



I N D I A N
I N S T I T U T E O F
D A L I T
S T U D I E S

Devoted to Studies on Social Exclusion, Marginalized Social Groups and Inclusive Policies

Dr. Ambedkar's Strategies Against Untouchability and the Caste System

Christophe Jaffrelot



Working Paper Series

Volume III Number 04, 2009

Editorial Board

Sukhadeo Thorat
Surinder S Jodhka

IIDS Activities

- To conceptualise and theoretically understand social exclusion and discrimination in contemporary world.
- To develop methods and measuring tools for the study of discrimination and exclusions in social, cultural, political and economic spheres of everyday life and their consequences.
- To undertake empirical researches on measuring forms, magnitude and nature of discrimination in multiple spheres.
- To understand the impact of social exclusion and discriminatory practices on inter-group inequalities, poverty, human right violations, inter-group conflicts and economic development of the marginalised social categories;
- To undertake empirical research on the status of different excluded, marginalised and discriminated groups in Indian society *vis-à-vis* their social, cultural, political, and economic situations;
- To propose policy interventions for building an inclusive society through empowerment of the socially excluded groups in India and elsewhere in the world; and
- To provide knowledge support and training to civil society actors.

The IIDS Working Paper Series disseminate the findings of the core research outputs of the Institute to facilitate informed discussions among the civil society, the academia, researchers and also strive to contribute towards policy infusions.

**Dr. Ambedkar's Strategies Against
Untouchability and the Caste System**

Christophe Jaffrelot

**Working Paper Series
Indian Institute of Dalit Studies
New Delhi**

Foreword

Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS) has been amongst the first research organisations in India to focus exclusively on development concerns of the marginalised groups and socially excluded communities. Over the last six years, IIDS has carried-out several studies on different aspects of social exclusion and discrimination of the historically marginalised social groups, such as the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Religious Minorities in India and other parts of the sub-continent. The Working Paper Series disseminates empirical findings of the ongoing research and conceptual development on issues pertaining to the forms and nature of social exclusion and discrimination. Some of our papers critically examine inclusive policies for the marginalised social groups in Indian society as well as in other countries.

This working paper is based on the first Ambedkar Memorial Lecture organized by Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS) in 2008 and delivered by the well-known French Scholars of Indian studies, Professor Christophe Jaffrelot. Professor Jaffrelot's book on Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste has been widely regarded as an important contribution to Ambedkar Studies. Taking forward his work, Professor Jaffrelot provides us in this paper an overview and understanding of the different strategies that Dr. Ambedkar experimented with during public life to work for uplift of ex-untouchable communities of India. Professor Jaffrelot identifies four different strategies that Ambedkar used in his struggle. First of all he tried to write an alternative history of the ex-untouchables and gave them a new identity of being "sons of the soil". Second, he experimented with electoral politics to gain representation for "his people". Third he worked with those in power and tried to articulate the voice of India's Dalit masses. He worked both with colonial rulers and with the Congress Party with a single minded purpose of representing the Dalit case. The final strategy of Ambedkar discussed by Professor Jaffrelot for Dalit liberation was conversion to Buddhism.

IIDS gratefully acknowledges Christian Aid (India) for funding our first Ambedkar Memorial Lecture and publication of the Working Paper series. We hope our Working Papers will be helpful to academics, students, activists, civil society organisations and policymaking bodies.

Surinder S. Jodhka
Director, IIDS

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Identity Building: Untouchables As Sons of the Soil	2
3. Electoral Politics: From Separate Electorate to Party-building	3
4. Working with the Rulers: From the British Raj to the Congress Raj	6
5. Conversion, the Ultimate Strategy	11
6. Conclusion	16
Endnotes	17
References	22

Dr. Ambedkar's Strategies Against Untouchability and the Caste System

Christophe Jaffrelot

1. Introduction

Dr. Ambedkar analysed Hindu society before starting his struggle against untouchability and the caste system. He was a scholar as much as a man of action - in any case before becoming one. In his writings, Ambedkar tried hard to show the mechanisms of the caste system and clarified the origin of untouchability in order to support his fight for equality. For him, if the lower castes were not in a position to overthrow their oppressors, it was because of two reasons: they had partially internalised hierarchy; and because of the very characteristics of caste-based inequality. The internalisation of hierarchy was largely due to what M.N. Srinivas was to call the sanskritisation process that Ambedkar, in fact, had identified more than 20 years before. As early as in 1916, Ambedkar presented his first research paper at Columbia University and explained that the caste system could not have been imposed by the Brahmins over society, but that it took shape when they were able to persuade other groups that their values were universally superior and that they had to be emulated by others, including endogamy, a marital rule which closed the system upon itself¹.

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 varieties of inequality which were not so difficult to abolish or correct². 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 suffers 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 (*Shudras*) and the Dalits and

the *Shudras* and the Dalits themselves are divided into many *jatis*. 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 identity 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.

2. Identity Building: Untouchables As Sons of the Soil

Ambedkar tried to endow the lower castes with a glorious history of sons of the soil to help them acquire an alternative - not-caste based - identity, to regain their self respect and overcome their divisions. In *The Untouchables, who were they and why they became Untouchables?* (1948), Ambedkar refutes Western authors explaining caste hierarchy by resorting to racial factors³. His interpretation is strikingly complicated. He explains that all primitive societies have been one day or the other conquered by invaders who raised themselves above the native tribes. In breaking up, these tribes as a matter of rule give birth to a peripheral group that he calls the *Broken Men*.

When the conquerors became stationary then, they resorted to the services of these Broken Men to protect themselves from the attacks of the tribes which remained nomadic. The Broken Men therefore found refuge, as guards of villages, in the suburbs of the latter because it was more logical from a point of view of topography and because the victorious tribes did not accept foreigners, of a different blood, within their group. Ambedkar applied this theory to India by presenting the Untouchables as the descendants of the Broken Men (Dalit, in Marathi) and, therefore, the original inhabitants of India, before the conquest of this country by the Aryan invaders⁴.

According to Ambedkar these Broken Men were the most constant followers of Buddha soon after he began his teachings in the 6th century BC. And they remained Buddhists when the rest of the society returned to the Hindu fold under the pressure of Brahmins. Ambedkar drew two conclusions from it:

“It explains why the Untouchables regard the Brahmins as inauspicious, do not employ them as their priests and do not even allow them to enter into their quarters. It also explains why the Broken Men came to be regarded as Untouchables. The Broken Men hated the Brahmins because the Brahmins were the enemies of Buddhism and the Brahmins imposed untouchability upon the Broken Men because they would not leave Buddhism⁵. ”

Thus, Ambedkar did not contend himself with elaborating a theory of castes which culminated in the idea of graded inequality; he also devised an untouchable tradition susceptible to remedy the former. If they recognised themselves as sons of the soils and Buddhists, the Untouchables could better surmount their divisions into so many *jatis* and take a stand together as an ethnic group *against* the system in its entirety. Omvedt underlines that by the end of his life Ambedkar was working on a grand theory of the origin of the Untouchables and the conflict between their civilisation and Hinduism. The notion of autochthony played a key role in this theory. Ambedkar argued that if Hindu India had been invaded by Muslims, Buddhist India had been subjugated by Brahmins outsiders much before. Omvedt considers that there was 'a racial ethnic element in all of this, in which Ambedkar identifies his heroes to some extent with non-Aryans, for instance, arguing that the Mauryan empire was that of the Nagas...'⁶

3. Electoral Politics: From Separate Electorate to Party-building

The young Ambedkar was consulted at the beginning of 1919 by the Southborough committee, the body which had been entrusted with redefining electoral franchise within the framework of the constitutional reform -that was to be called "Montford", after the names of Montagu and Chelmsford. Unlike the other Dalit leaders who had been consulted, Ambedkar did not owe this hearing to the fact of belonging to any association but because he was the only Untouchable who held a graduate degree in the Bombay Province. In his testimony, he explained that the real line of cleavage, among the Hindus, was set not between the Brahmin and non-Brahmin but between the "Touchables" and Untouchables. He thus rejected an electoral system which would be based on territorial constituencies because the latter would then be in a minority and therefore deprived of representation. As a remedy, he recommended "either to reserve seats [...] for those minorities that can not, otherwise, secure personal representation or grant communal electorates"⁷. The two options then seemed equally valid to him⁸.

Before the Simon Commission, in 1928, Ambedkar submitted a memorandum on behalf of his association, the *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha*. He argued in favour of the granting of universal franchise and a quota of seats for the Untouchables rather than for separate electorates⁹. He explained, during his speech before a delegation of the Simon Commission at Poona, that in case universal suffrage was not being granted for the Dalits, then he would campaign for separate electorates¹⁰. This stand suggests that he still nurtured great

hopes towards the upper castes and that he still had nationalist scruples which prevented him from severing his links with social and political mainstream.

The report of the Simon Commission finally granted reserved seats to the Depressed Classes, but candidates who would take part in them would have, first of all, to get their competence endorsed by the governor of the province. This profoundly annoyed Ambedkar. Anyway, this report remained a dead letter since the main political force of the country - the Congress - had not been involved in its making. To get out of this deadlock, a Conference was held in London in 1930, and then a Second Round Table Conference in 1931. None of them bore fruits.

The arbitration given by the British following the Second Round Table Conference as regards the status of various communities in the Constitution to come, called the *Communal Award*, was announced on August, 1932. This award recognised the right of the Untouchables to have a separate electorate. Henceforth they were given the right to vote at the same moment within the framework of general constituencies and within 71 separate constituencies which could only be filled up by Dalit candidates. Immediately, Gandhi, who was then imprisoned at Poona for having revived the Civil Disobedience Movement, went on fast. A few days later, he proposed Ambedkar that the Untouchables should benefit from a number of reserved seats larger than the one that would have come to them within the framework of the separate electorate, in exchange for the renunciation by him of this system. Ambedkar had to resign himself to this defeat. "The Poona Pact" finally established a system of reserved seats, in which 148 seats (instead of 71 as put forward by the Communal Award) were granted to the Untouchables in the Legislative Council. But it excluded the principle of separate electorates: in 148 constituencies - those where the Untouchables were the most numerous - the members of the Depressed Classes (the official phrase) would designate by themselves the four Dalit Leaders who would be the candidates among whom all the voters of the constituency, mixed of all castes, would then have to elect their representative¹¹. This scheme, as a matter of fact, ruined the hopes of Dr. Ambedkar of constituting the Dalits into a political force before which elected MPs and MLAs would have to be accountable.

Dr. Ambedkar, yet, continued to pursue an election-based strategy by creating a political party, the Independent Labour Party, in 1936. The ILP, as its name indicated, was not intended to be confined to the Untouchables. As party president, Dr. Ambedkar tried to set up himself as a leader of the "labouring

masses". This shift was largely due to his need for an electoral strategy. He had become aware of the necessity of widening his social basis. Indeed, the Untouchables appeared only as labourers in the program of the ILP, which pays a lot of attention to economic questions and to a criticism of capitalism. Ambedkar considered that the Indian labourers were victims, at the same moment of Brahminism and capitalism (*Brahmanshahi* and *Bhandwalshahi*), the two systems dominated by the same group¹².

At the same time, Dr. Ambedkar did not believe in Marxism. Caste hierarchies were the most important ones in his view and they had (almost) nothing to do with the groups' relationship to the means of production. The contradiction between the philosophy projected by the ILP and the speeches of Dr. Ambedkar justifying his rejection of Marxism is however obvious: on the one hand, he claimed to represent the labourers in general; on the other, he denied a real significance to class analysis and emphasized that caste remained the basic unit of society.

This contradiction was evident from the results of the 1937 election: most of the candidates of the ILP were Dalits, and among them, a large majority was Mahar; on the list of candidates, there was only one Mang and the other non Mahar was an Untouchable from Gujarat. The Chambhars, whose level of socio-economic development was superior to that of the Mangs, but also to that of the Mahars were not at all represented in the ranks of the party. Dr. Ambedkar resigned himself to his status of Dalit leader in 1942 when he founded the Scheduled Castes Federation (Dalit Federation in Marathi). The Scheduled Castes, in this perspective, had to be considered as a minority in the same way as the Muslims and, as a consequence, had to get the benefit, not only of a separate electorate, but also of separate territories.

Reacting to the Cripps proposals, the Executive Committee of the SCF declared in September, 1944 in Madras that "the Scheduled Castes are a distinct and separate element in the national life of India and that they are a religious minority in a sense far more real than the Sikhs and Muslims can be and within the meaning of the Cripps Proposals"¹³. Another resolution stipulated that no Constitution would be acceptable to the Scheduled Castes if it did not have their approval. Now, this proposition was conditional to the fulfillment of several demands: a separate electorate, a guarantee of representation within the executive power and a toll tax for their own villages¹⁴. The notion of Dalit villages took shape around the same time. In 1944, Ambedkar confided to a British officer - Beverley Nicholas:

“In every village there is a tiny minority of Untouchables. I want to gather those minorities together and make them into majorities. This means a tremendous work of organisation - transferring populations, building new villages. But we can do it, if only we are allowed [by the British]¹⁵. »

The SCF lost heavily in the 1945-46 elections. The party gained only two seats in the provincial assemblies, one in Bengal, the other one in the Central Provinces and Berar. This setback was partly due to the voting system¹⁶. Another explanation for the defeat of the SCF laid in the very small number of candidates nominated by the party: the SCF could not field any in 129 out of the 151 reserved seats for Untouchables. This situation reflected the weakness of the party's organization. As Bandyopadhyay points out: “the Federation had no organizational machinery »¹⁷. It had no network of party branches and only a handful of cadres. In fact, the party's activities relied on the shoulders of Ambedkar.

In addition to the SCF's lack of organization, its defeat was also due to the remarkable popularity of the Congress, including among the Untouchables, because of its dedication to the freedom movement. In contrast, Ambedkar would be termed 'un-patriotic' because of his joining the Viceroy's government. The SCF won only two seats in the Lok Sabha, one in Hyderabad and the other in the Bombay Presidency where Ambedkar was defeated and where the performance of the party was very much lower than his expectation.

The political parties created by Ambedkar in the 1930s and 1940s oscillated between a socialist-like program aiming to widen his caste base and an effort to defend the interests of the Untouchables alone. None of these strategies proved to be successful and the setbacks registered by the SCF led Dr. Ambedkar to return to a non-caste based party-building exercise with the creation of the Republican Party of India, which was to see the light after his demise - but which was to meet the same electoral faith as his predecessors.

4. Working with the Rulers: From the British Raj to the Congress Raj

Dr. Ambedkar's political action was not confined only to his efforts to develop parties. He also tried hard to influence the governments in his personal capacity, whether they were of the British or Congress, for better serving the cause of the Untouchables. Under the British Raj, Ambedkar was prisoner for some time of a dilemma: on the one hand, he rejected the movement for

independence given that it was dominated by a party, the Congress, which he saw as the expression of the upper castes, whereas he found himself closer to the British, with whom he shared egalitarian values and from whom he hoped for a protection against the "caste Hindus". On the other hand, he was an Indian and could not resign himself to see his country dominated by a foreign power, which, on the top of it, trampled the values of equality, freedom and brotherhood that he cherished most. After years of hesitations, in the 1930s, his hostility towards the Congress eventually overrode his nationalist feelings. He then expected from his rapprochement with the British substantial gains for the Untouchables.

He was named in July 1941 to the Defence Advisory Committee set up by the Viceroy to involve the Indian leaders in the war effort and to give to this forced participation of India in the conflict a greater legitimacy. One year later, he entered the Executive Council of the Viceroy as Labour Member, an office that he hoped to use for improving the condition of the Untouchables. Indeed, he worked relentlessly to develop the social legislation. One of the most significant bills that Ambedkar managed to have passed was *the Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill*, making compulsory the recognition of a trade union in every enterprise provided it fulfilled certain conditions, particularly in terms of representation.

In November, 1943, assessing his governmental actions during a meeting, Ambedkar emphasized above all the fact that henceforth 8.33 percent of the posts of the national administration were reserved for the Scheduled Castes, as it was already the case previously in Madras Presidency, that places were also reserved for them in the institutions of technical education in London, that the quota in the Central Assembly had been increased by one seat and that a seat was reserved for them in the Council of the State (the Upper House of what was meant to be a Parliament)¹⁸.

The cooperation of Ambedkar with the British did not allow him to achieve his objectives in terms of association of the Dalits to the negotiations preceding independence - after the defeat of the SCF in the 1945-46 elections, Dr. Ambedkar was not listened to any more. However, he obtained substantial concessions for the Untouchables, in terms of representation in the administration for instance. The fact that India was very fast moving from 1946 towards independence brought him, a pragmatist par excellence, however to get closer to the Congress, the obvious candidate for power. Dr. Ambedkar's pragmatic approach to politics is not to be mistaken for a pure opportunism.

For he did not change allies because of the posts which one or the other could offer to him, but according to what could best serve the cause of the Untouchables.

In August 1947, Nehru made Ambedkar, doubtless under Gandhi's¹⁹ pressure, his Law Minister in the first government of independent India. Ambedkar accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister because, as he said later, "*in the first place the offer was not subject to any condition and secondly it was easier to serve the interests of the Scheduled Castes from inside of the government than from outside*"²⁰. As member of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Ambedkar did not have his say in a systematic manner, though. His disillusion with his taking part in the Minorities committee headed by Sardar Patel is a case in point. Ambedkar proposed to the committee that at least the candidate of a minority should be declared elected only if a minimal proportion of the members of his group (here he had in mind the Untouchables) voted for him, but he was not followed by the sub-committee. Patel emphasised that such a scheme would be as harmful as separate electorates²¹.

Dr. Ambedkar, however, was in a position to make a strong impact on the making of the Constitution after he was appointed president of the "Drafting Committee". This Committee, while it was not responsible for drafting the primary texts, had the essential function to get these into shape on the basis of articles proposed by other, issue-based, Committees, before submitting them to the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly made several readings and, each time, Drafting Committee members - and most often its chairman, Dr. Ambedkar - guided and channelised the discussion. In addition, he was one of the few members of the Constituent Assembly who belonged, besides the Drafting Committee, at the same time, to more than one of the 15 Committees - including the "Minorities Committee" where safeguards for the Dalits were discussed²². On this account he was able to follow closely all along the debates on articles as important as those concerning the rights of the minorities. Most importantly, as president of the Drafting Committee, it was to him that were sent the propositions of the various committees. Therefore, it was for him, and the secretary of the committee, S.N. Mukherjee, to whom he would pay later a warm homage, to reformulate the obscure articles -and most of them needed some clarification work. These editorial tasks also rested largely on his shoulders because of the chronic absenteeism from which the Drafting Committee suffered.

Dr. Ambedkar defended in the Constituent Assembly values and political models with which he had become immersed since his youth during his studies in the United States and England. This moved him closer to Nehru but brought him to take contrary positions to Gandhi. Like Nehru, Ambedkar believed in parliamentary democracy. He opposed moreover the criticisms of the left which wanted to qualify the Indian Republic, from the very first article of the Constitution, as "socialist". According to him, this would have had the effect "simply of destroying democracy"²³, because it was for the government designated by the people to choose the best form of social organization, as he explained it on November 19, 1948²⁴. Another indication of his attachment to the values of liberal democracy was found in his proposing an amendment in favour of a strict separation of executive power and the judiciary²⁵. Some representatives opposed it in the name of the authority of the State, by arguing that too strict a legal control would weaken it. Nehru took part in this debate even though his responsibilities as Prime Minister did not let him much time, because he wanted to support Dr. Ambedkar's amendment²⁶. It was adopted and became article 50 of the Directive Principles. Dr. Ambedkar later defended the setting up of a judicial system of British inspiration²⁷. In his view, separation of powers would not, on any account, weaken the State.

Dr. Ambedkar was, on the contrary, a supporter of a strong Centre, on grounds that too much federalism would hamper the uniform application of the Constitution on the entire territory of India. He argued, for example, that the article abolishing untouchability (see below) would not be evenly enforced if the states enjoyed too large an autonomy²⁸. This centralizing option offended naturally the supporters of Gandhi, who had always appeared very concerned about decentralizing power right up to the village level. In a sense, Ambedkar took, at the Constituent Assembly, a posthumous revenge on the Mahatma since he succeeded in pushing aside the propositions of the most radical Gandhians, or at least weakened their influence regarding Panchayati Raj, Cow protection, etc.

If none of the articles of this text abolished castes, the discriminations based on religion, race, caste, sex and birth-place were declared illicit because of the paramount importance of the right to equality, which was to become Article 15 in the 1950 Constitution. It prohibited also any limitation based on the same criteria concerning access to shops, restaurants, hotels, public places dedicated to leisure activities, wells, streets and other public places benefiting from any financial support by the State. Above all, Article 17 abolished untouchability. Hard labour and any other *begar* (forms of servitude often

hereditary of which the Dalits were the first victims) were declared illegal by the Article 23.

However, Dr. Ambedkar failed to make a strong impact on one of his priority areas that is personal laws a key domain for social reform. During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, he had demonstrated his will to reform Indian society by recommending the adoption of a Civil Code of western inspiration. He had then opposed the delegates who wished to maintain personal laws, especially Muslim representatives who appeared to be very concerned with the fate of the Sharia. As a result, Dr. Ambedkar did not obtain anything more than an article of the Directive Principles stipulating that: "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India".

After the promulgation of the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar militated in favour of the reform of the Hindu personal law. He wanted to implement in a revised manner the Hindu Code Bill that the British had gradually evolved. After more than one century of legislation - ranging from the Abolition of Sati (1829) to the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act (1937) - they had decided in the 1940s to consolidate in one code the reformed Hindu personal law. Among its main provisions were the facts that daughters were given a share of the inheritance along with sons after the demise of parents, the widows were granted absolute estate, monogamy was a rule of law and divorce was allowed under certain circumstances. The Code was introduced in the legislature in April 1947 but the political circumstances - Independence and Partition - did not allow this body to discuss the text. In 1948, Nehru entrusted the drafting of the new code to a sub-committee of the Assembly and nominated Dr. Ambedkar as its head²⁹. The latter got written in it essential principles such as equality between men and women on the question of property and adoption, the granting of legal status to monogamous marriage only, the elimination of 'caste bar in the civil marriage'³⁰ and the necessity of justifying concretely a petition for divorce - a procedure which too often until then was a case of a repudiation of the wife by her husband³¹. This questioning of the customs governing the private life of the Hindus aroused a profound emotion, not only among the traditionalists of the Hindu Mahasabha, but also among leaders of the Congress including Rajendra Prasad, who, after being president of the Constituent Assembly had become the first President of the Indian Republic³². Many other Congress bosses, including the party president, Pattabhi Sita Ramayyan, opposed the bill, lest it could alienate the local notables -

conservative landholders in the largest part - before the general elections of 1951-52.

Jawaharlal Nehru was attached to this code in which he saw, quite as Dr. Ambedkar, one of the corner stones of the modernisation of India. He even announced that his government would resign if this bill was not passed³³. Dr. Ambedkar pressed him to submit it as quickly as possible to the Parliament. The Prime Minister asked him for a little bit of patience and even split the Code into four subsets for defusing the opposition before submitting it to the Assembly on 17 September 1951. The debate which followed confirmed then the hostility of the most traditionalist Congressmen. Finally, on September 25, the portion of the Hindu Code Bill concerning marriage and divorce was deformed by amendments and finally buried without Nehru uttering the least protest. Considering that he had not been supported enough by the Prime Minister, Ambedkar sent him his letter of resignation from his government on 27 September³⁴.

The strategy of collaboration with the rulers had shown its limits, but it had bore fruits. The modernisation of the Indian society that the Constitution was supposed to permit could give hope to Dr. Ambedkar of the advent of a more egalitarian society. But he left the government a bitter man - and he became even more disillusioned with the political system after losing his seat in Parliament in the 1951-52 elections. He then returned to a strategy he had thought about before: conversion out of Hinduism.

5. Conversion, the Ultimate Strategy

The idea of converting to another religion in order to escape from the caste system logically ensued from Ambedkar's analysis of Hinduism, whose originality and strength laid in its demonstration that in this civilisation social hierarchy was consubstantial to religion. To leave it was thus the only means to attain equality.

The first reference made by Ambedkar to a conversion of the Untouchables dates back to 1927. During the Mahad Conference, he had indeed declared: "We want equal rights in society. We will achieve them as far as possible while remaining within the Hindu fold or, if necessary by kicking away this worthless Hindu identity. And if it becomes necessary to give up Hinduism it would no longer be necessary for us to bother about temples ³⁵". On 29 March 1927, during the Jalgaon (Berar) Depressed Classes Conference, which he chaired, a

resolution was voted in this direction. Some days later, a dozen Mahars converted to Islam to the great displeasure of the many orthodox Hindus who acted immediately in a way that the Untouchables of the region had an access to two new water wells³⁶. The fear of *en masse* conversions of the Untouchables seemed to open the possibility of an intense blackmail. Dr. Ambedkar saw however conversion as a strategy only at the beginning of the 1930s.

Dr. Ambedkar announced his decision to leave Hinduism in 1935, during the famous Yeola Conference: "The disabilities we have suffered, and the indignities we had to put up with, were the result of our being the members of the Hindu community. Will it not be better for us to leave that fold and embrace a new faith that would give us equal status, a secure position and rightful treatment? I advise you to sever your connection with Hinduism and to embrace any other religion. But, in doing so, be careful in choosing the new faith and see that equality of treatment, status and opportunities will be guaranteed to you unreservedly. (...) Unfortunately for me I was born a Hindu Untouchable. It was beyond my power to prevent that, but, I declare that it is within my power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating conditions. I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu"³⁷.

After comparing different religions and the willingness of their leaders in India to welcome the Untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar announced his preference for Sikhism in August 1936, because he thought "to have some responsibility as for the future of the Hindu culture and civilisation³⁸" and did not want to break with the majority community. In September 1936, he sent a delegation of 13 of his supporters to Amritsar to study the Sikh religion³⁹. In November, he went to England to sound out the British leaders about the guarantees which they would be ready to grant in the new Constitution to the Untouchables who would have converted to Sikhism⁴⁰. The British authorities replied that these provisions would apply only to the Sikhs of Punjab, which, in his views, was an irrelevant proposition. At the beginning of 1937, negotiations continued between Dr. Ambedkar and the Sikh leaders but meetings became less frequent and by the end of the year Dr. Ambedkar ceased to mention the idea of conversion.

This turnabout cannot be explained only by the response of the British to his demand of extension of the Sikh quota to the converts. Among the other factors accounting for his decision were first the fact that Sikh Dalits had conveyed to Dr. Ambedkar the atrocities they suffered at the hands of the Jats - which undermine all hope of emancipation⁴¹and, second, the opposition to such massive conversion among the Sikh political class: the Akalis - including Master

Tara Singh - feared that the leadership of the community would be taken over or, at least, that their authority would be diluted⁴². The challenge that a mass conversion would have represented for the upper caste Hindus also made Dr. Ambedkar afraid of the retaliatory measures, some of which, as testified by the threats of social boycott, had already materialised in 1935-36.

When Dr. Ambedkar contemplated conversion once again, in the context of the 1950s that we had mentioned above, he chose Buddhism. The familiarity of Ambedkar with Buddhism goes back up to his youth. In 1908 one of his teachers, K.A. (alias Dada) Keluskar, impressed by his aptitude, had offered him on the occasion of his success in the Matriculation examination, the biography of Lord Buddha he had published 10 years before. This text exercised a profound influence on his mind⁴³, even though he never referred to it for years. In 1934, he built at Dadar (Bombay) a house that he named as Rajgriha, the name of the capital of ancient Buddhists kings of Bihar.

In 1935-36, during the first movement in favour of conversion, he did not envisage leaving Hinduism for Buddhism. But his interest in this religion grew in the mid-1940s, as he named his first college Siddharth, after the first name of Buddha⁴⁴. In 1948, he republished *The Essence of Buddhism* whose author, Lakshman Narasu, as he emphasised it in the foreword, fought against castes and against British authoritarianism. The same year, he published *The Untouchables*, a work in which he presented Untouchables as the descendants of the Buddhists who had been marginalised when the rest of society crossed over to Hinduism. At the same time, his activities within the Constituent Assembly prepared the ground for his conversion to Buddhism and the official recognition of this religion. In May 1947, he opposed K.M Munshi's amendment which intended to forbid the conversion of minors, thus risking to hamper all conversion⁴⁵.

He also contributed to get Buddha Jayanti, the anniversary festival of Lord Buddha, put in the calendar of official holidays. Lastly, he was involved in the adoption of the multiple Buddhist symbols with which the Indian Republic endowed itself between 1947 and 1950: the *chakra* (the wheel of Dharma) on the Indian flag, the lions of Ashoka, the Buddhist emperor of ancient India as the national emblem and the inscription of a Buddhist aphorism on the pediment of *Rashtrapati Bhavan*, the residence of the President of the Republic⁴⁶. In 1950, he went to Sri Lanka and began a compilation of Buddha's writings and called upon the Untouchables to convert to Buddhism⁴⁷. He repeated this appeal on his return, in the autumn of the same year⁴⁸ and converted in October

1956, a few weeks before his death on 6 December 1956. Buddhism formed the best possible choice for Dr. Ambedkar because it was an egalitarian religion born in India - not the creation of outsiders⁴⁹. The fact that Buddhism was perceived by him as an alternative to the Hindu social hierarchy is clearly reflected in the speech he made during the ceremony of his conversion in Nagpur on 14 October 1956:

“By discarding my ancient religion which stood for inequality and oppression today I am reborn. I have no faith in the philosophy of incarnation; and it is wrong and mischievous to say that Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu. I am no more a devotee of any Hindu god or goddess. I will not perform Shradha (the Hindu funeral rite). I will strictly follow the eightfold path of Buddha. Buddhism is a true religion and I will lead a life guided by the three principles of knowledge, right path and compassion”⁵⁰.

These words reflected the anti-Hindu social motives of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion. All the more so as they were followed by 22 oaths of which the first six, the eighth and the nineteenth were directly pointed against Hinduism:

Box 1: 22 Oaths Taken by Dr. Ambedkar1. I shall not recognise Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as gods, nor shall I worship them.2. I shall not recognise Ram and Krishna as Gods, nor shall I worship them.3. I shall not recognise Gauri and Ganapati as gods nor shall I worship them.4. I do not believe in the theory of incarnation of god.5. I do not consider Buddha as the incarnation of Vishnu. 6. I shall not perform Shradha [a Hindu rite that one carries out for the safety of the deceased] nor shall I give offerings' to god.7. I shall not do anything which is detrimental to Buddhism.8. I shall not perform any religious rites through the agency of a Brahmin.9. I believe that all human beings are equal.10. I shall endeavour to establish equality.11. I shall follow the eight fold path of the Buddha.12. I observe the ten *Paramitas* (observances) of the Buddha [the virtues in which a follower of the Buddha has to restrain himself].13. I shall be compassionate to all living beings and I shall nurture them with care.14. I shall not steal.15. I shall not lie.16. I shall not commit adultery.17. I shall not drink liquor.18. I shall lead my life striving to cultivate a harmonious blend of the three basic principles of Buddhism [Enlightenment, Precept and Compassion].19. I thereby reject my old religion, Hinduism, which is detrimental to the prosperity of human kind and which discriminates between man and man and which treats me as inferior. 20. I fully believe that Buddhism is Saddhamma.21. By my embracing Buddhism I am being reborn.22. I hereby pledge to conduct myself hereafter in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha⁵¹.

Hundreds of thousands of Dalits – mostly Mahars – got converted along with Dr. Ambedkar on 14 October 1956 in Nagpur. The anti-Hindu dimension of these waves of mass conversions was reconfirmed, subsequently, by the elimination of the Hindu deities from the untouchable localities of Maharashtra, sometimes in a way of provoking the upper castes. The palanquin of the village goddess, generally kept with the Mahars, was returned to the upper caste Hindus. Similarly, the Untouchables rejected more and more obligations and functions attached to their ritual status, which did not go without causing violent tensions⁵².

The impact of conversion to Buddhism varies according to groups (even individuals) and places. In Maharashtra, the conversion of the Mahars had mixed consequences. Their break with Hinduism seemed quite relative and the converts therefore did not get emancipated from caste hierarchy. Their name changed. They now called themselves “bauddha” in Marathi, but this move was only slowly and partially reflected in the emergence of a new collective identity. E. Zelliott highlights that conversion freed the *bauddha* “from the sense of being a polluting person”⁵³, but this outcome remained abstract enough because “the mass of Buddhists in the slums of cities or the landless in the rural area, live in much the same fashion as the desperately poor in any culture”⁵⁴. However, E. Zelliott admits that the glass is half full too:

“What has happened is that even in areas where observers report ‘no change at all’, one finds that Buddhists no longer carry out what they feel are ritually submissive, degrading, or impure duties; that some young people, far more than in other Untouchable and backward communities, become educated; and that Buddhists do not participate in the Hindu public practices so long denied to them, not now out of a prohibition but out of a sense of separateness”⁵⁵.

The outcome is particularly mixed because the conversion of 1956, and those which followed, concerned almost exclusively the Mahars: if, in 1956, 55 per cent of the Untouchables of Maharashtra were converted to Buddhism so that the Buddhists crossed in numbers from 2,500 in 1951 to 2.5 millions in 1961 – almost all the *bauddha* came from the Mahar milieu. The coincidence between this new religious community and the frontiers of caste made it more difficult, for the former, to become emancipated from the status of the latter. Above all, this phenomenon complicated the emergence of an identity common to all the Untouchables, transcending the cleavages of caste because of the reference to Buddhism. The Chambhars not only did not convert to Buddhism but opposed any project aiming to grant the benefits of the politics of positive discrimination

to “bauddhas”. Besides, a number of converted Mahars continued to observe some Hindu customs, particularly when they were too poor to afford a break with their original milieu⁵⁶.

6. Conclusion

Dr Ambedkar has tried all kind of strategies during his life for eradicating caste and, more especially, for emancipating the Dalit from this oppressive social systems. In the political domain, he promoted separate electorate, party building and public policies like reservations - and did not hesitate to collaborate with the ruler of the time - be it the British or the Congress for having things done. In the social domain, he militated in favour of reforms at the grass root level - education being his first goal - and reforms by the state - as evident from the Hindu code bill. None of his strategies really succeeded during his life time: he could not have separate electorate introduced, he could not build a Dalit or a labour party, he could not have the Hindu code bill passed - and he became a bitter man.

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 substantial 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 largest democracy.

Endnotes

- 1 B.R. Ambedkar, "Castes in India. Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development", *Indian Antiquary*, May 1917, vol. 61, reproduced in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, vol. 1, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, 1979.
- 2 B.R. Ambedkar, "Untouchables or The Children of India's Ghetto" in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, vol.5, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, 1989, p. 101-102.
- 3 B.R. Ambedkar, "The Untouchables. Who were they and why they became Untouchables?" in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, vol. 7, pp. 290-303.
- 4 The idea that the Untouchables were the first inhabitants of India had been already spread by Gopalnak Vitthalnak Walangkar, a former Mahar soldier who had been influenced by Jotirao Phule and who had founded, in 1886, the first Mahar association, notably to get the British to make a wider place for this caste in the army.
- 5 B.R. Ambedkar, "The Untouchables", art. cit. , p. 317.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.134.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 252.
- 8 This ambivalence explains that according to Keer, he considered both options (Dr Ambedkar, op. cit.,p. 40) whereas for E. Zelliott, he prioritised "a common electorate with reserved seats" ("Learning the Use of Political means", art. cit. p. 41).
- 9 This attitude is all the more surprising, as at the same moment, 16 out of 18 Dalits organizations consulted by the Simon Commission in Bombay Presidency had clearly expressed themselves in favour of separate electorates. For instance, the common testimony of the Depressed India Association and the Servants of Somavamshiya Society before the Simon Commission stipulated: "experience has shown during the last two decades that it has served as a powerful lever to raise our Muslim brethren who in consequence are making rapid headway and coming into line with more advanced sections." (The Servants of Somavamshiya Society, Bombay, July 9, 1928, p. 2 in Private Papers of Ambedkar, reels 1/2).

- 10 "Evidence of Dr Ambedkar before the Indian Statutory Commission one 23rd October 1928", *ibid.* p.465. Ambedkar justified this demand of universal suffrage for the underprivileged persons (who never could reach tax quota for voting rights) because they were the first to need it to protect themselves from the dominant castes (" Report on the Constitution" *op. cit.*, p. 338). He added that in spite of their illiteracy, they are rather intelligent for it (" Evidence of Dr Ambedkar" *op. cit.*, p. 473).
- 11 For the complete text of the pact, see R. Kumar, "Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Poona Pact, 1932", *op. cit.*, p. 153-155.
- 12 J. Gokhale, *From Concessions to Confrontation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.
- 13 "The political demands of the Scheduled Castes - Resolutions passed by the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Caste Federation", App. XI to B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables*, *op. cit.*, p. 346-347.
- 14 Resolution 8 considered that "in the absence of an alternative system, the Parliamentary system of Government may have to be accepted" but the SCF demanded that Ministers representing the minorities should be inducted in the government after being designated by the minority communities themselves. Resolution 11 demanded that the Constitution should establish a framework "for the transplantation of the Scheduled Castes from their present habitations and form separate Scheduled Castes villages away and independent of Hindu villages " - a formula already used by Ambedkar in 1942. (*Ibid.*, p. 353).
- 15 Cited in B. Nicholas, "Below the Bottom Rung' : a British Estimate of Dr. Ambedkar, 1944", in K.C. Yadav, *From Periphery to Centre Stage*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- 16 The SCF had gained more votes than Congress in the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay and in the Central Provinces, during the primaries where only Untouchables voted. The situation in the United Provinces was even more revealing of the distortions inherent in the electoral system. In these provinces 20 seats were reserved for the Scheduled Castes, including four urban seats. The SCF decided to contest only these four seats. In the primaries, the party could get elected nine candidates as against four on the Congress side - but in the second round, the latter won all the seats thanks to the support of non Dalit voters. The most dramatic result took place in Agra where the four SCF candidates had polled 46.39% of the valid votes as against to 27.1% to the four Congress candidates

16. This state of things could only strengthen Ambedkar's stand in favour of a separate electorate for the Untouchables.
- 17 S. Bandyopadhyay, 'Transfer of power and the crisis of Dalit politics in India, 1945-47', *Modern Indian Studies*, 34(4), 2000, p. 913.
- 18 Lelah Dushkin, " Special Treatment Policy " in *The Economic Weekly*, vol. XIII, n ° 43-46 and E. Zelliott, *Dr Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 265. In 1946, the quota of 8.33 % was increased to 12.5 % so as to be proportional to the population of the Untouchables.
- 19 A veteran of the Constituent Assembly, R.M. Nalawade, emphasized that Nehru and Patel were hardly favorable to the allocation of a ministerial office to Ambedkar but that Gandhi imposed his name so as to associate him with the work of national construction (S.M. Gaikwad, "Ambedkar and Indian nationalism ", *Economic and Political Weekly*, in March 7, 1998, p. 518). This hypothesis is accredited by a conversation of 1946 between the Mahatma and two Protestants - Muriel Lester, an English Quaker, and Miss Descher, an American missionary - during which he expressed the wish that Ambedkar should become a part of the first government of independent India. (M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology*, op. cit., p. 18).
- 20 Quoted in G. Austin, *The Indian Constitution*, op. cit., p. 19-20.
- 21 CAD, p. 415.
- 22 Ambedkar was a member of the two sub-committees of the Advisory Committee (the one on fundamental rights, the other one on rights of the minorities) and of the Union of the Powers Committee.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 494
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 494.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 582.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 589.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 952.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 1139.
- 29 CAD, vol. 5, Speech of April 9, 1948.
- 30 M. Yasin, 'Hindu Code Bill and Dr Ambedkar', *Towards Secular India*, 2(1), Jan-March 1996, p. 24.

- 31 Reba Som, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu Code: A victory of Symbol over Substance?" *Modern Asian Studies* 28 (1) , 1994, p. 171.
- 32 Quoted in D. Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel Patel Correspondence, 1945-1950*, Ahmedabad, Navajiyani, 1947, vol. VI, p. 40a.
- 33 D. Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 426.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 435-436.
- 35 Quoted in M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology*, op. cit., p. 91.
- 36 D. Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 130-132.
- 37 Bhagawan Das, *Thus spoke Ambedkar*, vol. 4, op.cit., p. 108.
- 38 Bhagwan Das, *Thus spoke Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 307.
- 39 Exceeding their mission, they were converted before returning to Bombay where Ambedkar received them without much warmth (D. Keer, *Dr Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 284).
- 40 E. Zelliot, *Dr Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 225.
- 41 D.C. Ahir, *Dr Ambedkar and Punjab*, Delhi, B.R. Publishing, 1992, 12).
- 42 H. K. Puri, 'Scheduled Castes in Sikh Community', *EPW*, 28 June 2003, p. 2698.
- 43 On May 24, 1956, during a meeting organized in honour of the anniversary of Buddha, he declared: "At the very young age of fourteen, Mr. Dadasaheb Keluskar had in a meeting presented me with a biography of Bhagwan Buddha. Since then my mind has always been under the influence of Buddhism". (Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, " Buddhism and Hinduism are not the same thing", a talk given on May 24, 1956 (Marathi), *Private Papers of Ambedkar*)
- 44 In 1951, he named the second college he created the "Milind College", after the name of the Greek king who had converted to Buddhism.
- 45 *Constituent Assembly Debates*, New Delhi, Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1989, vol. 3, p. 501.
- 46 D. Keer, *Dr Ambedkar*, op. cit., p. 481.

These symbols received the general approval of secular personalities such as Nehru because they allowed India to root the new Republic in a nationalist past, being quite neutral on a religious plane, as distinct from

the most numerous and politically aware communities - the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

- 47 Interviews of May 5, 1950 and of May 25, 1950 in D. Keer, Dr Ambedkar, op. cit., p. 421.
- 48 Ibid., p. 423-424.
- 49 For example, Hinduism took over Lord Buddha by making him Vishnu's seventh incarnation.
- 50 D. Keer, Dr Ambedkar, op. cit.,p. 500.
- 51 Cited in G.S. Lokhande, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1977 [1982], pp. 255-6.
- 52 E. Zelliot, From Untouchable to Dalit, op. cit.,p.138-9
- 53 E. Zelliot, From Untouchable to Dalit, op. cit., p. 219.
- 54 Ibid., p. 220.
- 55 Ibid.,
- 56 Ibid., p. 195.

References

- Ahir, D.C. (1992), "Dr Ambedkar and Punjab", New Delhi: B.R. Publishing.
- Ambedkar, B.R. (1917), "Castes in India. Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development", *Indian Antiquary*, May 1917, vol. 61, reproduced in *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, 1979
- - -, "Untouchables or The Children of India's Ghetto" in *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol.5, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, 1989, p. 101-102.
- - -, "The Untouchables. Who were they and why they became Untouchables?" in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 7, pp. 290-303.
- - -, "Untouchables or The Children of India's Ghetto" in *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol.5, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, 1989, p. 101-102.
- - -, "The Untouchables. Who were they and why they became Untouchables?" in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 7, p. 317.
- Bandyopadhyay, S. (2000), "Transfer of Power and the Crisis of Dalit Politics in India, 1945-47", *Modern Indian Studies*, 34(4), 2000, p. 913.
- Das, B. (1969), "Thus spoke Ambedkar", Jalandhar: Bheem Patrika Publications, vol. 4, p. 108, .
- Das, D. (ed.) (1973), "Sardar Patel Patel Correspondence, 1945-1950", Ahmedabad, Navajivan, 1947, vol. VI, p. 40a.
- Dushkin, L. (1961), "Special Treatment Policy " in *The Economic Weekly*, vol. XIII, No. 43-46 and E. Zelliot, *Dr Ambedkar*, p. 265.
- Gaikwad, S.M. (1998), "Ambedkar and Indian nationalism", *The Economic and Political Weekly*, 7 March 1998, p. 518).
- G. Austin, (1999), "Working A Democratic Constitution: The Indian Experience", Oxford University Press, pp. 19-20.
- Gokhale, J. (1993), "From Concessions to Confrontation: The Politics of an Indian Untouchable Community", South Asia Books, Columbia, US, pp. 132-133.
- Gore, M.S. (1993), "The Social Content of an Ideology: Ambedkar's Political and Social Thought", New Delhi: Sage Publications p. 91.

- Keer, D. (1971), "*Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*", Bombay, Popular Prakashan, p. 426.
- Kumar, R. (1985), "Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Poona Pact, 1932", Occasional Paper on Society and History, No. 20, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi pp. 153-155.
- Lokhande, G.S. (1977), "*Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*", New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, pp. 255-6.
- Nicholas, B. (2000), "Below the Bottom Rung: a British Estimate of Dr. Ambedkar, 1944", in K.C. Yadav, *From Periphery to Centre Stage*, p. 47.
- Puri, H. K. (2003), "Scheduled Castes in Sikh Community", *the Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 June 2003, p. 2698.
- Som, R. (1994), "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu Code: A Victory of Symbol over Substance?" *Modern Asian Studies* 28 (1), p. 171.
- Yasin, M. (1996) "Hindu Code Bill and Dr Ambedkar" in *Towards Secular India*, 2(1), Jan-March 1996, p. 24.
- Zelliot, E. (2004), "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Untouchable Movement", New Delhi: Blumoon Books p. 225.

Recent IIDS Publications

Books

- In Search of Inclusive Policy - Addressing Graded Inequality by Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender Kumar, Rawat Publications, 2008
- B. R. Ambedkar - Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies by Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender Kumar (Eds.), Oxford University Press, 2008
- Bhartiya Dalit Sahitya Ka Vidrohi Swar by Vimal Thorat and Suraj Badiya, Rawat Publications, 2008
- Social Justice Philanthropy by Sukhadeo Thorat, Gail Omvedt and Martin Macwan, Rawat Publications, 2009
- Dalit in India - Search for a Common Destiny by Sukhadeo Thorat, Sage Publications, 2009
- Naye Shitij Ki Aur (Hindi Poems) by Jai Prakash Leelwan, IIDS and Anamika Publications 2009
- Samaye Ki Aadamkhor Dhun (Hindi Poems) by Jai Prakash Leelwan, IIDS and Anamika Publications 2009

Forthcoming Books

- Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination and Social Exclusion in Modern India, Sukhadeo Thorat and Katherine S. Newman, (Eds.), New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2009
- Dalit Human Development Report by Sukhadeo Thorat and Martin Macwan
- Dalit Art and Imagery by Gary Michael Tartakov
- Hindi Dalit Sahitya Ka Vidrodhi Swar Ed. by Vimal Thorat and Suraj Badiya, IIDS and Anamika Publications
- Ambedkar on Caste by Sukhadeo Thorat and Surinder S Jodhka

Working Papers

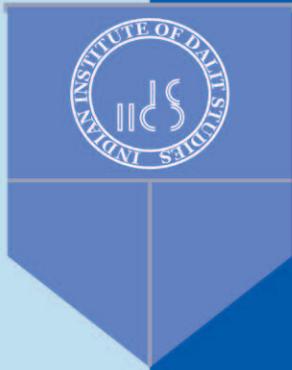
- Observations on the Dalits in Indian Villages, 1963 - 2004 by Gilbert Etienne, Volume II Number 01, 2007
- Exclusion and Discrimination - Civil Rights Violations and Atrocities in Maharashtra by Sukhadeo Thorat and Prashant Negi, Volume II Number 02, 2007
- Dalit Empowerment and Vocational Education - An Impact Study by Michael Kropac, Volume II Number 03, 2007
- Reservation in Employment, Education and Legislature-Status and Emerging Issues by Sukhadeo Thorat and Chittaranjan Senapati, Volume II Number 05, 2007

Volume III

- Urban Labour Market Discrimination by Sukhadeo Thorat, Paul Attewell and Firdaus F. Rizvi Volume III Number 01, 2009
- Will India's Attainment of MDGs be an Inclusive Process by Purnamita Das Gupta and Sukhadeo Thorat, Volume III Number 02, 2009
- In the Name of Globalization: Meritocracy, Productivity and the Hidden language of Caste by Surinder S. Jodhka and Katherine S. Newman, Volume III Number 03, 2009
- Dr. Ambedkar's Strategies Against Untouchability and the Caste System by Christophe Jaffrelot, Volume III Number 04, 2009
- Dalit Children in Rural India: Issues Related to Exclusion and Deprivation by Nidhi Sadana, Volume III Number 05, 2009
- Caste Discrimination and Social Justice in Sri Lanka: An Overview by Kalinga Tudor Silva, P.P. Sivapragasam and Paramsothy Thanges, Volume III Number 06, 2009
- Housing Situation of Social Groups and Poor Households: A Study of Selected Districts of Maharashtra and Orissa with a focus on Indira Awas Yojna by Firdaus Fatima Rizvi, Volume III Number 07, 2009
- Impact Assessment of IKP Land Purchase Scheme by Ananth S. Panth and M. Mahamallik, Volume III Number 08, 2009

The views expressed in this working paper are those of the author (s) and not necessarily endorsed by IIDS or any representative of IIDS or co-sponsoring or supporting organizations.

Copyright © 2009 Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. All rights reserved. Sections of this working paper may be reproduced without the express permission of, but with acknowledgment to, the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies.



Office for Publications and Dissemination

Indian Institute of Dalit Studies
DII/1, Road No. -4, Andrews Ganj,
New Delhi, India, 110 049
TEL: +91-11- 26252082
FAX: +91-11- 26251808
EMAIL: publications@dalitstudies.org.in
WEBSITE: www.dalitstudies.org.in

**Designing Credit
Narendra Kumar**