

## **Subaltern Consciousness: An Inevitability** *(With a Special Reference to Dalit cause in India)*

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### **Abstract**

The social order is possible through social consciousness, which is the upshot of the self-consciousness generated in every individual. The dominating class ideology influences the formation of social order and excludes the people's notions. By the use of religion and its means, the dominant class or caste degrades the consciousness of the working people. In India the traditional intellectuals used to generate ideology conducive to maintain caste system to divide the working classes into compartmentalized divisions and subdivisions. Thus, they were able to sustain the dominance over others. The social order based on caste system denied the fundamentals of progress to the working-class and relegated them to the backyards of common social stream. The paper reflects upon the thoughts of intellectuals like Ayyankali, Narayana guru, and such others who emerged from the marginalized working class or from the degraded castes. They paved the way to recapture the subaltern self-consciousness erased in the march of caste hegemony. The postmodern developments invite the re-reading of the texts in order to maintain social harmony and seek justice.

**Keywords:** Consciousness, Caste system. Antonio Gramsci, Untouchability, Hegemony.

### **1. Preface**

The social order of any society should be built up on the social consciousness; as it is well-established the dominant ideology determines the social consciousness of the society. The social consciousness of the society, by its very nature, excludes the real agonies of the people, and in the words of G.W.F. Hegel it's the void which Christ had to address. There are many theories about consciousness in the history of philosophy. Self-consciousness is being

conscious of something correlated to one's life; in this sense, consciousness means knowing oneself or understanding the surrounding of our own. Descartes finds certainty in the intuition that when he/she is thinking, he/she must exist. In the *Discourse on method*, Descartes expresses this intuition by the dictum *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). The cogito is a logically self-evident truth that also gives intuitively certain knowledge of the existence of particular things. That is, one's self. Levinas suggests, following Husserl, that the central feature of consciousness is 'intentionality'; the idea of "consciousness of its object."<sup>1</sup> Consciousness always involves an object of consciousness. Perhaps subjects learn about something when they direct their attention to it, making it an object of consciousness. For Habermas "self-knowledge must be oriented to the very specific scope of developing autonomy of judgment and freedom of action-the two pillars of the political project of modernity canonized by Kant."<sup>2</sup> Everyone has consciousness of what he possesses, but until they create a general code of conduct it is impossible to create a general will on the problems they face. So the self-awareness and consciousness on the part of the degraded and marginalized societies become essential in order to resist the situations which produce the degradation they suffer from.

By the use of philosophical and religious texts, rituals, festivals and art forms, the dominant group suppresses other cultural and religious expressions and parallel objects that belong to the communities other than the dominant group. Actually, the folklores of the world and especially those of India were either distorted or marginalized to serve the interests of the dominant group. Gradually the subaltern notion or consciousness of the working people who used to or were forced to create all beauties of the world get degraded or marginalized. The primary dominating sectors of the society like governance and education facilitated the upper class to hold and practice their social order in every sphere of life. As a result, a large number of people were forced to remain in the backyards of the socio-economic and political progress. The dominant group enjoys superior status in the realm of culture and politics. This hierarchy is clearly visible in the Indian social order where "subaltern classes"<sup>3</sup> remain as a mere means to attain the wealth and power for the leisure/superior class.

Indian social order exhibits uniqueness in its nature as the system has been constructed on the so-called Hindu religious aspects which preach monolith unity at the cost of various social and cultural beings/groups. Hindu castes have traditionally formed a hierarchy with the Brahmin at its top and the lowest untouchable at its bottom, which cleverly restricts/excludes a large number of people from the main streams of social life. The upper class/caste society created an ideology conducive to divide the people into castes and sub castes on the bases of their birth.

The hierarchy based on birth is a social concept that people used to take it for granted as reality without questioning its legitimacy. The Caste system is so closed one that the interaction among these castes are restricted in the name of purity by the upper class. The upper class/caste used the 'caste ideology' as a means to secure their political and economic power and sustain their domination in the society. The compartmentalization of caste is so perfect that the populace from the lower strata/caste failed to share their feelings, etiquettes rationale etc., and thus unable to generate and share protests against the ruling social order.

The intellectuals, as defined by the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, play an important role in the creation and maintenances of social orders. In the Indian sphere, the Brahmins play the role of traditional intellectuals of society, and they create the world based on their own ideas, where they placed man in different caste/social categories. The 'mental servitude', accordingly is made possible by the ideology of the dominant group which acts as hegemonic power in the society. Here, the 'hegemonic power' means the ruling ideology which knowingly or unknowingly subjugates all other groups and their visions.

The hegemonic ideology keeps up a social order based on purity of the upper castes. Gramsci defined hegemony as the consent produced in any society by the organization of civil society, contrary to the State with its apparatus of coercive power. The hegemony within civil society supports the leading group's authority over political society. This is supported by the juridical apparatus of the political society that protect the dominant group's hegemony within civil society through coercive measures. In this sense, the integral state comprises not only

political society and civil society, but it also includes dictatorship and hegemony. In basic terms, hegemony is protected by coercion and coercion is protected by hegemony, and these together protect the dominant group's political and economic positions.

In Indian society, the upper class acquired hegemony largely through the religious texts and practices. By using the power of literature and other academic exercises, the Brahmins ensure the hegemonic reign in favour of them. The socio-political structure of Hinduism shows up the people's gradation of job and their statuses in the society; "This division dated from the ancient north Indian society of about 1,200 to 1,000 B.C. In that society as in later periods, Brahmins were the priests, law givers, scholars, and literati; *Kshatriyas* the rulers and warriors; *Vaishyas* the traders, peasants, and artisans; *Sudras* the servile manual workers; and Chandalas, later called *Panchamas*, members of the population who lived outside the villages and had been conquered, or not yet conquered, by the invading Aryans"<sup>4</sup>

The Hindu ideology deliberately meant to support the reign of Brahmins and excluded the vast aborigines of India. In turn, this created a 'subaltern' structure normally called as untouchables and the vast majority of the Untouchables had been born, lived, and died in the midst of discrimination. Untouchables suffer innumerable humiliations in daily life. They are not allowed to attend school, no access to health care, prohibitions to use the public road and market place and even their shadows were considered as impure and forced to settle down in the nearby fields and in the marsh lands. Their concepts and knowledge about nature, methods of survival, cultivation, their anger against the social order and such expressions were part of their rituals and folklore ballads.

## 2. The Hegemony of the Brahmins

The Indian social order has been deeply influenced by the Hindu religion and the religious texts propagating the caste system and the superiority of the Brahmins. The Brahmin intellectuals are empowered to perform religious rights and also to determine the way of public life. The male members of the Brahmin upper castes rule over the public, over women, untouchables, and all other working people of the society. Since the (religious) texts and their readings produced the consciousness to subjugate the subaltern, an alternate re-reading of the same texts and its resulting counter consciousness are inevitable to redeem the power and status of the lower castes. As it is evident, the thoughts of the lower caste and other marginalized represent the real life of the nation. The unity and monolithic order actually supported the ruling class. The principle of ultimate reality, that is, Brahman (absolute) is somehow equivalent to the words uttered by the priest class. On the contrary, various consciousnesses as Karl Manheim conceived used to exist in any plural society.

As compared to other nations, the meaning and use of public and public sphere is diverse in Indian circumstance where the public and public sphere is limited to some castes or groups. Generally, public sphere works as a mode helpful to create new means and meaning of knowledge among the mass. As for Habermas, the public sphere stands for; "By the 'public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed....Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest.... The expression 'public opinion' refers to the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally practises... *vis-à-vis* a ruling class"<sup>5</sup>. In the Indian context, open relations and public conversation are not possible because of the caste division which prevent large number of people from the public institutions. So the public sphere which appeared in Europe during the period of renaissance could not become a reality in India even in the 19th century because of the caste system. The British rule, their legislations, early industrialization and such social movements helped to invent a new space in Indian society despite the colonial aggregations. It was in these contexts Jotirao Phule and Dr. Ambedkar started to invent their own history, philosophy and culture.

In India many factors associated with caste ideology restricted social mobility and public sphere; untouchability, prohibition of public pass, the distances to be maintained to the different castes, superstitions regarding crossing River etc., actually prevented the formation of the public sphere as it happened in the west. In these circumstances, the renaissance movements in India had its own features. One important feature of Indian renaissance was its own limitation due to the impossibility of crisscrossing cultures. So the Indian renaissance, which could not develop further because of the caste ideology imposed upon the society, should find ways of expressions by imbibing the spirit of postcolonial readings. Here, the attempt is to bring out the possibility of inventing and nourishing self-consciousness of the marginalized to carry forward the arrested progress of early renaissance.

The anthropologist M. N. Srinivas pointed out the term, “*Samkritization* to describe the process in which locally organizable caste groups—especially low- and middle-ranking groups—would mimic the actions of upper castes in order to achieve a better fit with high-caste purity and order standards and so raise their standing in local caste rankings.”<sup>6</sup> This borrowing leads to subordination to the dominant groups; Philosophy is also part of politics. So this submissiveness in the realm of philosophy also leads to the political submissiveness of the group.

The Indian social reforms movements and political parties, especially the Indian National Congress had clearly excluded the “dangerous thoughts”<sup>7</sup> of India. The Indian reformers mainly focused on eradicating the problems such as the restriction of sea voyage, women education and widow remarriage, etc., and remained in silence about restructuring the Vedic *Varnashrama* (socio-political dissection of Hinduism) based society into real. In India, the ‘dangerous thought’ is eradication of closed caste system and implementing a social order based on equality and freedom. Gandhi expressed his firm belief in *Varnashrama dharma* which denotes his interest of caste system, and he argued that *Varnashrama dharma* is the soul of Hinduism. He states: “Varnashramais in my opinion inherent in human nature, and Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science it attaches to birth. A man cannot change “Varna” by choice. Not to abide by Varna is to disregard the law of heredity.”<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi appealed to the non-Brahmins that in their ire against Brahmins, non-Brahmins should not wreck the system of *Varnashrama dharma*. “Gandhi defended social divisions in the sense of *Varnashrama dharma*, that is, in the sense that there were certain social functions or duties which were related to one’s order or status in society. So in the first instance he approved of a society with functional distinctions based on the different abilities of different members as a way of preserving the stability of social life.”<sup>9</sup> He considered that *Varnashrama dharma* is actually protecting the untouchables and other depressed ones who are embodied with limitations. *Varnashrama dharma* indirectly proposes securing the jobs and rewards according to the inert ability which is inherent or bestowed upon by one’s birth in a particular caste. So, it is their prime duty to live with their limitations. In India, the ‘dangerous thought’, the move against the closed caste system by accepting *Varnashrama dharma*, Gandhi stood with the *Brahmanical* notion of caste system and its evil aspects like statuses and opportunities of better life acquiring only thorough birth.

Even the Indian National Congress leaders remain in silence about social reform based on the ‘dangerous thought’ of caste annihilation. Most of them stood to attain political power and not for any real social reform. Dadabhai Naoroji in his 1886 Calcutta congress referred that; “we are met together as apolitical body to represent to our rulers our political aspirations, not to discuss social reforms”<sup>9</sup>. W.C Bannerjee also shared the thoughts on Congress’ attitudes towards the social reforms in 1892 that, “others more timid still would allow social problems to solve themselves ... the congress commenced and has since remained and will, I sincerely trust, always remain as a purely political organization devoting its energies to political matters and political matters only”<sup>10</sup>. Ambedkar measured that congress doesn’t have interest in the matters related to the uplift of the depressed class. The Congresses’ resolutions of 1917 at Bardoli included matters related to depressed ones but it remained in documents just like the Karachi resolutions of the 1930s.

According to the Gramscian concept of intellectuals, the Indian social reformers fit in to the organic class, which rose in accordance with the colonial situation intended to utilise the

opportunities ideal to own caste. The reform they articulated within high caste Hindu society problematized prohibition of sea voyage, child marriage, women education, widowhood, etc, the social practice within the higher castes.

Despite the Brahmin dominations in every aspect of daily life, the emergence of the intellectuals from untouchables could not be altogether prevented. In different parts of India they began to acquire new status in society because they are different from the traditional upper caste or are organic intellectuals. They proposed and acted for restructuring the Indian Brahmanical ideology into humanistic one and wanted to demolish the unethical norms and gradation of the people. Intellectuals like Kisanfauji Bascode, Ayyankali, Narayana guru, Ambedkar, and others gave emphasis to the humanistic modern social order which would guarantee natural rights to all.

### 3. Pre- Ambedkar Period of Renaissance

The pre-Ambedkar Dalit leader Kisanfauji Bascode acted as an educator among Mahar community and worked among the people of textile industry. He wanted to demolish the influence of Brahmin philosophy of caste and its influences. The Brahmanical philosophy is considered as an alien ideology which imposed upon the indigenous groups through invasion. He also advocated the original inhabitant's movements and education among the depressed ones. He declared that, "The Aryans-your ancestors-conquered us and gave us unbearable harassment. At that time we were your conquest, you treated us even worse than slaves and subjected us to any torture you wanted. But now we are no longer your subjects, we have no service relationship with you, we are not your slaves or serfs.... We have had enough of the harassment and torture of the Hindus."<sup>11</sup> By questioning the Brahmanical ideology he turns against the oppressed social order and tried to root out the caste discrimination.

Jotirao Phule, eminent reformer in Maharashtra upheld the thoughts of natural rights and formed his acts in accordance with the concept of equality. He revolted against the injustice imparted by the caste system under which millions of people had suffered for centuries. He courageously upheld the cause of the untouchables and took up the cudgels for the poorer peasants. He gave priority to educate women and the lower castes. He attacked the Brahmanism and its norms which deny those common rights of mankind like education, public activity, etc to women and other caste in the name of birth and dharma. He states: "Drawing his inspiration from orientalist canon, Phule presented the Aryan invasion as the destruction of a pure indigenous civilization of which the lower castes were the heirs. For Phule the invaders were Brahmins who subjugate the autochthons, reducing them to the rank of lower castes."<sup>12</sup> Jotirao Phule refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct opposed idolatry and denounced the *chaturvarnya*. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Jotirao Phule emphasized the requirements of knowledge and its possibilities and advocated untouchables that acquiring of the knowledge is the only way out for untouchables from social discrimination and regain their consciousness and statuses in the society. He encouraged the missionary education where untouchables got admission as students. In order to educate the depressed caste, he opened schools for girls with untouchable students and posted his wife Savitribai as teacher, in August 1848. Jotirao Phule opened two more girl's schools during 1851-52. He also opened female school and indigenous mixed school for the lower classes, especially for the Mahars and Mangs. To him, the Brahmins had denied the Shudras any access to education, and had also forced them into 'mental slavery' through the pernicious fiction of the caste-system. Jotirao Phule gave protection to pregnant widows and extended care to their children and fought against the inhuman activities like *sati* and stood for widow remarriage of child widows. In 1868, Jotirao Phule decided to give access to the untouchables to a small bathing tank. It was a great move to demolish the caste discrimination.

On 24, September 1873 Jotirao Phule formed the '*Satya Shodhak Samaj*' (Society of Seekers of Truth). The main objectives of the organisation were to liberate the Shudras and Ati-

Shudras and to prevent their exploitation by the Brahmins. All the members of the *Satya Shodhak Samaj* were expected to treat all human beings as children of God and worship the Creator without the help of any mediator. He requested the depressed castes to come out from the Brahmanical order and generate their own rituals and excluded the Brahmin priests from their ceremonies. He stood for the demolition of the Brahmanic domain and to replace it by the indigenous culture of humanism.

Ayyankali, the revolutionary social reformer, belongs to the agro slave community of Kerala, in South India. He devoted his thoughts and actions to fight against the social inequality and the caste discrimination. He developed his thoughts on the basis of natural rights, the philosophy which emphasis on equality of being to possess and enjoy the necessary aspects of worthy life. He fought against the inhuman caste discriminations faced in the name of purity of upper caste people. Ayyankali gave importance to the acquiring of the educational, economic and political rights for Dalits. Like other subaltern movements, his thoughts and acts exhibited the characteristic of spontaneity, and consequentially it led to mass movement. His earlier agitations were based on the physical strength since they were deprived of other possibilities and it was the only thing accessible to the hard-working labours at that time.

Even under the British rule, the Dalits failed to enter in to the realm of knowledge. The Hindu upper caste people always tried to keep the Dalits away and denied education to them. They recognized that the Dalit literacy will root out their strongholds of society and demolish their supremacy over others in the name of purity and birth.

In 1893, Ayyankali violated the practicing social code by wearing pricey clothes and riding the bullock cart in Public Street which was considered as the privilege of the upper castes. "The act of a pulayar buying a *villuvandi* was in itself a violation of the social code of his time. One morning he set off from his home in villuvandi."<sup>13</sup> Ayyankali emphatically asked the Dalits to achieve their place in the public sphere through the proper dress codes and hygienic cultural aspects. He ruled out the existing norms which graded human beings into class and restricted them within the pre-proposed circle of life codes.

Ayyankali formed the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana sangam* in 1907. The aim of the organization was to unify all Dalits and produce economic prosperity among them. Under his leadership Dalits asked for educational rights for their children. The upper caste school management refused to implement the government order insuring the opportunity of education to Dalit children. He decided to use his castes labourer power as means to attain the education right. In 1907 he declared the strike which became first organised agricultural strike in the history of Kerala. As per his call, the *Pulayas*, the paddy field labourers gave up their woks and registered their protest. The boycotting of agricultural field generated starvation and economic crises over the upper caste Hindus. Ayyankali succeeded to build a pact between the Fishermen and saved the Dalits from starvation. Thus, he was able to maintain the strike in its full potential. The strike ended with an agreement between Dalits, landlords and government. It promised the increase in wages and assured the educational rights to the Dalits.

The first school in the history of Dalit was established in Venganoor, which was destroyed many times by the upper caste Hindus. As the founder of early Dalit movement in Kerala, the main ambition of Ayyankali was to witness 'twenty graduates' from the untouchables. These ambitions of Ayyankali point towards the necessity of new awareness and consciousness among the marginalized.

Sree Narayana Guru emerged from the Ezhavas in Kerala. Ezhavas were considered untouchables in the early society of Kerala; they were not allowed to attend schools with high-caste children. They were also not allowed to take jobs in the government sector, denied entry to Hindu temples. Through the Aruvippuram pratishtha (consecration of the idol into Siva) of 1888 he ruled out the brahmanical ideology of worship and its ritual practices of the social sphere. He considered the temple as an ideal space for assembling people belonging to all castes and communities. Later Guru transformed the agitation to improve status of the Ezhavas in the social sphere. He discards the practicing of animal sacrifices and obligations towards the norms of superstitious power and stress the superiority of prayers and dignified norms of worships.

E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, social reformer from Tamil Nadu, stood against the illogical and irrational aspects of Hindu religion. He advocates rationalist way of thoughts and acts in every sphere to try to demolish the unhumanistic philosophy of the Hindu religion and its dominance over the mass. He took interest in the poor and the untouchables and critically examined the religious texts to find out the causes of sufferings of the untouchables. To fully understand Hinduism and its norms, he travelled to the sacred places of Hinduism.

E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker realised the unworthy characteristic of saints and priests. He decided to fight against the irrational Brahminism and its immoral aspects and work for the untouchables and stand against the problems like property and untouchability. He took part in the National movement through Indian National Congress and became the president of Tamil Congress Committee. He took part in the *Vaikom Satyagraha* held in Kerala for attaining the right to walk on roads and temple roads which is prohibited to the untouchables. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker condemned the *Varnashrama dharma*, the ideal aspect of caste system, as it means the relegation of all the non-Brahmin caste Hindus to the position of *Shudras* in the Tamil region. He was disappointed with Gandhi's notion on *Varnashrama dharma* and the Congress Brahmin member's attitudes towards depressed castes. His resolution for equal educational opportunities and social enhancement for the depressed communities was defeated by the Brahmin majority in the Congress committee. He considered that Brahmins were in the national organisation only to further their own political interests rather than to strive for the independence of the country. He expressed that true freedom for India would be achieved only with the destruction of the Indian National Congress, Hinduism and Brahmanism. He quit from Congress on his disagreements on the notion of the uplift of the untouchables and their social statuses. In 1925, he formed the *Suyamariyatiyakkam* or self-respect movement that aims to promote the rational thinking, self-respect and self-confidence of the untouchables and enable them to enjoy the social and political freedom. He replaced the religion with reason and tried to uplift the Dravidian dignity. Self-Respect Movement had targeted the Brahmanical tradition and its symbol came under attack. On a number of occasions, the *Manusmṛti* was burned. Certain characters in the Puranas were changed. For instance, Ravana in the Valmiki's Ramayana was held up as the hero and be an ideal of good Dravidian conduct. Rama was seen as a wicked and unjust Aryan.

E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker recognised the need of political power for implementing the notions. So, he joined with the *Janata* party. In 1944, he restructured *Janata* party into *Dravidakazhagam* with the slogan for separate *dravidanadu* (*sovereign state for Dravidians*). His movements generated new awakening for the untouchables and others and it gained large number followers in every sphere. The party's stand is to renovate the Dravidian culture and its values, forms of life. It pushed out the Brahmins from political sphere and Dravidians captured the commanding heights of politics.

Through these social movements, untouchables could find a place in the realm of educational sector and were able to generate and develop their own epistemological notions and social consciousness. The untouchables got rid of the adaptation of alien thoughts of Vedic culture and opened up new opportunities to attain and absorb the new modes of knowledge from others. All of these social fighters stood and fought for the rights of their people, emerging from the castes and class which are considered as inferior by Indian upper caste Hindus and governments.

Ambedkar, the social reformer, arose from the Mahar community one of the dominant depressed castes in Maharashtra. He was the upshot of Colonialisation and its education system, which liberated some untouchables from the yoke of slavery to the real life, which was prohibited to them for years. Even the educational and economic achievements did not change his status in society, which was determined only through *varnashrama* or by birth. His life experiences of caste discriminations and its wounds moulded his carrier and thoughts, which lead the majority of peoples into live life in its full potential, away from slavery.

The social inequality and discrimination of Indian social order emerged from the Hindu caste system. As for Ambedkar, endogamy creates and sustains the whole structure of the Hindu caste system. He states: "endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste"<sup>14</sup>. Through endogamy, Brahmins remain as closed caste and for levelling up their status equal to

that of the dominant Brahmins, others mimic the system and absorbed the alien practice of endogamy into their culture. This mimicking annihilates their places in public sphere and bound them to slavery.

Ambedkar advocates for democracy and considered it as a means to ascertain appropriate place in public sphere. For him, democracy is a mode of associate living appropriate not only in the political sphere but also in the socio-economic spheres of life. It's a man centered one, which assure his rights for better life. He asserts that the political democracy will collapse in the absence of social and economic democracy. He wants to make use of the political notion of one man, one vote and one value in the socio-economic spheres, which will eradicate the inequality generated by the Hindu social order. His ideal democratic society based on the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity will endow the people with mobility. He observed, "In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality." In India, the caste system will cause the socio-economic inequality and he advocated for its demolition.

Ambedkar argued that untouchables are distinct and separate from Hindus and demanded measures to safeguard untouchables to accomplish the democratic process of Indian legislation. To attain and secure the political sphere for untouchables, in 1930, he took part in the Round Table conference as the representative of untouchable. He presented memorandum to guarantee the safeguard of the untouchables and insisted on the rights like; equal citizenship, free enjoyment of equal rights, protection against discrimination, adequate representation in the legislatures, adequate representation in the services, redressal against prejudicial action or neglect of interest, special departmental care etc. He succeeded to ensure a separate electorate for untouchables which signifies its own entity apart from Hinduism. Due to Gandhi's fast, the British government was compelled to withdraw the separate electorate and limit the number of representation of untouchables.

As a way out for eradicating the evil practice of caste discrimination, Ambedkar advocated and encouraged the practices of inter-marriage and inter-dining among the castes and sub-castes. To ensure the Dalit interest in 1936, Ambedkar formed the Independent Labour Party to contest the elections to the Legislative councils and succeeded to politicise the Dalit's problems. The high caste Hindus persisted to remain on the Vedic norms and continued the discriminations. He then realised the lack of space and advocated the Dalits to embrace Buddhism, which will knock out the bond slavery of the Dalits. Ambedkar considered Buddhism as a social order than religion. His fights focused on the adversary of the Indian caste system and its immorality and he partially succeed in it.

The philosophy of consciousness would play important role in the formation of social ideology. The ontological notion of the existence of world independent of knowing subject was later replaced. Hegel assumes that the world is a unity and is conceivable only with reference to a knowing subject. The unity of the subject and object as it is found in the Hegelian thought transcend the limitation of both rationalism and empiricism. It opens up avenues for accommodating all kinds of folk expressions prevalent in any society.

For Karl Mannheim, the social mobility always plays an important role in the social changes and reforms the existing order. The new waves of technology and associated ideas may challenge and change the modern way of life but at the same time the dominant ideology might remain unchanged. Unlike Gramsci, Karl Mannheim suggests two kinds of social mobility, one is horizontal and other is vertical. While the horizontal is just like the Gramscian organic intellectuals, the vertical is capable of shaking the thoughts and views of the traditional ideology. Closed caste societies like Indian caste system lack vibrant vertical mobility and fail to generate an alternative notion against traditional thoughts. In this regard, let me quote, Karl Mannheim, "In a society organized along the lines of closed castes or ranks the comparative absence of vertical mobility served either to isolate from each other the divergent world-views or if, for example, they experienced a common religion, according to their different contexts of life, they interpreted it in a different way."<sup>15</sup>

Most of the theories on Indian social development, including that of the Marxist historians, failed to reckon the role of vertical mobility and the resistance of the oppressed caste in the formation of Indian society. Although some of them identified and paid sympathy to the



suffering untouchables, they could not see the cultural arena which would produce new mass movements among the Dalits. As Manheim further suggests, the vertical mobility has its own features. Likewise, postcolonial African thinkers also have shown the need for resisting dominant ideology especially in the realm of culture. Accordingly, the formation of counter-culture should arise from one's own consciousness. In these regards, the famous Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o actually request the subaltern to re-invent their own history in the light of newly formed reading techniques. It will help to generate and maintain ones consciousness about his own or her own circumstances and resist that which would be imposed upon them. Manheim also puts forward the similar views, "Horizontal mobility (movement from one position to another or from one country to another without changing social status) shows us that different peoples think differently. As long, however, as the traditions of one's national and local group remain unbroken, one remains so attached to its customary ways of thinking that the ways of thinking which are perceived in other groups are regarded as curiosities, errors, ambiguities, or heresies. At this stage one does not doubt either the correctness of one's own traditions of thought or the unity and uniformity of thought in general."<sup>16</sup>

In the Indian context, various thinkers, poets, reformers and revolutionaries evolve as part and parcel of caste resistance. In Kerala itself Ayyankali, Sree Narayana guru etc are the prominent preachers against hegemonic ideology. In Tamil Nadu, Ayya Vaikunda Samy, E. V. Ramasamy and many others performed the role of resisting caste ideology. In Maharashtra Jotirao Phule and Dr. Ambedkar played the role. Even nowadays many thinkers and revolutionaries like Kancha Ilaiahin are playing ardent role to resist the upper class ideology. All such developments throughout India show the need for the formation of new awareness and consciousness among the Dalits and other marginalized communities of India.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the name of the *Sasthras*, sacred texts and epics certain values and meanings are generated and propagated to maintain the existing power structure in India. While the traditional intellectuals of the upper castes still play the dominant role, the intellectual of the subaltern are somehow silenced. Since the contemporary society has been witnessing new awareness and new readings, the social consciousness and mobility among the subaltern are also increasing. The new awareness and consciousness will dismantle the hegemony and assert the genuine nature of the living culture. In other words, the consciousness of the subaltern will replace a dominant culture by a living culture and convince the society about the plight of the majority in the history of the Indian society. The subaltern consciousness means the consciousness about oneself and realizing the hegemony. It is simultaneously the consciousness to protect one's own history and to resist the domination of the other. As in the philosophy of Husserl it is the 'life world' of the subaltern. The consciousness of the subaltern is a pre-condition before attaining class consciousness. To be class conscious, one should become a citizen of the public sphere. The emancipation of the Dalit communities in India depends upon the extent of recovering the consciousness of the subaltern from the depths of their own history.

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