sever but to religion the untouchable community with the changing social equation and the mainstream of Indian culture and national life. Sixthly, besides socioeconomic advancement it was a step to remove the centuries old inferiority complex advancement Ambedkar did not want his followers to be lost in the maze of materialism and its leading

ideologies like Marxism which were gaining ground and he despised those ideas. Rightly, conversion was a move to mitigate and to remove the sub-caste barriers of the untouchable community and bind them in a single large homogenous and indigenous groups to make them strong.

Ambedkar revived his efforts for conversion since 1950 with a new vigor and converted to Buddhism along with his followers on 15th October 1956. In the changed scenario Buddhism met most of the criteria needed for religious conversion as noted above. Ambedkar's own preparation for conversion to Buddhism had begun in the 1920's or even before that, In early 1930's naming his new home as Rajgriha reflects his early inclination towards Buddhism. Study of Pali and Buddhism at Fergusson collage, Poona, Bombay and places in and around Maharashtra by leading scholars and social workers before independence possibly drew Ambedkar increasingly towards Buddhism. At the same time rediscovery of the glorious history of Buddhism in Maharashtra and its Buddhist sites became more popular. The Ambedkar like the Buddha opposed the Brahmanism and the caste- system and provided some rationale to his struggle in the current age.

The turning point in his life to Buddhism the untouchable could exchange their nameless and sorrowful past for a golden age of the Buddhist history, which could strengthen their pride in themselves as Buddhists and create for them a new sense of identification and a new destiny. Buddhism is within the mainstream of Indian intellectuals. This made conversion moment less prone to the risk of a split. The Buddha and his basic philosophy would not have been too foreign to his followers. And Ambedkar's his followers- made conversion to Buddhism making it simply an act of reclaiming their own past. The social message of a Democratic society based on liberty, equality, rationality, love for humanity and the strong moral teaching of Buddhism appealed Ambedkar. Also, it did not inhabit the spirit and forces of modernization and Urbanism. In fact, Buddhism became another means of modernization for the lowliest of the low in India. Ambedkar drawn towards Buddhism, visited the Buddhist countries, attended conference and meeting on Buddhism. Following he declared Buddhism to be the future religion of mankind. Buddhism was the meeting point of his social humiliation, democratic ideals, modernization and religious yearning. There is a conflict of opinion regarding the success and the nature of Ambedkar's Buddhist conversion movement. The neo- Buddhists have shed their inferiority

complex; acquire a new consciousness and cultural identification. But the socioeconomic position of the majority of the neo-Buddhist remains more or less the same.

As a result, conversion to Buddhism became the strategy of last resort. But it was not an exit option. Dr Ambedkar did not take refuge in religion, but looked equality and social reform in religion since Buddhism was likely to endow the Dalits with a new identity and a sense of dignity. More than sixty years later, his contribution to the making of modern India is possibly more considerable than that of any other leader of his generation. He has not only prepared the ground for a silent revolution, but has also played a key role in the drafting of the constitution of India, which has set the terms for the development of the world's largest democracy. He was the soul of the constitution of India. He crusaded for the betterment of the Oppressed and Depressed classes. And in this struggle, he stood with a rare crusading spirit, carving out this process plays a significant role for himself among the leading architects of modern India.

Since 1948, Ambedkar has suffered from diabetes. He was bedridden from June to October in 1954 due to medication side-effects and poor eyesight. He had been increasingly embittered by political issues, which took a toll on his health. His health worsened during 1955. Three days after completing his final manuscript *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar died in his sleep on 6 December 1956 at his home in Death.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gandhi Ambedkar disputes an analytical

This book gives us knowledge into the reasoning, principles and strategies behind and dispute between Gandhi and Ambedkar on a few issues.

Dr. Ambedkar & Social justice

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's provides us information about the life sketch of Dr. Ambedkar and his philosophy relating to the caste system, conversion, social justice, equality, harmonious brotherhood, varnashram, democracy, and equality -ultimate goal of oneness.

Ambedkar's Thought

This article gives us knowledge about the effort to take out the cream of Ambedkar's thoughts and therefore an easy, at a glance help to quench the various aspects of Indian social complication. In which Babasaheb has written in his long writings and speeches from Vol-1 to Vol-14 and some more from other sources.

Dr. Ambedkar's thought on Education

This book gives us information about the B.R Ambedkar, a distinct and outstanding thinker, freedom fighter, social revolutionary and expert on economic matters and constitution emerged as a force on the social- political map of India. His radical thoughts about man, society, nation and nationalism, humanity, law as an instrument of social change helped in framing the directive principles in the Indian constitution. He dedicated his energy and efforts in promoting higher education among the poor and backward sections of society.

Ambedkar, politics and scheduled castes

This book provides us knowledge about the Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar among Indian leaders who took up the cause of untouchable whole-heartedly. He played a very significant part at a crucial period in the history of this country and offered solutions to the several ticklish problems India was confronted with during the struggle for political reforms. With a relentless fight, he hammered out constitutional provisions for the upliftment of Depressed Classes.

Great Political Thinker B.R. Ambedkar

This book gives us information Dr.B.R Ambedkar was bestowed with Bharat Ratna in 1990. He was a multi-talented personality as he was a political leader, historian, orator, prolific writer, economist, scholar, editor, revolutionary- all rolled into one.

Ambedkar's life and mission

This research paper contributes in his early life and mission. Dr. B.R Ambedkar played a great role in the upliftment of the depressed classes. His efforts to convert Hindus to Ambedkar Buddhism are political, social stunts rather than sincere commitments to great social reform.

Great philosophers and Thinker on Educational

The book is inspiring thoughts of celebrity philosophers and thinking on education. It also includes their rich contribution to education as well as their published works. Brief-notes and name-index of several other thinkers in the field added in the book further enhance its utility. The users may find this reference book useful.

Famous great Indian Freedom Fighters

This book provides us information great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bal Ganghadhar Tilak, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, B.R Ambedkar, Lala Lajpat Rai, charted the path for the independence of India and has granted us the privilege of living in independent India.

Society and Religion

This book informs to a different religion to analysis Include which society and religion, Aspects of religion, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Secularization and last one chapter is society and religion: interface

OBJECTIVES:

The main aim and objectives of the study are:

- 1.To examine problems related with crisis of identity to Dr. B.R Ambedkar.
2. To identify the problems of depressed classes and the reasons behind conversion of Dr. B.R Ambedkar to Buddhism
3. To analyze the effect of conversion of Dr. Ambedkar to Buddhism on his community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive as well as analytical and provides the Qualitative research. This study will be conducted based on the secondary sources and primary sources. Various books on the concerned topic have been consulted. Also, research papers and Articles from different journal has been used. The data collected from different secondary sources written by different scholars and historians provided abstract idea in this study. Without these resources, this study cannot be conducted in which they were deeply acknowledged. Some books and studies conducted in the past were also referred to make the study more authentic and purposeful.

The researcher will also visit different local and university libraries for collecting of the secondary data such as journal of History and social science, Journal of regional History, past and present, Punjab History conference proceeding and Indian History proceeding.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will help in the identification of depressed classes and will suggest the ways for their Upliftment. It also helps in changing the mentality towards the depressed classes. Dr. Ambedkar views will help in inspiring the Oppressed, Depressed and downtrodden classes to challenge the dominant strands of political articulations. It will show the Upliftment of depressed classes and their awareness about civil rights. The investigation of study will help in overcoming the challenges of depressed classes.

Chapter - 2

Dr. B.R Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism

A simple understanding of religion believes in God as the center of all reality. It helps individual to build up a relationship between God and oneself. However, Ambedkar while explaining the meaning of religion did not mention God in his understanding of religion. He tried to understand religion from, social perspective. Keeping this in mind, he examined and analyzed the different major religion of the world.

His conversion to Buddhism reflected many Incidents in his life. Humiliation came when Dr. Ambedkar was a member of viceroy executive council in the pre-independence days. At the request of the viceroy and his wife, Dr. Ambedkar went to see the ancient architecture of the prominent temple in Eastern India. As Dr. Ambedkar put his foot on the very first step of the temple the priest of the Hindu temple came down running and allowed the viceroy and his wife, coming from thousands of miles beyond the seas, to enter the temple but prevented entry to Dr. Ambedkar on the plea that he was untouchable. Finally, he embraced Buddhism and advised his followers to accept the new faith himself give Deeksha. In October 1956 he and half a million of his followers, therefore, became Buddhists, thus bringing about the Renaissance of Buddhism in India and initiating a religious and social of major significance. The conversion was as important to him as the swaraj. He felt imperative to emphasize the social movement. As a champion of the down – trodden he waged a relentless struggle against the oppressive features of Hindu society. Throughout his life, he strove for the establishment of a new social order based on the principles of liberty, equality, justice and universal brotherhood. The Indian to his radical and humanitarian approach to the solution of the problems of the backward classes. Thoughts and teaching of great men like. Dr. Ambedkar always serves as a beacon light for the new generation. When it was announced that Ambedkar was to embrace Buddhism, Savarkar did not refrain from criticizing him. Like Sikhism, Buddhism was also regarded as a branch of Hinduism. However, Buddhism spearheaded a serious attack on Hinduism and because of this Ambedkar's decision of embracing Buddhism might have upset Savarkar. Ambedkar was confident that conversion was the only means to redeem the untouchable. The conversion was as important to him as the swaraj. There was the possibility of the facilities to the untouchable being affected by the

conversion. But Ambedkar also knew that the facilities were not of a permanent character. The real strength of the untouchables was in their social organization. He felt imperative to emphasize the social movement. Therefore, he told the untouchables about the need of conversion for the sake of spiritual as well as material well. Ambedkar criticized that Gandhi was not prepared to hurt the sentiments of the Swarna Hindu but he paved the same way in changing his faith. Had he accepted Islam or Christianity, he would have to sever his relations with the Indian culture. Ambedkar was careful in choosing only such religion which had its origin in India. While announcing the conversion programmers Ambedkar was aware of his own responsibility and the good of the untouchables. For the removal of untouchability, religious conversion was extremely necessary. Ambedkar was bent upon freeing the untouchables from the iron social framework of Hinduism. But he did not want to cut relations with the Indian culture. He desired to raise their spiritual and economic status. And for this, it was necessary for him to keep the untouchables at a safe distance from Islam. Had he become Christian, it would have helped the British Government. In such situation, he had limited choices of Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. These religions were not treated as independent religions by the Indian people. These religions originated in India and had a close relation with the Indian culture. The Indian culture absorbed these religions. Ambedkar noted that the Swarna Hindus treat non-Hindu on par in social behavior and hence conversion was necessary. He almost chose Sikhism because of its close relation with Hinduism. The Hindutvawadis influenced Ambedkar's decision. As such, they tried to take credit of conversion.

Ambedkar would hardly accept any religion other than Buddhism, which he considered as the only religion that satisfies the modern criteria of liberal democracy, humanism, and scientific rationalism. It is acceptable because it upholds the 'real' religious moral. He found Buddhism as the only philosophical alternative for the liberation of humankind. The Buddhist Dhamma and the Sangha are the means of achieving human emancipation. Therefore, he embraced Buddhism, the 'scientific religion. Dr. Ambedkar is one of those illustrious sons of our country, whose life and work has influenced and inspired both young and old generations before and after independence.

Ambedkar has been honored with the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, given for the highest degree of national service. The life of Dr. Ambedkar was marked by struggle, but he

proved that every hurdle in life can be surmounted with talent and firm determination. Even today, the cost factor is dominant in every sphere of the life of the people of the country. Before the commencement of Ambedkar's Era, there was the untouchable Hindu in India, who due to Hindu social system, had, from time immemorial remained socially degenerated, religiously ostracized and indefinitely excluded from educational and cultural opportunities. They condemned to a lot of serfs and deprived of all human rights.

Babasaheb's life and work constitute a glorious chapter in the history of India, and ungrateful would be the nation to forget the service he rendered in writing that memorable chapter in modern Indian history. I will observe that while highlighting the principal events in Babasaheb's career, certain other events that have a bearing on the history of the "Untouchables" for whose emancipation he valiantly struggled, have also been incorporated in the chronology. Now, a word about the ground- plan of this chronology, which spans a period of over a century, is divided into the following four phases.

- The First phase: (1848 –1918) Ancestors & others
- The Second phase: (1919 –1927) The war on Brahmanical pollution
- The Third phase: (1928 –1935) The round table conferences
- The Fourth phase: (1935 -1950) The Quest for a religion for mankind
- The Last phase: (1950 -1956) Constitution for the state and a Damma for the people

The First phase: (1848 to 1918)

(Ancestors and others)

Maloji, like his son Ramji, later on had retired from the British army. Ramji (1848 – 1913) was recruited in the British army, in 1866, under the command of Subedar – Major Laxman Murbadkar. Ramji was promoted, in course of time, as Subedar, and he was headmaster of an army normal school. The Murbadkars too were a family of army- men, belonging to the village of Murbad, to the thane district, near Bombay. Babasaheb's mother Bhimabai (1854-96) belonged to the well-to do family of the Murbadkars. We meet Subedar Ramji's ascetic brother Balwant, nicknamed " Fakira", whom Bhimabai and Subedar Ramji chanced to meet, in 1879, during their camp at Rawalpindi (near modern Islamabad), during their Afghan war of 1878-80.

We meet Babasahib's aunt Mirbai, Subedar Ramji's sister; Subedar Ramji had fourteen children of whom seven died young. Of the remaining children, we come across Babasahib's brothers Balram and Anandrao, and his sisters Gangh, Rama and Talsa. We meet, of course, the principal person of the chronology. Bhimrao or Bhiva as he was affectionately called at home, the fourteenth son of subedar Ramji. Bhimrao was born on the 14th, 1891, at dawn, at Mhow near Indore in the present Madhya Pradesh. We meet Ramabai (1896- 1935), the worthy daughter of Bhiku Dhutre of waned, a village in the Dapoli sub-division. Ramabai was married to Babasaheb, in 1906, when she barely 10 years of age, and he was hardly 15 years old, we come across Sakhubai, daughter of Babasahib's brother Balram, and Mukund and Ganghadhar, sons of Babasahib's other brother Anandrao, we meet Yeshwant (1912-77) Babasahib's son. We meet Dr Sharda Kabir who married Babasahib's in April 1948.

Among Babasahib's "Other Ancestors" the first mention must be made of the Buddha (563-483 B.C) whose life and teachings deeply influenced Babasahib's, as perhaps no one else ever did. The next mention must be made of his mentor (Guru) Jotirao Phooley's devoted wife Savitribai Phooley's (1831-97). This famous couple dedicated their lives for the upliftment of the down-trodden, the "Untouchables" the exploited peasants, women, widows, orphans, etc. Jotirao Phooley's founded the "Satyashodhak Samaj" (Society for Search after Truth). Jotirao Phooley's was a pillar of strength and a source of inspiration to thousands of people in Maharashtra. It may be truly said he anticipated Dr. Ambedkar. That Dr. Ambedkar inscribed his "Who were the Shudras"? To the memory of Mahatma Jotirao Phooley's greatest Shudra of modern India, bears testimony the profound impact Jotirao Phooley's had on his mind and activities.

Gopal Krishna Walangkar (1840-1900) was born at Ravdal. He was related to Ramabai Ambedkar. He too was an army man, having retired from the army as Haveldar, in 1886, and settled down at Dapoli. He came under the dynamic influence of Jotirao Phooley's; Gopal Baba was a pioneer of the movement for the emancipation of the 'Untouchables', in the nineteenth century. It was the first volcanic eruption of the protest and sign of a new consciousness about the legitimate rights and the position of the Untouchables in society. He was the link between Jotirao Phooley's and Dr. Ambedkar in the crusade against social inequality and injustice. In the fitness of things, teachers played a crucial role in Babasahib's early development. When he was at school, in Satara, in 1890, a teacher named Ambedkar changed Bhimrao surname from

Ambavadekar to Ambedkar. Dada Keluskar advised young Bhimrao in the matter of reading books systematically, and was instrumental in developing in Bhimrao a passion for reading. It was Dada Keluskar who presented the promising young students with a copy of “Bhagwan Gautama Buddhache Charitra” written by Dada himself in 1898. Again, he was Dada who protested the industrious students Bhimrao to the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda, and it was through his meditation that Dr. Ambedkar was awarded a Baroda state scholarship for higher education at the Columbia University, U.S.A.

Dr. Ambedkar's entered the Columbia University in 1913, and became Dr. Dewey's student. His foreword to Dr. Ambedkar doctoral thesis, 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India'. The problem discussed by Mr. Ambedkar in his excellent dissertation, is one that is arousing a growing interest in all parts of the world. The value of Mr. Ambedkar's contribution to the discussion lies in the objective recitation of the facts and the impartial analysis of the interesting development that has taken place in his native country. In his preface to 'The Problem of the Rupee', Dr. Ambedkar writes. Dr. Ambedkar passionately desired the annihilation of caste and the abolition of untouchability, and throughout his life he battled against odds for the reconstruction of Indian society on the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. These are the principles he built into the constitution of India, and these are the very principles underlying the principle of morality which he advocated when he exhorted India's suffering humanity to adopt Buddhism.

The second phase: (1919- 1927)

(The War on Brahmanical Pollution)

The main characteristic feature of this phase is the commencement of war against Brahmans by Dr. Ambedkar. His participation in this war and commitment to the movement against the Brahmans for the upliftment of the untouchable was started in 1919, while he was still a student abroad, still in his twenties; he gave an evidence of a vital importance before the franchise committee constituted under “Lord Southborough”. The reforms envisaged in the August (1919) Declaration, after the end of the first world war (1914-1918), did not at all inspire the Indians and they began to distract the British all over the world.

The emergence of charismatic leadership, India nationalism received a great boost under the leadership of Gandhi who had returned to India, from South Africa after his success, “Satyagraha” movements. After the passing away of the three great leaders of the national movement, namely, Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a great void was created in the national movement of India. The need for a dynamic leader to guide the masses to participate effectively in the struggle for freedom was greatly felt. This void was by filling up Mohan Das Karmchand Gandhi, who had already made his marks in taking up the people's case in South Africa during his stay there. From 1904 to 1914, he had launched, Satyagraha, a number of times. On account of his peaceful and untiring efforts, the Indians began to be treated as human beings in South Africa.

Dr. B.R Ambedkar at that time had left for the Columbia University for higher studies. In 1915, he took his Master of Arts degree from the University the subject of his dissertation being 'Administration and Finance of the East India Company' a subject which only a student having India's interest at heart, would chose to research. This thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Columbia University was “The national divide of India- A historical and analytical study”. It was accepted by the Columbia University in 1917, and he was allowed to use the PhD degree for all practical purposes from that date. The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy was later formally conferred on Dr. Ambedkar on the 8th June, 1927.

In this year, 1923 was again a very important year in Dr. Ambedkar's career, for it was in that year that he was called to the Bar, to study the law. Dr. Ambedkar contradicted the movement of Gandhi, the harmful proposals of vital Ramji Shinde relating to franchise for the Untouchables from amongst themselves, their interests would be better safeguarded by caste- Hindus. It was this dangerous move of Gandhi on his part of the Savarna Hindus , that Dr. Ambedkar opposed and his efforts were rewarded by the Britishers, because of his Historical research of the problem at that time which was facing in India. The Government of India passed the Act of (1919), in December 1919, and subsequently 'Dnyandeo Dhruvanak Gholap' was nominated, from the depressed classes, to represent them in the Bombay legislative council, for a period of three years from January 1920. After later still, in December 1926, Dr. B.R Ambedkar and Dr. Purshotam Govindji Solanki were nominated under the provisions of the Act the period from 1926 to 1929.

On the 1920, Dr. Ambedkar started the weekly paper "Mook Nayak". The Mook- Nayak was Babasahib's first journalistic enterprise against the polluted Brahmanical attitude; he declared his war against them through this paper. In this manner, Dr. Ambedkar took upon himself the responsibility of the Shudras of rousing the social consciences of the people during odd hours when Brahmanical revolts were there in Indian history at that time. He started his career one side to give a new look the Indian society by establishing a law of the society how to control and how to govern. However, the Mook- Nayak did not survive its journalistic vicissitudes after Dr B.R Ambedkar's departure for London, in July, 1920, to complete his studies in law and economics. On his return from England, undeterred, he launched a new fortnight paper, The Bahishkrit Bharat.(outcast India), in April 1927, soon after the Historic Kolaba District Bahishkrit conference, at Mahad, on the 19th and 20th March 1927, when Babasaheb and his followers exercised their rights to take water from the Chardar Tank.

In the field of Journalism also Dr. Ambedkar's contribution cannot be exaggerated. He started Marathi weekly Mook Nayak on 1920. He started it to proclaim and to bring to fight for equal rights. He wrote in the first issue of this paper that the Hindu society is like a tower of many stories. It has neither a leader nor a door to go out. Attaining popularity, he used this Journal to criticize orthodox Hindu politicians and a perceived reluctance of the India political community to fight caste discrimination. By this time there were signs the Hindus society was beginning to understand that Untouchability is unjust. On March, 1920 he presided over the Mangaon conference at Kolhapur state. Shahu Chatrapati attended the conference and appreciated Ambedkar later; he attended the first all India depressed class conference held at Nagpur during 30.5.1920 to 1.6.1920. Shau Chatrapati presided over this conference. This was the first all India conference conveyed by Untouchables. He was back to London again. He submitted his thesis to the University of London and they were accepted and then obtained a Master of Science in 1921 and he presented his thesis entitled "The problem of the Rupee" in 1922 and in the next year he came back to India. After returning to India from London, in June 1923, he decided to settle down as a lawyer in Bombay high court. He was financially so badly off that he did not have money to pay for the sanad. The stigma of Untoucability continued to dog him, and solicitors refused to have any working relationship with him on the usual ground that he was an Untouchable. He himself was forced to confine himself to mofussil work. Being an Untouchable

he found it hard to attract clients also. Dr Ambedkar men decided to campaign against the caste system.

On 20th July 1924, he set up the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha to promote education and social-economic uplifting of the depressed classes which he held till 1928. The aims of the Sabha were educated, agitate and organize. The era of self respect dawned with the birth of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha. In 1925, he was appointed as a lecturer at Batlibai's accountancy training institute. The royal commission on Indian currency was appointed under the chairmanship of Edward Hilton young. He gave evidence before the royal commission on Indian currency. He had been nominated by the British rulers to the Bombay presidency in December 1925. Here Ambedkar worked hard to secure for the Untouchables legal access to wells and entry into temples. He was appointed to the Bombay presidency committee to work with the all- European Siman commission in 1925.

Mahad Satyagraha was he had personal experience of the humiliation and the injustice of Untouchability. He felt the Untouchable had lost their individuality for centuries, it was impossible to wake up such people through speeches and slogans. He decided to revolt against the blind beliefs of the Hindu. The "Chowdar Tank Satyagraha" was a result of this decision. The government of Bombay had already passed a bill. According to this, the government had decided that all people could use public tanks to wells. On the basis of the decision, the Mahad Municipality in Colaba district had resolved that Chowdar Tank could be used either by the Untouchables. Ambedkar resolved to raise the flag of equality by using the water of this tank. On the appointed day Ambedkar touched the water first. Then, many of his followers drank the water. Ambedkar proved that nature created water belongs to all. But after a couple of hours someone spreads the rumour that Ambedkar's men would enter even the Veereshwara temple. The other caste Hindus attacked Ambedkar and his men. In this clash, Ambedkar was injured. This incident opened a new chapter in the social life of India. Many sensible Hindus condemned these actions. They began to say that there was nothing wrong of the Untouchables, taking water from wells and tanks. This was Ambedkar rock- like decision. He was prepared to oppose anybody to reach his goal.

By 1927, he decided to launch active movements against Untouchability. He began with public movements and marches to open up and share public drinking water resources, also he began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He starts Satyagraha on 1927 at the Chowdar tank at Colaba, near Bombay, to give the Untouchables the rights to draw water from the public tank where he burnt copies of the Manusmriti publicly in 1927 shook the world of the Hindu orthodoxy. The Satyagraha organized at an Ambadevi temple in Amravati, Parvati temple at Pune and Kalaram temple at Nasik demanded Untouchables' accession to the temples. Thus, during the early phase of his movement he demanded equal rights, particularly social and religious, for the Dalits.

The Third phase: (1928- 1935)

(The round table conference)

The Third phase in February, 1928, representatives of various political parties in India, met in Delhi, to draft a constitution for India. A committee was constituted for the purpose under Pandit Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru was its secretary. The committee produced, in 1928, its report officially known as the report of the committee appointed by the conference to determine the principles of the constitution for India, and popularly known as the Nehru report. The problem of the Untouchables the committee thought, was a social or a religious problem, but not a political problem. It says the problem of the depressed or suppressed classes. It says, the problem of the depressed or suppressed classes has come to the front in recent years. Dr. Ambedkar vehemently attacked the Nehru report in his editorial in the Bahishkrit Bharat of the 18th January, 1929. He wrote, if the problem of the Untouchables is a social problem, is not that of the Muslims also a social problem? The Muslims to suffer from the consequence of the distorted vision of the upper caste of the Hindu, in the same manner as do the Untouchables. It is our firm conviction that the Nehru committee's Brahmanical strategy aims at perpetuating the Hindu social hierarchy in their struggle for political power. The Indian statutory commission popularly known as the Simon commission, arrived in India, in early 1928. Dr. Ambedkar submitted to it a statement concerning the safeguards for the protection of the interests of the depressed classes as a minority in the Bombay presidency, and the changes in a composition of the guarantees from the Bombay legislative council necessary to ensure the same under provincial autonomy. At the

1928, he gave evidence before the Simon commission in Pune, in the course of the evidence. He agreed that the term Depressed classes, and the Untouchables, were synonymous, the term untouchable meaning those whose touch caste Hindu. Again, on the 17th May, 1929, he submitted a lengthy report on the constitution of the government of Bombay presidency, setting aside all consideration of brevity. Among other things, Dr Ambedkar says, the legislature should be hardly elective, reserved seats should be provided for Mohamedans, Depressed classes and Anglo- Indian. On the revenues of the Province. He further said that surely the first essential of any scheme of on 23rd October, 1928, Dr. Ambedkar gave evidence before the Simon Commission in Pune. In the course of the evidence, Dr. Ambedkar agreed that the terms “Depressed Classes” and “Untouchables”, were synonymous, the term “Untouchable” meaning “those whose touch will pollute a high caste Hindu”.

All India Depressed Classes Conference was held at Nagpur on 8th and 9th August 1930. Dr. Ambedkar delivered presidential address. In his address, he told that the best guarantee for the protection of your own interests, consists in having the power of control in your own interests, consists in having the power of control in your own hands so that you may yourselves be in a position not only to punish when the mischief to your interests is done, but to keep a watch over your interests, from day to day, prevent possible mischief from arising. This will never be secured by leaving the power in the hands of the third party be it the Governor, Viceroy or the League of Nations. For of what use will that power be with us, if those who will hold it in trust for us refuse to exercise it when we call for their intervention.

The Round Table Conferences held by the British Government in London during 1930-1932 has immense importance in the history not only for the nation, but also for the Depressed Classes and other weaker sections of the people. Dr. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conferences. He voiced at the First Round Table Conference held from 12th November 1930 to 19th January 1931 that a generous policy be adopted in the matter of the employment of the Depressed Classes in the Public Services and the recruitment of the Police and Military from which they are now excluded should be thrown open to them. Dr. Ambedkar further spoke on the scheme of political safeguards for the protection of depressed classes in the future Constitution of India.

Soon a second conference was held from 7th January, 1931, which Mr. Gandhi attended representing the congress party. Babasahib met Gandhi in Bombay before they went to London. Gandhi told him that he had read what Babasahib said at the first conference. Gandhi told Babasahib he knew him to be a real Indian patriot. At the second conference, he asked for the depressed classes. Hinduism, he said, has given us only insults, misery, and humiliation. A separate election would mean that the Untouchables would vote for their own candidates and be allotted their votes separate from the Hindu majority. Babasahib was made a hero by thousands of his followers on his return from Bombay- even though he always said that people should not idolize him. The British government party concurred with his arguments in the arbitration, which it announced on August 14th, 1932. Even after more than 75 years, The Poona Pact remains the emergence of an autonomous and strong Dalits political leadership. Dalits continue to face formidable challenges and the situation has actually deteriorated in absolute terms, despite some advances among certain sections of the Untouchables.

The Poona Pact refers to an agreement between the lower caste Untouchables of India led by Dr. Ambedkar and the upper caste Hindus of India that took place on 24 September, 1932 at the Yerawada jail in Pune, India. To draft a new Constitution involving self rule for the native Indians, the British invited various leaders for Round Table Conferences in 1930-32. Mahatma Gandhi did not attend the first and last but attended the second Conferences. The concept of separate electorates for the Untouchables was raised by Dr. Ambedkar. Similar provisions were already available for other minorities, including Muslims, Christians, anglo-Indians and Sikhs. The British government agreed with Ambedkar's contention, and British Prime Minister.

Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award to the "depressed classes" was to be incorporated into the constitution for governance of British India. Gandhi strongly opposed it on the grounds that it would disintegrate Hindu society. He began an indefinite hunger strike at Yerawada Jail from September 20, 1932 to protest this Award. As Gandhi's health worsened, Dr. Ambedkar was under tremendous pressure to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Ambedkar feared that should Gandhi die due the fast there would be a severe reprisal against the depressed classes by the upper caste Hindus of India. A compromise, the Poona Pact, was made between the leaders of caste Hindus and Dr. Ambedkar was reached on September 24, 1932.

Dr. Ambedkar got the concession for separate electorate from the British. When Mr. Gandhi— a very strong supporter of the caste system and Untouchability— heard about the British acceptance of separate electorate, he went into a tizzy fit. The Hindu mahasabah threatened mass massacres of the Dalits. The enslaved Untouchables were harassed to no end all across the land. Mr. Gandhi went into a fast unto death to blackmail Dr. Ambedkar. Finally Dr. Ambedkar gave in to the pressure, and surrendered the rights of the Dalits. He said that this was the biggest blunder of his life. The Dalits still remain oppressed because of the lack of separate electorate for them.

The Scheduled Castes want the restoration of separate electorates given to them by the Communal Award by Her Majesty's Government and the abrogation of the Poona Pact, which was forced by Mr. Gandhi through His fast unto death. Babasaheb had by this time collected a library of over 50,000 books, and had a house named Rajgriha built at Dadar in north Bombay to hold it. In 1935 his beloved wife Ramabai died. The same year he was made Principal of the Government Law College, Bombay.

Yeola Conference was again a turning point in Dr. Ambedkar's life as well as in the movement of the Depressed Classes, which was held on 13th October 1935 at Yeola and which is a Conference of Dalits. It was during that Conference that he moved a resolution to this effect: "We have made strenuous efforts to bring about a rapprochement between the so called untouchables and the caste Hindus, during the Mahad Chavdar Tank satyagraha, and the Nashik Kalaram temple satyagraha. But the caste-Hindus have evinced no sign of change of heart. And so, this conference of the "Untouchables" do hereby resolved that efforts to persuade the caste-Hindus having proved futile, the 'Untouchables' should no longer waste their energies on such efforts. Let us put a stop to Satyagrahas; get away from the Hindus; and achieve an honorable position of equality with all people of India. Because we call ourselves Hindus, we are treated thus. If we were the members of another faith, nobody would treat us as untouchables. I had the misfortune of being born with the stigma of 'untouchability'; that is not my fault; but I will not die as a Hindu; this is in my power. This was the first time that Babasaheb stressed the importance of conversion from Hinduism for his people - for they were only known as 'untouchables' within the fold of Hinduism. In December 1935, Dr. Ambedkar was invited by the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal (Society for the Breaking up of Caste), of Lahore to preside over its conference. Address that Babasaheb wrote for it, has come down to us in the shape of the famous, thought – provoking classic, namely, "Annihilation of Caste". In the Annihilation, he

sought to destroy the very sanctity of the Shastras that gave religious sanction to the creation of castes and untouchability. He wanted to bring about a radical, 'notional' change in the Hindu mind. These views were much too extreme to the Arya Samajist Jat-Pat Todak Mandal's ideology. Dr. Ambedkar, however, was not prepared to alter his speech to suit the views of the organization. So Jat-Pat-Todak preferred to have cancelled the conference altogether. Babasaheb, however, published the Annihilation, in 1936. He distinguishes between a religion of rules and a religion of principles; and advocates the annihilation of the religion of rules.

Following the path showed by Dr. Ambedkar, Dalits rejected Hinduism once again and burnt Manu Smriti at many places throughout India and abroad. Manusmriti is the mythological book of Hindus where the rule of life has been written. Hindus used to follow the rule of Manu Smriti, it was nothing but a theory written by orthodox to keep Dalits away from their rights and allow Hindus to exploit them. So another satyagraha was organized at Mahad later in the same year on December 25-26, 1927, thousands of Dalits publicly burnt copies of the Manu Smriti, the hated ancient symbol of Brahmanical caste and gender oppression. This incident opened a new chapter in the social life of India. Many sensible Hindus condemned these actions. They began to say that there was nothing wrong of the untouchables taking water from wells and tanks. This was Ambedkar's rock- life decision. He was prepared to oppose anybody to reach his goal. He identified himself with the spiritual environment of his family and protested against the inhuman treatment being given by the social environment throughout his life. By 1927 Dr. Ambedkar's decided to launch active movements against untouchability. He began with public movements and marches to open up and share public drinking water resources; also he began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He started Satyagraha on March 20, 1927, at the Chowdar tank at Colaba, near Mumbai, Untouchable the right to draw water from the public tank where he burnt copies of the Manu Smriti publicly.

Dr. Ambedkar's brainstorming, striking and thought-provoking speeches at the roundtable conferences bear ample testimony to his depth of knowledge, through grasp over the subject, the immense power of logic, tremendous tenacity and capacity to put across his point of view in a cogent, comprehensive, crystal, clear and convincing manner, He roared like a lion at the round table conference causing flutter in the political circles in India and England. The power he proved himself worthy of the nomination to the roundtable conference. His pursuit of his theory of separate electorate was opposed tooth and nail by Mahatma Gandhi. He thwarted the sinister

design of the Hindu delegate to barter the interest of depressed classes to Muslim and Sikhs. He strongly pleaded for urgent settlement of the problem of the depressed classes, as he felt that it was a part of the general political settlement, which must not be left in the shifting sands of sympathy and the goodwill of the rulers of the future. Dr. Ambedkar pleaded for parity and no charity. In recognition of his claim as a leader of the depressed, He was nominated as a delegate to the three roundtable conferences in London and served on some of the committees till 1934. We now come to the round table conference in London in the years 1930-1932. Historically speaking, those conferences were of immense importance, not only for the nation, but also for the depressed classes and other weaker sections of the people. The first round table conference was from the 19th of the 19th January, 1931, the second from the 7th September 1931 to the 1st December, 1931, and third from the 17th November, 1932 to the 24th December, 1932. Dr Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur represented the depressed classes at the round table conference. Dr Ambedkar attended all the three round table conferences in London and each time, forcefully projected his view in the interest of the untouchable. He exhorted by downtrodden sections to raise their living standards and to acquire as much political power as possible. He was the view that there was no future for untouchables in the Hindu religion and they should be their religion if need be. In 1935, he publicly proclaimed, "I was born a Hindu because I had no control over this, but I shall not a die a Hindu."

The most important work Dr. Ambedkar did to achieve his goal was the preparation of the declaration of fundamental rights, safeguarding the cultural, religious and economic rights of the depressed classes. He prepared the scheme with great labour and statesmanship, and submitted it to the minorities subcommittee for being included in the future constitution of India.

The Fourth Phase: (1935-1950)

(The Quest For a Religion For Mankind)

When India became independent in August 1947, Babasaheb Ambedkar became First Law Minister of Independent India. The Constituent Assembly made him chairman of the committee appointed to draft the constitution for the world's largest democracy. All his study of law, economics, and politics made him the best qualified person for this task. A study of the Constitutions of many countries, a deep knowledge of law, a knowledge of the history of India

and of Indian Society - all these were essential. In fact, he carried the whole burden alone. He alone could complete this huge task.

After completing the Draft Constitution, Babasaheb fell ill. At a nursing home in Bombay he met Dr. Sharda Kabir and married her in April 1948. On November 4, 1948 he presented the Draft Constitution to the Constituent Assembly, and on November 26, 1949 it was adopted in the name of the people of India. On that date he said: -I appeal to all Indians to be a nation by discarding castes, which have brought separation in social life and created jealousy and hatred.”

In May, 1936, Babasahib addressed another important conference, in Bombay when he delivered his well-known speech on Mukti Kon Pathe? In the course of the speech he stoutly vindicated his resolve for conversion. Defining the term “religion as that which holds the people together, he said that was the real definition of religion. Then he said, the religion which does not recognize the individuality of man, is not acceptable to me”. After the Mukti speech, Babasahib wrote and spoke on several occasions on Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar through his Advaita Vedanta analysis has clearly proved though this Vedanta doctrine has great potential to create a new society and it is the basis of democracy, still this is not useful in India. This is the greatest wonder and biggest pitfall of Indian culture. Dr. Ambedkar understood, it is not an easy task to mould Hindus into the Advaita Vedanta framework. So he decided to move to liberal Buddhism, which could inspire Indians to construct a better society out of it.

Ambedkar studied Buddhism all his life, and around 1950, Ambedkar turned his attention fully to Buddhism and travelled to Sri Lanka to attend a conference of Buddhist scholars and monks. While dedicating a new Buddhist Vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced that he was writing a book on Buddhism and that as soon as it was finished, he planned to make a formal conversion back to Buddhism. Ambedkar twice visited Burma in 1954, the second time in order to attend the third conference of the world fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Buddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist society of India, He completed his final work, The Buddha and his Dhamma, in 1956.

The last phase; (1950- 1956)

In the last phase of Ambedkar's life, he made a great resolve to raise the banner of Buddhism and bring back to his motherland the Buddha who had suffered an exile for over twelve hundred years. He unfurled the banner, and his people marched. Ambedkar considered the foundations of

religion to be essential to life and practices of society. According to him, religion was a part of one's "social inheritance". He wanted religion, but he did not want hypocrisy in the name of religion. Religion, to him, was the driving force for human activity. He remarked, "Man cannot live by bread alone. He had a mind which need food for the thought." Religion instills hope in Man and drives him to activity. He considered the foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices of society. He firmly believed in religion. So he was not against religion. According to Ambedkar, religion must be judged by social standards, based on social ethics. He linked religion with the social being of the people. He remarked, "The religion which discriminates between two followers is partial and the religion which treats crores of its adherents worse than dogs and criminals and inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all." He wanted to have a religion in the sense of 'spiritual principles' truly 'universal' applicable to all times, to all countries and to all races. He treated Hinduism as a "a mass of sacrificial, societal, political and sanitary rules and regulations; all mixed up."

Ambedkar's believed that Buddhism was the greatest of all the religions in the world Ambedkar as it was not merely a religion but also a great social doctrine. His research oriented mind was fully convinced by the logical, empirical, humanistic and pragmatic teaching of the Buddha. He observed that besides *ahimsa*, the Buddha taught many other things such as social, intellectual, economic and political freedom. It would be difficult to find a religious teacher to compare with Buddha whose teachings embrace so many aspects of social life and whose doctrines are so modern and whose main concern was to give salvation to people during their life on earth and not to promise it to them in the heaven after they are dead. Recognition of human suffering, and inquiry into its causes and ways of its removal were the real basis of Buddhism. Ambedkar declares, "Never in the history of the world has any founder of a religion taught that the removal of this misery is real purpose of it". He was much impressed by the Buddhist interpretations of the traditional concepts. He observed that Buddha did not believe in soul. Indeed, in his opinion, the belief in the existence of soul is far more dangerous than belief in God. Regarding rebirth the Buddha seemed to believe in the regeneration of matter and not in the rebirth of the soul.

In simple terms, religion means belief in the existence of god or gods, especially the belief that they created the universe and gave human beings a spiritual nature, which continues to exist after the death of the body. "Some people think that religion is not essential to society. I did not hold

this view. I consider the foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices of society” . In all his writings and speeches Ambedkar has mentioned the necessity of religion. According to him Religion is part of one’s inheritance. It pains me to see youths growing indifferent towards religions. Religion is not opium as some holds it. What good things I have, have been the benefits of my education to society I owe them to the religions feeling in of me. I want religion, but not hypocrisy in the name of religion. Religion to him was the driving force for human activities. He remarked, “Man cannot live by bread alone. He has a mind which needs food for thoughts”.

According to him religion must be judged by social standards based on social ethics. He linked religion with social wellbeing of the people. To him religion, social status and property were all sources of power and authority. He wanted to have religion in the sense of spiritual principles truly universal and applicable to all countries and all races. He treated Hinduism as a mass of sacrificial social, political and sanitary rules and all mixed up. He treated religion as source of social and spiritual unity. But his reason and his religious conviction were circumscribed by social environment Ambedkar’s religion was a social force, a source of power, and a plan of action to realize man’s hope for a fuller and happier life in this world. Religion, which gave hope, inspiration and enthusiasm to enrich the present and build a future, is the only true and useful religion. So Ambedkar had no contempt for religion but pleaded for a change in the structure of religion and also in the attitude of those who profess religion. He defined religion as something that offered prosperity or elevation first in this world and then in the other world. Ambedkar wished to replace the religion of rules with true religion, the religion of principles, which is the basis for civic government. Thee principles, liberty equality, and fraternity are true religion. He says, True religion is the foundation of the society. For Ambedkar these principles were religious principles. He was perfectly well aware that these were the principles of the American and French revolutions. However, he wanted to bring Indian ways of thinking, which in effect meant identifying a strand of his own indigenous culture, which could legitimately be presented as a critique of Hindu ritual orthodoxy. The religion of caste hierarchy described by Ambedkar reveals the opposition between Brahmin purity and dominance, on the one hand, untouchable impurity and subservience on the other. These ritual values permeate traditional Hindu society and are most clearly codified in texts such as the Manusmriti. The other concept of religion is similar to Western democratic principles and institutions, based on the belief in the

formal equality of all individuals, equal right under the law, the abolition of hereditary status, personal freedom to choose one's own occupation and to develop one's own individual talents. These were the principles, which he was to build into the Constitution. These sacred principles are what Westerners generally like to think of as the secular, the non-religious but which Ambedkar suggests is the basis for a concept of true religion. This is one reason why Ambedkar's view of religion is interesting. For him, the basis of religion is values, and it is values that hold a society together.

Thus the concept of religion implied in this kind of analysis is not essentially about supernatural beings, transcendental worlds or spiritual salvation in life after death. It is about the fundamental values, which make possible different kinds of social institution; in one case, the institution of caste, which is based on the sacred Brahminical principles codified in the Smriti, and, in the other case, the institution of democracy, which is based on the sacred principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. However, one significant way in which these sets of values differ from each other is that, for Ambedkar, the democratic values are universal in the sense that they apply equally to every one in principle, for all humans are individual and all humans have equal rights and obligation, and all humans deserve the opportunity to discover their talents. In contrast, the Hindu values are particularistic. There is one set for Brahmins, one for the Maratha, one for the Mahar and one for the dalits. In a democratic world, one can become president get a good education, marry the partner of ones choice regardless of caste, and live in their preferred neighborhood, be respected for what they are or do rather than for their inherited status. But in the case of the caste system in India, rules apply to particular people in particular situations. In a democratic kind of society, freedom of the individual implies a new kind of freedom, the freedom to choose one's religion. We have a different concept of religion emerging. Here religion is conceived as a body of doctrine about salvation which the individual can chose to adhere to because he finds it the best, the most rational, and the most suitable for his /her personal needs. The religious principles of equality, liberty and fraternity make possible a secular society in which religion becomes a matter of personal commitment and choice. Ambedkar calls a religion a private affair; a matter of personal choice and commitment, something one gets converted to. According to Ambedkar's understanding, Buddha and Dhamma are essentially morality. By morality he means compassion, caring for one's fellow human being and for the natural world, feeling asense of responsibility and commitment being actively committed to the

wellbeing of the world. Morality, unlike ritual obligation, springs from the heart of the individual and is based on a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. A large majority of untouchables who have reached a capacity to think of their problem believes that one way to solve the problem is for them to abandon Hinduism and be converted to some other religion. There are many opponents of the conversion of untouchables. They ask what the untouchables can gain by conversion. Conversion can make no change in the status of the untouchables; it is only a materialist need and so on, they say. In order to understand why conversion, we should pay attention to its purpose and function in society. According to Charles A. Ellwood, the purpose of religion is to project the essential values of human personality and of human society into the universe as a whole.

It inevitably arises as soon as he tries to take a valuing attitude towards his universe, no matter how small and mean that universe may appear to him. Religion emphasizes and universalizes social values and brings them to the mind of the individual who is required to recognize them in all his acts in order that he may function as an approved member of society. The function of religion is the same as the function of law and government. It is a means by which society exercises its control over the conduct of the individual in order to maintain social order. It may not be used consciously as a method of social control over the individual. Nonetheless, the fact is that religion acts as means of social control. As compared to religion, government and law are relatively inadequate means of social control. The control through law and order does not go deep enough to secure the stability of the social order. The religious sanction, on account of its being supernatural has been on the other the most effective means of social control, far more effective than law and government have been or can be. Religion is the most powerful force of social gravitation without which it would be impossible to hold the social order in its orbits. Today, the untouchables can very well ask the protagonists of Hinduism the question which Lord Balfour asked the positivists. They can ask: Does Hinduism recognize their worth as human beings? Does it stand for their equality? Does it extend to them the benefit of liberty? Does it at least help to forge the bond of fraternity between them and the Hindus? Does it teach the Hindus that the untouchables are their kindred? Does it say to them Hindus it is a sin to treat the untouchables as being neither man nor beast? Does it tell the Hindus to be just and humane to them? Does it tell the Hindus to be just to the untouchables? Does it inculcate upon the Hindus the virtue of being friendly to them? Does it tell the Hindus to love them to respect them and to

do them no wrong? In short, does Hinduism universalize the value of life without distinction? No Hindu can dare to give an affirmative answer to any of these questions. On the contrary, the wrongs to which the Hindus subject the untouchables are acts which are sanctioned by Hindu religion. How can the Hindus ask the untouchables to accept Hinduism and stay in Hinduism? Why should the untouchables adhere to Hinduism which is mainly responsible for their degradation? To be poor is bad but not so bad to be untouchables. In Hinduism there is no hope for them. The opponents of conversion are determined not to be satisfied even if the logic of conversion was irrefutable. They ask another question. What will the untouchable gain materially by changing faith? It is true that they will not gain wealth by conversion. But socially, they will gain absolutely and immensely because by conversion they will be 35 members of a community whose religion has universalized and equalized all values of life. Such blessing is unthinkable for them while they are in the Hindu fold.

Ambedkar's role as a prominent constitution maker of India is quite well known. However, his views on religion, particularly his reason for renouncing Hinduism, the religion of his birth, are not so widely known. Ambedkar, who was born in an untouchable family, carried on a relentless battle against untouchability throughout his adult life. In the last part of his life, he renounced Hinduism. What were his reasons for doing so? Studying his works *The Buddha and Dhama*, *Annihilation of Caste*, *Philosophy of Hinduism*, *Riddles in Hinduism*, etc can obtain a detailed answer to this question. Some of his articles, speeches and interviews before and after his conversion to Buddhism can also throw some light on this question. Ambedkar's statement in 1935 at Yeola Conference is quite instructive in this regard. Ambedkar believed that the untouchables occupied a weak and lowly status only because they were a part of the Hindu society. When attempts to gain equal status and ordinary rights as human beings within the Hindu society started failing, Ambedkar thought it was essential to embrace a religion which will give equal status, equal right and fair treatment to the untouchables. He clearly said to his supporters, select only that religion in which you will get equal status, equal opportunity and equal treatment, after a comparative study of different religions. He became convinced that Buddhism was the best religion from this point of view (Ambedkar 13). He appealed to all the untouchables to leave Hinduism, which does not help them to grow in the society. He remarked and argued about religion and said: I tell you, religion is for man not man for religion. If you

want to organize, consolidate and be successful in this world, change this religion. The religion that does not recognize you as human beings or give you water to drink or allow you to enter the temples is not worthy to be called a religion. The religion that forbids you to receive education and comes in the way of material advancement is not 36 worthy of an appellation religion. The religion that does not teach its followers to show humanity in dealing with its co-religionists is nothing but display of force. The religion that asks its adherents to suffer, the touch of animals but not touch of human beings is not religion but a mockery. That religion which precludes some classes from education, forbids them to accumulate wealth and to bear arms is not religion but a mockery. (Keer 275) According to Ambedkar the religion of the Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibitions. Ambedkar delivered a speech on the Buddha Jayanti day in Delhi in which he attacked Hindu gods and goddesses and praised Buddhism because it was a religion based on moral principles. Besides, he points out, unlike the founders of other religions, who considered themselves emissaries of God; the Buddha regarded himself only as a guide and gave a revolutionary meaning to the concept of religion. He said that Hinduism stood for inequality, whereas Buddhism stood for equality. On May 1956 talk by Ambedkar titled why I like Buddhism and how it is useful to the world in its present circumstances was broadcast from the British Broadcasting Corporation London. In his talk Ambedkar said: I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination, which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches prajana (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), karuna (love), and samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life. Neither God nor soul can save society. In his last speech delivered in Bombay, on May 24, 1956, he declared his resolve to embrace Buddhism. Ambedkar observed: Hinduism believes in God. Buddhism has no God. Hinduism believes in soul. According to Buddhism, there is no soul. Hinduism believes in Chaturvarnya and the caste system. Buddhism has no place for caste system and Chaturvarnya. It is obvious that Ambedkar regarded Buddhism as a religion, much more than Hinduism. His main objection to Hinduism was that it sanctified inequality and untouchability through its doctrine of Chaturvarnya. Buddhism on the other hand, and soul and for emphasizing morality. According to him, prajana (understanding against superstition and supernaturalism) karuna (love) and samata, which Buddhism alone teaches, are all that human beings need for a good and happy life. Ambedkar's final religious act was to embrace Buddhism. His work the Buddha and His Dhama contains his own understanding and interpretation of Buddhism. We may say that

Buddhism, as expounded in this book, is what Ambedkar embraced and recommended. It is widely recognized by scholars of Buddhism that the Buddha did not believe in God and soul and rejected the Varna-vyavasth. However, according to the traditional interpretation of Buddhism, Buddha did believe in rebirth and the related doctrine of bondage and liberation (Nirvana). Ambedkar's interpretation on this point differs from the traditional interpretation on this point. But regrettably, Ambedkar has not documented his book Buddha and Dhama. Therefore, it is not possible to say how he arrived at his alternative interpretation of Buddhism. From a rationalists and humanist point of view, one may say that Buddhism is a better religion than Hinduism and that it is closer to rationalism and humanism compared to any other religion. Still, it cannot be denied that Buddhism is a religion and certain elements like faith, worship and other worldliness or supernaturalism, which are common to all religions, are also found in Buddhism. Ambedkar proclaimed that though he was a Hindu with full conviction, he assured them that he would not die as Hindu. He, by his conviction and affirmation, visualizes a separate community outside the Hindu fold carving out for themselves a future, worthy of free citizens. Though the caste Hindus leveled and characterized Ambedkar's attitude as escapism, some far-sighted Hindu society reformers hailed him as a messiah born to reorganize the Hindu society and revitalize Hinduism. Having found Buddhism a source of light to bring a radical change in society, he called upon all untouchables to embrace Buddhism. He defended his conversion to Buddhism on the basis of these following reasons. (a) He tried to prove that the untouchables were Buddhists. (b) Buddhism was an Indian religion and the Buddha was nearer to the untouchables. (c) The untouchables would join with the world Buddhist community and thus pave the way for world brotherhood. So Ambedkar, in the year 1956, embraced Buddhism along with three lakhs of dalits and vowed that he would dedicate his life for the spread of Buddhism throughout India. Since Ambedkar emphasized the dignity of the human person, his philosophy of social humanism concerns itself with the dalits, the exploited and the marginalized, who had been stripped of their dignity as persons? He considered them as humans and as humans they are entitled to human dignity, social liberty and equality of opportunities for self-development. Thus Ambedkar regarded social humanism as the philosophy for social transformation and Buddhism as a religious means to attain it.

Chapter- 3

Conclusion

Ambedker was a great thinker, a social activist, a distinctive constitutionalist, a proficient supervisor and a masterly statesman. All decided that he was a warrior for the self-respect of man and the liberator of a concealed people. He remained always as a rationalist warrior. After finishing his education, he transfers his thinking and resolute on social problems. At that time untouchables were being ill treated. They were not acceptable to explain water from public wells and public tanks. He took up the matter of broth tank at Mahad. So Ambedker joint dalits and prepared them to break customary system. They marched in a procession to the chowder tank to assert their right to drink and take water.

He produced self-confidence, power and hope among oppressed people. This event was incredible in the history of India. It increase alcove and comer of this country. Ambedker made this topic a national issue. This system was all over the place. The claim of the untouchables to use the broth tank was finally accepted after a long drained legal conflict by the Bombay High Court in 1937. This is the accomplishment of Dr. B. R. Ambedker as a insurgent and fighter forever.

This proved that Ambedker was a educational and fighter. in the course of his awareness, he mobilized and planned people and moved them to resolve their troubles in a right way. He showed a self-governing path to them. Ambedker combined the untouchables, raised them to the point of human beings and place them on the social and political map of India. as of his guidance the bonds between best and ample have full-fledged and an active educated middle class has been fashioned which is to a great degree immersed in government service.

The script has been certainly the deed of rights for the caste Hindus and at the similar time a Bible of slavery for the untouchables. He attacked the script as it was sign of unfair social laws. The Manuscript was scalded on December 25, 1927. It was a red-letter day in the history of India, and demanded a new one in order to reform the Hindu code governing the life of so enormous a people.

To some level, this occasion changed thoughts of the people of this country. He prepared a audacious effort for temple entry. So during these activities Ambedker made untouchables to consider their problems in coherent way. So later untouchables of this country began to join

to face up to any problem. These people under the direction of Ambedker had selected the lane of westernization than sanskritisation. Modification in the internal caste groups, persistence on the guidance within the assembly, political anxiety, refusal of traditional religion, have given his society a definite figure. Nationalist tendencies were and are noticeable; but they could be illicit with the help of integrating services. Watan system was abolish. This is great input and accomplishment of Ambedker.

He was always unstinting warrior in every attempt to fortify untouchables. He was great a campaigner. He prepared a struggle against fundamentalism, conventionality and intransigence. He wanted to make Indian politics free from conventional and established forces.

For the upliftment of down flattened he prepared first Indian Labour Party and later the Scheduled Caste Federation. He founded the people's teaching Society and started colleges at Bombay and Aurangabad. Most of his activities were inveterate to Maharashtra Region only. Till 1946 he was leader of one sector of this country. whenever he became part of constituent Assembly, chairman of drafting committee of constitution, he became a Minister for law in 1946, and then Ambedker emerge as a leader of the nation.

According to article 17 of the constitution which abolish the perform of untouchability in any form. In a simple and succinct away this article abolish this age-old survival of our society. This is the greatest success of Dr. B. R. Ambedker. In truth he was emancipator of untouchables. He gave always priority to the social liberation of the untouchables. His life aim was to take away untouchability, this was promise of Ambedker. This promise was pleased, the dream realized and the aspiration materialized. The oppression ended. He said it, he did it. Through his incessant fighting, he succeed. He fought for federal government necessary for Indian democratic system and a guarantee of marginal rights and union judges. He showed a great skill in guiding the draft Constitution through the Constituent Assembly. He enlightened Indian politics from parochialism. He gave India its legal edge and the people the basis of their freedom. His name will figure significantly in any history of socio-political and constitutional growth of India during the final stage of the British rule which ruined with the ushering in of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India. His role as a politician and his cerebral giving has become an vital part of the story of India's political progress. He

prejudiced important political decisions and his outstanding skill for beneficial statesmanship manifested impulsively during the period of constitution-making.

In India, social impracticality and political impracticality were conflicting to each other. Ambedker solemnly wished that the political impracticality of the majority would become the social impracticality of all. The spirit of his all-India direction could be seen in his devotion to his society. He always placed the liberty and wellbeing of his society above the accomplishment of swaraj. But when swaraj was in sight he made a dispensation with the national leadership. He did not dictate politics, but predisposed important political decision. Although he was the head of his community he tried to secularize Indian politics. crash of the west, rule of law, parity of citizens, political contribution in law-making and policy decisions, gigantic efforts of social reforms by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ranade, Phooley, Agarkar and others; self-governing open-mindedness, fully developed permission— were some of the factors which contributed to the material trends in Indian political affairs. The preface of the Indian Constitution is a exclusive illustration. Dr. Ambedker was a provider to the above inclination.

National incorporation was a aflame problem. Learning and fiscal development, cogent and experimental outlook, modem science and technology, worldly outlook to socio-economic troubles and lawful move toward contributes much to national amalgamation. Ambedker superfluous separatist tendency, and tried to turn out to be one with the countrywide trend. In this respect his involvement to national incorporation was great. He vitalized the general life of India. His productive statesmanship stamped a specific place for him in the line of the great organizer of the nation.

It is possible only during his fighting courage. So he remains in history as a great diligent fighter. In the last phase of his life, he embraces Buddhism. No reservation there is social parity in Buddhism. He definitely whispered that man cannot live without religious conviction. Religion is part and tract of life of man and civilization. He wanted to transform hearts of the people through belief. He made one endeavor through the Buddhism. It was enormous daring stride in life. If Ambedker had embraced Buddhism prior the situation of Indian society would have been poles apart. He had anticipated to organizing huge tackle for the transmission of Buddhism in India and abroad. However, death disallowed him to do so.

Ambedker has been criticized for his renewal. It has been stated that the collapse of Ambedker was due perchance to too much poignant zeal without any real analysis of the problem. He wanted to close down caste and he wanted to do it swiftly. He set out to break practice which had existed for centuries. He even doubted the motives of a man like Gandhi and turned an unsighted opponent of the Congress privileged.

No doubt Ambedker was one of the supreme leaders of the country. During his skirmishing nature and his erudition, he prejudiced people of this country. There is a lot of inspiration of Ambedker in Indian society.

It is observed that when the autonomy movement was going on against the Britishers Ambedker did not partake in this movement. He was not incarcerated. He criticized Gandhi and the Congress party. For this he was criticized, he fought for all time to solve the troubles of untouchables.

In this way the exceptional life of Bharat Bhushan Ambedker has developed into a new spring of education and a new source of stimulation for devotees. From it has emerged a new divinity, and the light that will be ablaze in its temple in this land of temples will be seen from all sides of the country and from far-flung corners of the world. A new conservatory of knowledge, a new support for verse, a new place of pilgrimage and a new opportunity for literature have sprung up!

It is powerfully felt that if any scholar is not going to study totally the job and achievements of Ambedker, the history of modern India will be incomplete. It is proved that Ambedker did yeoman service for the progress of Indian society throughout his assiduous warfare methods. So Dr. B. R. Ambedker remains in history as a diligent fighter forever.

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