

Partition Politics and *Achhut* Identity: A Study of the Scheduled Castes Federation and Dalit Politics in U.P., 1946-48.

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‘This is 1946, not 1932’.¹

The year 1946 was a significant moment in the history of Dalit struggles, about which we still know very little. The Dalits had launched a popular movement against the Congress and the British government in different parts of Uttar Pradesh and outlined their agenda. Its importance was noted by a Dalit activist, Shankaranand Shastri. In November of the same year, he published *Poona-Pact or Gandhi*, which he claimed to be an authentic history of Dalit struggle from 1932 to 1946 (the second, revised edition of the book extended the narrative up-to the events of 1965). Addressed primarily to Dalits, the book hoped to make them aware of the dubious and hawkish policies of the Congress. Written in an angry and combative tone, Shastri portrayed ‘a scheming and corrupt Gandhi, Nehru, Malaviya and Company’ and described the Congress as ‘Brahmin-baniya Company’.² The timing of the book suggests Shastri's awareness of the crucial relationship between the present political juncture and the fate of the Dalits in an independent India. As a Dalit activist's account of their struggle against Gandhi, the caste-Hindus, and the Congress, the book offers a Dalit perspective on what we might describe as 'Partition politics', that is, the politics made possible by the coming of Independence and the likelihood of Partition.

According to Shastri, the Dalit agitation in UP was part of a wider agitation launched by the All-India Scheduled Caste Federation (hereafter SCF) between July and August 1946, which included the anti-*begari* movement in which rural labourers participated.³ Shastri identifies two other

'satyagrahas' of the Dalit struggle: the Mahad Satyagraha of 1927 and the Nasik Satyagraha of 1930. He thus suggests a trilogy of Dalit struggles as a deliberate counterpoise to the trilogy of Congress struggles (1920-22; 1930-34; 1942) advertised by Congress spokespersons.⁴ In all this, Shastri's work represents a Dalit reading of the recent historical past, an alternative to the Congress history of the 'freedom struggle'-- it is a conscious effort to contest not only Congress politics, but also their 'politics of History'.

The central concern of the author is to repeatedly assert a separate *achhut* identity and emphasise the leadership of Ambedkar.⁵ Both were necessary, he urged, to protect the rights of *achhuts*. The book, in fact, documents the betrayal of the *achhuts* by 'Gandhi, Nehru, Malaviya and Company'. Shastri identifies the Poona-Pact as the emblem of their betrayal.⁶ He then elaborates how the Pact ensures a subservient position for the *achhuts* to the Hindus and obstructs any liberation of their community. In the third section he gives an account of the *achhuts*' struggle for their rights, which were described as 'communal' by the caste-Hindus in order to discredit and destroy their movement. In the final section he discusses the contribution of Dr Ambedkar to political processes after Independence.

Is Shastri's book an aberration from the general mood of 'nationalist' unification that is supposed to have defined the times, or can it be considered one of the many subaltern initiatives which has remained hidden or deliberately ignored by 'caste-Hindu' historiography? Existing writings on Partition and Independence seem to have no place for Shastri's text (or similar writing). Shastri's book, it seems to me, offers an alternative reading of the politics of the 1940s, one that seriously takes the attempt made by the UP Scheduled Caste Federation to formulate an *achhut* identity. The prospect of Partition created a new and volatile situation, and constitutional discussions

about independence and the rights of minority communities in the new nation enabled, I will argue here, new forms of Dalit activism and struggle.

As a reminder of the issues at stake in such a discussion, we might turn to Urvashi Butalia's recent book, and in particular to the important question she poses: 'was there then a history of Harijans too at Partition?'⁷ Butalia exemplifies this question by staging the predicament of an untouchable woman from Punjab, who was left unharmed by Muslim rioters once she disclosed her untouchable identity. In the context of the Partition riots in Punjab, Butalia suggests that the Dalits were in many ways 'invisible' or 'untouchable', and thus outside the polarised oppositions of Hindu and Muslim. I would suggest that we read this incident more specifically in the particular context of Dalit politics in the Partition years, and remind ourselves of their increasing assertion, at this time, of a separate identity. Indeed it is possible to speculate that the Dalit woman escaped because there was, for a while, a *formal* alliance between the Muslim League and the SCF in Bengal, UP and Punjab, and because of the support extended by the SCF to the demand for Pakistan. In Lahore, from early 1947, sections of Dalits had supported the Leagues' movement, and demanded the resignation of Sikander Hyatt Khan, Premier of Punjab, the restoration of civil rights and the establishment of Pakistan.⁸ The Muslim League repeatedly vowed to protect the safety of the Dalits in Pakistan. In Punjab, many representations were sent by Dalits from various villages that they should form part of Pakistan.⁹ These political developments may have shaped popular perceptions about the attitudes of Dalits towards the Muslim League and the Congress (perceptions which need to be addressed in discussions of Partition riots).

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has argued, however, that the Dalit electoral support to the Congress in 1946 and their role in anti-Muslim riots in Bengal suggests 'their merger with the Indian,

predominantly Hindu nation'.¹⁰ His study indicates that they opted for a Hindu identity in response to the sharply polarised situation created by the Partition. Riots in Bengal might provide compelling instances of such identification, but his argument about electoral support nationally is by no means watertight. For instance, he fails to take into account the election to Primaries in which only the Dalits voted, for in these elections, the SCF established its popularity by winning most of the seats it contested in UP.¹¹ In this regard, other commentators too consider these years as insignificant to the history of Dalit politics. Mark Juergensmeyer's sympathetic account of the Ad-Dharmis struggle is a case in point. He writes that 'during the final struggle for independence and the trauma involved in the Partition of the Punjab, issues regarding the lower castes were all but forgotten in the chaos of migration and resettlement'.¹² Owen Lynch points to the initiative taken by the Jatavs' in the 1940s to further "direct political participation" by establishing the SCF, but discusses only the sociological aspect of the SCF; he does not discuss the political aspect of *achhut* identity as it was articulated in the new SCF agenda.¹³ In this respect, Juergensmeyer and Lynch share common ground with the historiography of Partition and Independence. Dalits figure in these histories solely as supporters of the Congress-led national movement, which has become some kind of received wisdom in our historiography.

Here, I will point to the specificity of the Partition politics which enabled the Dalits in UP to raise issues of their separate and communal identity, taking my cue from Shail Mayaram's suggestion that we 'look at how [the] identity politics of Partition' impinged on issues and politics which were not directly concerned with the demand for Partition.¹⁴ Partition politics, we are told, fixed identities even for the marginal communities: the choice was between Hindu or Muslim. But this might be an inaccurate reading; I will argue that new opportunities for self-definition became available to marginal

groups. The Dalits of UP, for instance, appropriated the new situation to their advantage. When necessary, they did not hesitate to establish an alliance with the Muslim League to justify their demand for a separate identity. In doing so, they indicated the similarity of their politics with those of the League, and the outcaste status of their community. They were equally keen to assert their differences with the Congress in UP, which they demonstrated (especially in the urban areas) by voting for the SCF in the election to the Primaries in 1945. In contrast to existing historical accounts, I argue that in the context of UP, the SCF and the Dalits articulate a separate *achhut* identity, forceful enough not to have become submerged into Congress or national consensus, and one whose political concerns live with us still.

I

The SCF expected some kind of constitutional safeguards from the Cabinet Mission. It hoped that the Mission would provide for the principle of separate representation for the Dalits by recognising them as a separate community. This was the major demand that the SCF repeatedly raised in its resolutions after 1942.¹⁵ The expectations of the SCF were not entirely unfounded; they were, in fact, based on the commitments given by the Viceroy. In a letter to Gandhi, Wavell reaffirmed the British position by stating that they viewed the Scheduled Castes as a separate community, and their consent was a necessary condition in the transfer of power. Earlier, Lord Linlithgow had made a similar statement about the Scheduled Castes in his speech on 10 August 1940 in Bombay.¹⁶ According to Dr Ambedkar, the Cabinet delegation gave a positive response to his proposals during their meeting on 15 April 1946.¹⁷ The representatives of the Scheduled Castes, however, were not invited to the final discussions at Simla. The British, in the end, accepted the Congress proposition

that the Scheduled Castes were part of the Hindu community. In line with this position, the Cabinet Mission Award of 16 May 1946 did not provide any specific safeguards for the Scheduled Castes.¹⁸ The arrangement proposed by the Cabinet Mission for elections to the Constituent Assembly from the provincial assemblies recognised only three communities, a) General b) Muslims and c) Sikh. The SCF demand that the Dalits be recognised as a separate community was not accepted. As a concession to the demands of the Scheduled Castes and other minorities were accommodated in the Advisory Committee to safeguard their interests in the proposed Constitution.

In his critique of the Cabinet Mission proposals Ambedkar argued that the 'Scheduled Castes were greatly surprised to find themselves lumped together with the Hindus'.¹⁹ The status and powers of the Advisory Committee were not defined. Ambedkar argued that the representatives of the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly represented the interests of the Congress and not of the Scheduled Castes. He disagreed with the Cabinet Mission's defence that the representatives of the Scheduled Castes in Constituent Assembly represented the interests of the Congress and not the Scheduled Castes' seats in the last election. Instead, he argued that an examination of the elections to the Primaries in 1945 would show the limited extent to which the Congress represented the Scheduled Castes. In this phase of election the Scheduled Castes were provided with separate electorates, which was not the case in the general election. His analysis of the election results of the Primaries indicated that the non-Congress Scheduled Castes secured 72 per cent of the vote compared to the 28 per cent for the Congress.

Jagjivan Ram, in his response to the Mission's Plan, asserted that the Ambedkarite politics of separate electorates has been rejected. Nevertheless he too articulated a position different from that of the Congress. He agreed that the Dalits have received unfair treatment by the Cabinet

Mission, and reiterated the demand of the Depressed Classes League that 'the Scheduled Castes should be given representation in the Constituent Assembly and the Legislative Assembly in proportion to their population in a province'.²⁰ Ironically, this demand was first raised by the SCF. Jagjivan Ram was well aware of the similarities of his party's position with the SCF's. The only difference between his party and the SCF, he said, was with regard to the position of the Dalits to the Hindu community. He believed them to be the part of Hindu community, while the SCF argued for Dalits' separation from Hindu society.²¹

I suggest that Jagjivan Ram came to realise the importance of changes then in progress in the 1940s and therefore reassessed his position. This was, perhaps, also a comment on the Congress's failure to deal adequately with the problems of Dalit society. It was for this reason that he agreed with Wavell's characterisation (in 1944) of the Congress as a caste-Hindu party. When Gandhi protested against this description, Jagjivan Ram issued a public statement approving Wavell's position. He also characterised Gandhi's statement as self-contradictory and surprising. He argued that the Poona-Pact was a clear acknowledgement of two sections within the Hindus, the 'Harijan' and the 'non-Harijans and Hindus'.²² This radicalism in a leading Congress Harijan leader underlines the changes taking place around this time in the character and temper of Dalit politics.

The inadequate representation of the Dalits in the Interim Ministry was portrayed as yet another instance of injustice towards them. Ambedkar in his statement objected to the unfair and unjust composition of the Ministry. He said that the Dalits had demanded three seats, but were allotted only one. Jagjivan Ram elaborated this point by referring to their population of 60 million which made them eligible for three seats. He complained that "if three seats could be allotted to the Muslims, two seats to the Sikhs, then one seat for the Dalits is unfair and against the principles of the

Cabinet Mission Plan". Similar criticism was made by the UP Congress Dalit leaders Hari Prasad Tamta and Chaudhari Girdhari Lal.²³

Criticism of the Cabinet Mission plan was not limited to the elite Dalit leadership. Even at the popular level there was a fairly widespread sense of betrayal by the Congress. Dalits of western UP were among the first to register their protest against the award of the Cabinet Mission. In June 1946, the District Harijan Conference and the District Harijan Uddharsabha of Saharanpur passed two identical resolutions.²⁴ They protested not only against the award of the Cabinet Mission *per se*, but also the acceptance of the award by the Congress. They accused the Congress of being partial and unfair to the Dalit community. They were passed in response to the press statement made by the President of the Congress, Maulana Azad, on 24 June, in which he stated that the seats for the Dalits in the Constituent Assembly would be fixed in accordance with the proportion of their members in the Assembly of each province. Even the Congress Harijans (hereafter Harijans) of western UP disagreed with their Party's response to the Awards.

The two resolutions demanded that the Harijans should be given 45 seats out of a total of 140 general seats in the UP Legislative Assembly. They were allotted 20 seats in the Assembly, which they felt were inadequate, considering the Scheduled Caste population which was 11 million out of a total population of 55 million. The Harijans wanted the same rights in representation as had been provided to the caste-Hindus, Sikhs and the Muslims. The criterion enunciated by the Cabinet Mission for representation to the Constituent Assembly was one elected representative for every one million of the population. If this criterion could be applied to other communities, they argued, then why were the Harijans excluded? What is significant for us is their articulation of Harijan differences with the Congress (and the implications of these differences for Dalit politics). They

invoked the constitutional criteria by which the Congress accepted the rights of minorities, and thus, to reinforce their claim, compared themselves to other non-Hindu communities. While the Harijans were in fact careful to avoid any reference to their religious separateness from the caste-Hindus, and adopted a secular strategy to focus on a constitutional principle, they nevertheless underlined their separateness, as a community, from caste-Hindus. This sense of difference defined the notion of their own community and was enhanced by their invocation of, and comparison to, other communities.

The positions articulated by the two resolutions were similar to the stand taken by the SCF. This tension between the Harijans of western UP with the Congress indicates the changes in positions taken by Dalits in the 1940s. The two Harijan organisations were, however, equally keen to emphasise their preference, for the Congress and addressed the two resolutions, in order of preference, to the Congress leaders and the Viceroy. They choose to ignore Ambedkar from their initiative.²⁵ The rapid ease with which public meetings were organised after Maulana Azad's statement on 24 June suggests that the Dalits had already been discussing the implications of the Cabinet Mission Award. Such meetings were held on 26 June in Meerut and 30 June in Saharanpur. The resolution passed in Meerut was later approved by the Dalits of Saharanpur. The close proximity of time and space in the passing of the two resolutions suggests that a great deal of dialogue was taking place among the Harijan leaders of western UP, particularly among the two Harijan organisations. One reason for the Congress Harijans' difference with the Congress-- despite being part of it-- could be located in the Dalit agitation taking place in parts of western UP.

In its turn, the SCF's rejection of the Cabinet Mission award of 16 May 1946 was not limited to mere statements in the press. It decided to organise satyagrahas throughout India to protest against the Cabinet Mission award and the Congress and identified three main issues for the proposed satyagrahas. They demanded a blue-print from the Congress on position of the Dalits in independent India. They also demanded the abrogation of the Poona-Pact, which they described as political fraud against the Dalits.²⁶ They reiterated their demand for separate electorates for the Dalits. Gandhi and his Harijan movement were held responsible for denying rights to the Dalits.

This Dalit movement affected twenty-three districts of UP. Out of these, ten districts witnessed prolonged agitation from June to November 1946.²⁷ Altogether the extent of the satyagraha speaks remarkably well of a party set-up only four years earlier. To ensure participation in the proposed satyagraha, leaders of the SCF toured their respective areas to mobilise the Dalits. In the absence of Party papers or much reporting in the newspapers, it is difficult to make detailed statements regarding these efforts. We may note, however, that the decision to launch the satyagraha was taken in the first week of June 1946, and by the second week the leaders of the SCF in UP began to mobilise the Dalits. The Dalit leaders, Dr Manik Chand and Faqir Chand, toured western areas of UP. In Saharanpur, Faqir Chand organised a meeting on 12 June in which he "threatened to oppose the Congress Government if all the Dalit demands set out in a leaflet distributed at the meeting were not conceded".²⁸ Manik Chand organised similar meetings in the district of Ferozabad. Tilak Chand Kureel of Kanpur and President of the UP SCF organised the Dalits not only in Kanpur but also toured Azamgarh and Gorakhpur. In a meeting at Lucknow, Piare Lal Talib reiterated the demands of the SCF, and mobilised volunteers. Similar meetings were also held in Etah and Etawah district by Swami Chhamanand. In some respects organising Dalits in these areas

was not difficult, since the SCF had done considerable political work during the elections of 1945-6.

The agitation began in Lucknow on 16 July when hundreds of *achhut* satyagrahis marched in a procession towards the Legislative Assembly. The demonstration was led by Tilak Chand Kureel. The satyagrahis carried placards and raised slogans: 'Down with British Imperialism', 'Down-with Congress' and 'Scrap the Poona-Pact'. The prominent Dalit leaders-- Kureel, Jaiswar, Talib and Shastri-- were arrested immediately after their speeches to the satyagrahis. On the first day of the satyagraha, 222 Dalit satyagrahis were arrested. In subsequent days the satyagraha was held on 17, 18, 22, 24 and 29, July 1946. After a gap of a fortnight the UP SCF organised another satyagraha on 11 August, when 45 satyagrahis were arrested.²⁹ The All India SCF suspended the satyagraha in Bombay on 28 July, when the session of the Legislative Assembly in Poona was adjourned. The SCF in UP, however, continued the satyagraha until 15 August when the Legislative Assembly in Lucknow was adjourned.³⁰ The official statement in the Legislative Assembly put the total number of satyagrahis arrested as 311.³¹

I would like to emphasise two aspects of the Dalit agitation: first, the choice of the Legislative Assembly as the site of protest and second, the appropriation of the Gandhian concept of satyagraha as the mode of protest. The SCF decided to question the democratic credentials of UP Legislative Assembly that was in session in Lucknow. It was keen to make a point about the lack of 'true' Dalit representatives in Legislative Assembly, thanks to Poona-Pact. The choice of satyagraha was a deliberate political act in the context of SCF's opposition to the Congress and Gandhi. It was thus more than a mere appropriation, a point noted and commented upon by the Hindi daily *Vartman* in an editorial about the illegitimacy of the choice. The editorial noted that 'the most amusing aspect (of the satyagraha) is that today Dr Ambedkar has to depend on Gandhiji's weapon

of protest: satyagraha, the same person against whom his opposition is well known'.³² That a nationalist Hindi daily would represent the SCF choice of satyagraha as a 'contradiction' suggests that its subversive potential was generally understood.

In the book Shastri mentions Kanpur (besides Lucknow) as another centre of *achhut* protest. The SCF organised a satyagraha to mark 'Poona Day' in Kanpur on 15 August by 'hoisting black flags on their houses and holding meetings at which caste-Hindu leaders were denounced'.³³ Meetings and demonstrations were also organised in rural areas. Members of the SCF were particularly active in areas around Etah and Etawah, where meetings and demonstrations were organised in co-ordination with the satyagraha in Lucknow. The objectives of the SCF were reaffirmed in meetings and demonstrations organised in other districts as well (Faizabad, Gorakhpur, Fatehgarh, Ferozabad, Agra, Azamgarh and Farrukhabad are some of the places that are mentioned repeatedly in the Weekly CID reports). For instance, at the Faizabad meeting, 'the audience was asked to follow Ambedkar' as their leader. At a meeting in Gorakhpur, 'speakers criticised the Congress government with the remark that rather than enjoy Swaraj under Congress, they [will prefer] to live under British rule'.³⁴ In these meetings great emphasis was laid on the unity of the *achhuts*. Speakers also warned their audience about the undemocratic character of the caste-Hindus and their party, the Congress and the Poona-Pact was cited as an example of their undemocratic attitude. These points were specifically made in the *achhut* meetings in Etah, Etawah and Farrukhabad.³⁵ The SCF in UP also decided to resume its agitation during the next session of the Legislative Assembly.

The second phase of the Dalit agitation was aimed at enlisting volunteers for the proposed satyagraha, which began in Agra from the first week of August. In Agra, Manik Chand, his wife, and

Gopi Chand Pipal, the President of the Agra SCF, enrolled about 150 satyagrahis by the middle of September.³⁶ Meetings were also organised in Etah, Etawah and Farrukhabad by local leaders of the SCF to mobilise satyagrahis. At a meeting in Fatehgarh, a Hindi leaflet, 'Alarm Bell Arthath Khatrey Ki Ghanti' was distributed in which the Dalits were 'warned not to join' the Congress but to 'prepare for a satyagraha'.³⁷ In this agitation, the status of Ambedkar as the leader of the Dalits was emphasised in conscious opposition to Gandhi, Nehru, and Jagjivan Ram. In their meetings at Hamirpur and Agra, Gandhi was described as 'a traitor and a cheat to the cause of [Dalits] and accused of misleading the [Dalits] into the Congress'.³⁸ There will be no freedom for Dalits unless they follow the path of Dr Ambedkar—the Bhim. The Dalits were urged to worship Bhim instead of Ram. At some places symbols of Gandhian politics like Khadi clothes and Gandhi caps were also burnt.³⁹ In a meeting of Dalits in Moradabad, a resolution was passed declaring Dr Ambedkar as their 'true leader and representative'.⁴⁰ Similar resolutions were also passed in Faizabad, Etah, Etawah and Allahabad. Reposing faith in Ambedkar's leadership and declaring him as their true representative became an integral feature of the new *achhut* identity. Efforts along similar lines had also been made during the election to the Primaries in October 1945 and at the General election in March 1946.⁴¹

The extension of Dalit agitation into rural areas provided a new dimension to these efforts. The Anglo-Indian press and official reports noted the involvement of Dalit women in the agitation, including against *begari* in the few reports, we can extrapolate from reports like that in the *Pioneer* which notes that 'the Dalit women of Rampurva village (district Gorakhpur) engaged in the work of cutting umbilical cords are demanding Rs.5 per case'.⁴² That this was not a local instance but part of a wider protest is shown by other comparable newspaper reports.⁴³ The *Aaj* reported that in many

parts of the province, Chamar women were demanding Rs. 5 for cutting the umbilical cord of newborn babies. The *People's Age* also reported similar events from the district of Jaunpur, where Dalit women refused to act as 'dais' or midwives.

Dalit women were required to perform *begari* not only in the domestic sphere but also in the fields of zamindars, where they worked as labourers, particularly in the reaping and harvesting season. Intelligence report from Bijnor noted that 'the [Dalits] have stopped their women folk from doing menial work such as removing dung and grinding' in the household of Hindu zamindars.⁴⁴ In village Kealowara, district Azamgarh, a Dalit woman Jhunia went to the police station and filed a complaint against the zamindars of the village. In the complaint, Jhunia accused zamindars of forcibly demanding *begari* from the Dalit men and brutally beating them when they demanded wages.⁴⁵ Thanks to these newspaper reports, however brief, and the odd question in the Legislative Assembly, Dalit women emerge as visible participants in the agitation. I would suggest that we should take these reports as representative of a wider process of women's participation in the protest. The involvement of Dalit women was geared to the demands of their community, and the issue of *achhut* identity-- for men and women-- was thus linked crucially to their right to fair wages (to start with, to any wage at all).

III

The building of an alliance between the SCF and the Muslim League was also a significant development in *achhut* politics during this period. The alliance was an indication of changing times, a conscious move to legitimise Dalit claims to minority status by identifying the similarities of their social conditions with those of the Muslims. From the middle of September 1946, regular interaction

between the leaders of the SCF and the League became a distinctive feature of their struggle for *achhut* identity.⁴⁶ The League's participation in the Dalit agitation in UP was symptomatic of similar changes at the national level. The election of Dr Ambedkar to the Constituent Assembly from the Bengal Legislative Assembly as an independent candidate supported by the Muslim League was one such indication.⁴⁷ An early instance of co-operation between the SCF and the Muslim League, in the course of the Dalit agitation, was reported from Kanpur and Farrukhabad.⁴⁸ At Kanpur a Dalit meeting was addressed by two Muslim League leaders. In Farrukhabad, at a Dalit meeting, League leaders compared the position of their community with those of the Dalits in India. They supported the *achhut* struggle and reminded them that unless they filled the jails, their demand would not be conceded. Prior to this, in the last week of August, the SCF in its meeting at Kanpur had supported the demands of the Muslim League, including that of boycott of the Constituent Assembly and Interim Government.⁴⁹

The SCF and the League leaders began to emphasise the similarity of their struggles against the Congress. It was not long before ordinary members of the League began to participate in these meetings. For instance, at Kheri, Lucknow and Kanpur, the League members participated in Dalit meetings. At meetings in Kanpur it was repeatedly stated that 'no scheduled caste movement would be launched in Provinces which has [a] Muslim League government'.⁵⁰ In meetings at Kanpur, Farrukhabad, Kheri, Lucknow and Mainpuri, 'Jinnah was thanked' for the support extended to Dr Ambedkar's election to the Constituent Assembly. The Muslim League was swayed by the enthusiastic response of the Dalits, and heartened by the widespread criticism of caste-Hindus and the Hindu religion and scriptures in Dalit meetings. Their criticism of the Congress, Gandhi, the Poona-pact and the demand for separate electorate strengthened the League's conviction. These

two aspects of the *achhut* agitation may have convinced a few leaders of the League that the Dalits might convert to Islam. In some of their joint meetings they appealed to Dalits to embrace Islam and join the League, as for instance when a Muslim League leader, Haji Mohammad Saleh, asked his audience in Lucknow to join hands with the League and embrace Islam.⁵¹ The perception that Dalits might convert en masse seemed to have acquired a fair amount of credibility, till the SCF denied, in Allahabad, any such prospect, a denial which may have undercut the very separateness from Hindus which was a major feature of the Dalit Struggle.⁵²

The alliance between the League and SCF elicited an immediate response from Hindu organisations like the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha which felt especially threatened by this development in Dalit politics. In early November, these organisations took initiatives in Aligarh, Etah, Bareilly, Nanital and Mathura to show their willingness to consider the demands of the *achhuts* for social uplift.⁵³ In these districts the Hindu organisations opened temples and wells for the *achhuts*, organised inter-dining sessions and invited them to religious ceremonies in caste-Hindu temples. Subsequently, similar measures were taken in other parts of the province in Bijnor, Saharanpur, Jalaun and Etawah.⁵⁴ Elite 'Hindu' nationalism had formulated the question of untouchable identity as a 'Hindu' question in the 1910s and 1920s. This was related to the concerns of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha about the numerical strength of the Hindu community and its dominant position in the Indian nation. The Hindu organisations went a step further and claimed that untouchability emerged during Muslim rule.⁵⁵ The insensitivity of the Hindu organisations in offering stale solutions to the issue raised by the *achhuts* is noteworthy. They were unable to respond to changes in Dalits politics, or to negotiate with the new agenda put forward by the *achhuts*, primarily because they did not acknowledge the SCF and its political agenda.

The Congress followed suit: the Mau Mandal Congress Committee organised a Harijan meeting on 17 November and warned Harijans about the nefarious designs of Ambedkar and the League.⁵⁶ Similar attempts were also made in meetings at Azamgarh, Unao, Kheri and Agra, which at times turned violent. In Unao two thousand members of the Congress, caste-Hindus at that, made an effort to disrupt the proceedings of an SCF conference. Timely police intervention averted a clash. In a more amiable response, Congressmen in Agra distributed leaflets in which the Dalits were urged to join the Congress.⁵⁷ As these instances suggest, the nature of opposition was very similar to that of the Hindu organisations: they wooed the Dalits and warned them against the Muslim League as ‘separatist’ and described it as a part of ‘communal politics’.⁵⁸ It was with this perspective too that the Congress and Hindu organisations intervened in Dalit politics when the alliance between the SCF and the League acquired a more stable character in UP from late September. As rumours of Dalit conversion to Islam or their co-option into the League spread, the Congress and the caste-Hindu organisations offered religious reform. They did not address the political demands of the SCF, particularly for separate electorates, which in any case was read as a communal demand.

At the time of the negotiations for the transfer of power, there was thus no space in the Congress perspective to even acknowledge Dalit demands. To further erode the legitimacy of their politics, Dalit leaders were described as agents of feudalism or imperialism, or as urban leaders involved in institutional politics without a mass base among the people. In a Hindi leaflet entitled ‘Congress Socialist Party ki Salah’, Dr. Sheo Shankar Upadhyia identified Ambedkar among others as a Congress enemy and an ‘obstacle to our independence’.⁵⁹ The skewed electoral arrangement worked out under the Poona-Pact ensured that the Dalits opposed to the Congress would never succeed in the elections. This allowed nationalist historians to create and perpetuate a myth that the

Dalits were traditional supporters of the Congress.⁶⁰

In such a scenario, historians too easily see the League as the pre-eminent partner in the alliance with the Dalits, and as encouraging and manipulating Dalit politics to fulfil its own 'communal' aims. In this reading, therefore, there is no alliance, but a conspiracy hatched by the League to capture the Dalits. Official reports too took a similar view towards the alliance and attributed the increasing strength of Dalit agitation to the intervention of the League.⁶¹ The possibility that Dalits could enter into an alliance with the Muslim League on their own terms was not even considered. On the other hand, evidence suggests that the initiative for the alliance was taken by the SCF, in response to changing political circumstances. Moreover, there was nothing 'natural' in the efforts of the SCF to seek an alliance with the League, for as late as 1944, the UP SCF in its annual conference had passed a resolution against the demand of Pakistan, which was described as 'anti-national'.⁶² Two years later however, the SCF not only initiated an alliance with the League but also supported their demand for Pakistan. The shift was a reflection of the Dalits' new political agenda. In seeking an alliance with the League, the SCF expressed their shared concern about the issue of political justice for members of deprived sections of the society-- the *achhuts* and the Muslims. In this regard, Shankaranand Shastri writes that the Congress 'effort was to suppress our freedom movement by describing it as communal'.⁶³ This he writes, 'was truly an example of their opposition to the emergence of true citizenship and nationalism'. For him then, the abolition of untouchability was in fact necessary to provide Dalits with a citizenship and nationality. It was a political ideal, not simply a problem of social reform.

IV

On 28 April 1947, the Constituent Assembly unanimously passed a Bill abolishing untouchability and making its practice a criminal offence. It was, perhaps, the first step from the Congress towards rapprochement with the SCF. A more concrete gesture was made on 2 July, when Ambedkar was nominated as the Congress candidate from the Bombay Legislative Council to the Constituent Assembly.⁶⁴ This paved the way for his subsequent appointment as a Law Minister in Nehru's cabinet. Soon, on 18 July, the UP Government released all the leaders of UP SCF arrested during the satyagraha.⁶⁵ These initiatives from the Congress were aimed at integrating the SCF into the 'national mainstream'. If these were steps to disarm the Dalit struggle, perhaps the most crucial was Ambedkar's decision to accept the Congress nomination. Predictably, his decision has been celebrated by nationalist historiography as the final triumph of Indian (Congress) nationalism. I wish to argue that these events need to be understood in the context of *achhut* politics. This initiative on the part of Congress should not lead us to believe that the SCF had disowned its agenda. I would in fact suggest that Ambedkar's decision reaffirm the endurance and significance of *achhut* identity in Indian politics. The fact that the Congress had no option but to negotiate with Ambedkarite politics was recognition of the power of the Dalit struggle. In the changed realities of 1947-- the Congress government and independence-- some kind of co-operation with the Congress government was a worthwhile proposition for Ambedkar.⁶⁶

These Congress initiatives were certainly not wholly beneficial to Dalit politics in UP; in particular Ambedkar's decision disrupted the developing cohesion in Dalit politics. There was in fact already an indication of the first major division in the SCF, as three senior leaders of the UP SCF, Piarelal Talib, R.S. Shyamlal and Nandlal Jaiswar, had pledged their co-operation with policies of the Congress Ministry in UP.⁶⁷ These leaders soon joined the Congress, as did Manik Chand, and

contested the elections in 1951-52 as official candidates of Congress. Piarelal Talib and Manik Chand were elected to the Lok Sabha, respectively from the Banda district constituency in UP (General and SC) and Bharatpur (Reserved) constituency in Rajasthan, while R.S. Shyamlal was elected to the UP Legislative Assembly as a Congress candidate. Another prominent leader of the SCF, Karan Singh Kane was appointed a Rehabilitation Officer by the UP government. He, however remained a loyal Ambedkarite and worked for the SCF.⁶⁸ Gopal Singh, a Dalit activist of the SCF from Ludhiana (Punjab) responded differently. He described Ambedkar's decision as an opportunistic 'surrender' to the caste-Hindus and their politics, and announced his decision to become a socialist.⁶⁹ Gopal Singh's response was surely shared by many other workers of the SCF, who saw in the 'surrender' to the Congress the loss of what had so far been the ideals of the SCF. This does not mean, however, that they renounced their commitment to these ideals. Rather, Dalit activists found individual solutions to cope with a new political situation, and continued to pursue their objectives.

In turn, Ambedkar realised the disorienting impact of his decision, and felt it necessary to clarify his stand so as to reaffirm the ideals of the SCF and its opposition to the Congress. The fifth conference of the UP SCF provided the opportunity for him to explain his position to the Dalits. The conference was held at Lucknow on 24 and 25 April 1948 and attended by 7,000 members and delegates.⁷⁰ In his speech, Ambedkar denied the rumours that he has joined the Congress. He clarified that his object was to serve the interests of the Dalits, a cause for which he had fought against the Congress for 25 years. 'What I want is power -- political power -- for my people, for if we have power we will have social status', reaffirmed Ambedkar in his inaugural address.⁷¹ He particularly emphasised the significance of their separate identity and the need to transform it into a

potent political force, under one banner, one slogan, one leader, one party and one programme. He also criticised the Premier of UP, who turned down the legitimate demands of the Dalits because he commanded a majority in the House. Ambedkar's speech was important in its reaffirmation of the SCF's differences with the Congress. Notions of 'independence' and 'citizenship' were meaningless for the Dalits unless they had a share in political power, he argued. The point driven home at the Conference was that despite the abolition of untouchability and the promise of citizenship, their struggles were far from over. The SCF was doubtful about the likely outcome for Dalits in implementing these principles through administrative measures. Therefore the SCF considered it essential that the Dalits should continue their efforts to maintain their separate identity.

Ambedkar's speech was dismissed by the nationalist press in UP as a 'frustrated outburst'.⁷² With Partition fresh in collective memory, the editorial in the *Leader* commented, 'Dr Ambedkar has chosen precisely at this moment to tell the Scheduled Castes, 'a united nations is all rot'. Dr Ambedkar wants the Scheduled Castes to *form a third nation*'.⁷³ Ambedkar's criticism of the Congress, including his remarks about the disintegration of the Congress, was also considered unacceptable. An editorial in the *National Herald* described his speech as a cynical outburst lacking in wisdom and foresight.⁷⁴ The editorial in *Vartman* described Ambedkar's speech as 'reactionary and against the ideals of Indian nationalism. Any hopes of change in the ideas of Ambedkar, when he joined the Cabinet have been quashed by his speech'.⁷⁵ The editorial presented him with two choices: either submit to nationalism or resign from the Cabinet. The opinion offered in these newspapers, indeed those of the press in general in UP, were clear that their loyalty lay with the Congress. For the press, the Congress symbolised nationalism and national unity, and editors were clear about what constituted nationalism, and consequently, 'Indian' politics, and what was 'anti-

national' or 'communal' politics. Ambedkar was described as potential Qaid-e-Azam, and this despite the fact that he did not raise the SCF's demand for a separate electorate, always the bane of Ambedkarite politics for the nationalist.

After independence the nationalist press was certain that there could not be two identities: that of being Dalit or Muslim in addition to that of being 'Indian'. This, they argued, was a necessary precondition to building the new Indian nation-state, and all political parties were exhorted to help Congress achieve this noble aim. Only the Indian state and the Congress possessed the sole right, according to the nationalist press, to constitute the new 'Indian' citizen. Dalits could be thus scarcely be allowed to define their citizenship in ways which would also allow them to retain their *achhut* identity, even if they attempted, as Owen Lynch has argued 'to make the politically ascribed status of citizen and not the religiously ascribed status of caste, the dominant status'.⁷⁶

Indeed, not only Ambedkar, but Dalits in general in different parts of UP began to make their feelings about post-Independence political realities quite clear. In 1948, the SCF organised a series of demonstrations and meetings in some twenty-one districts of the province.⁷⁷ Two concerns came to occupy centre-stage: the first addressed the 'failure' of the Congress government, and the second demanded statutory provisions for Dalits. These points were reiterated in SCF meeting at Allahabad, Etah, Lucknow, Bareilly, Kanpur, Agra, Saharnpur and Meerut.⁷⁸ The Congress was described as a caste-Hindu party and therefore the slogans were anti-Hindu, e.g. 'Hindu Quam ka nash ho', 'Kangress Government ka nash ho', 'Achhuto ke Shattroun ka nash ho' and 'Manu Smriti ka nash ho'.⁷⁹

This was the polarised context in which the Chamars launched an agitation in July 1948 (the movement continued till November before petering out) against *begari*, an agitation that was not

even acknowledged as a legitimate protest by the Congress government in UP.⁸⁰ Official report in fact insisted that the Chamar agitation was harming 'public' interests. A report noted that 'Chamars of Bijnor districts have refused to remove the dead bodies of animals and this is causing considerable inconvenience to the public'.⁸¹ It is as if the Dalits were not considered part of the 'public', which was constituted by the caste-Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and so forth, so that 'public life' was seen being harmed by the Dalits' refusal to work without wages. Particularly revealing is the fact that the Chamars protested not only against their supposed 'duty' to remove dead bodies, either human or animal, in a village, but also refused to perform this task for the police. In the second kind of protest, the Chamars refused 'to perform menial duties including removal of corpses connected with crimes', which obstructed the functioning of the police.⁸² In Jalaun, Kanpur and Hamirpur, caste-Hindu police constables were compelled to perform the task of removing corpses.

The Chamar protest thus had twin targets: one the caste-Hindus and the zamindars, the other the police and the state (now represented by the Congress government). The Chamars were of course compelled to provide assistance to the police because they were Chamars, and not because they were appointed to paid posts by the state. Thus, the so-called menial duties demanded by the police was a form of *begari* imposed on Dalits. Like the caste-Hindus, the police in many areas did not hesitate to apply coercive measures to ensure that they work.⁸³ But this time the Dalits were determined to assert their rights. In Bareilly a group of 100 Chamars, organised a demonstration against the police, and approached the DM to initiate action against the culprits. Similarly the Chamars were ready to fight the zamindars, in case they retaliated with violent methods.⁸⁴ Police reports noted that 'in Bijnor and Bulandshahr districts, Chamars are refusing to remove the dead bodies of animals which is naturally causing inconvenience'.⁸⁵ The official

perception of these protests was similar to that of caste-Hindus: the Chamars were violating the accepted norm-- what they owed to the caste-Hindus-- by refusing to 'perform their duties'. In using these terms-- 'public' and 'duty'-- official discourse underlined the distinction between caste-Hindus and Chamars. The Chamars were assumed to have a specific role within the public domain, even as they could make no claims on it. In spite of the commitment of the state to universal principles of modernity and citizenship, Dalits were treated as a group apart, to be forced to acknowledge customary and discriminatory caste practices.

The SCF was very much involved in these protests, which is why the protests began in Kanpur and Jalaun where the SCF had a substantial following. The agenda was outlined in the fifth annual conference of UP SCF at Lucknow. In one of the resolutions at the conference, the SCF demanded abolition of *begari* and criticised the tyranny of zamindars.⁸⁶ At the conference Tilak Chand Kureel threatened to launch a satyagraha if their demands were not accepted. The criticism of the Congress government and demand for abolition of *begari* was also repeated at the second conference of Rohilkhand Division of SCF, held on 16 and 17 June 1948 at Bareilly.⁸⁷ This Dalit protest after Independence confirmed to them that they would need more such struggles to achieve their liberation. It also reaffirmed the continuing necessity of separate *achhut* identity, and enshrined it as a cardinal principle of their new politics.

VI

These new trends in Dalit politics in the 1940s, built upon the rapid expansion of the SCF in UP were different from earlier forms of Dalit politics, which emphasised the need for 'ritual purity' or 'clean' social status. Since many Dalit caste mahasabhas merged their existing networks with the

SCF, a new all-encompassing identity for the *achhuts* could be imagined. For instance, the Adi-Ravidass Mahasabha of Allahabad in their resolution of 16 February, 1946 maintained that the Dalits 'are trying their utmost to gain all their legitimate social, moral and citizen rights, considering themselves a separate element from the caste-Hindus'.⁸⁸ Resolutions along similar lines were passed by the Dalits in various districts of UP in 1946. Shastri too, in his book, points to a shift in Dalit political understanding: 'If Gandhi and Company had done genuine work for their uplift, then the Dalits might not have felt necessary to raise their own voice'.⁸⁹ The failure of the Congress to address the issue of caste-inequality further alienated the Dalits, particularly as the Congress considered untouchability to be a religious issue of the Hindus, whereas the Dalits considered it a political problem.

Accordingly, Shastri identified two key aspects of the real social reforms for the *achhuts*, 'special educational facilities ... particularly higher studies and twelve per cent reservation in the Government jobs'.⁹⁰ He tells us that these programmes were implemented for the first time by Dr Ambedkar in 1942. In fact, in the 1940s, education had become a kind of panacea to the Dalits for all their problems.⁹¹ Political power and education thus were seen by the *achhuts* as a necessary precondition to disrupt the social and occupational discrimination which perpetuated their confinement to menial or low labour. The Dalit intelligentsia and the Adi-Hindu ideologues played a crucial role in propagating these ideas in the Dalit neighbourhoods of major towns in the province.⁹² Their vision was one in which the Dalits would occupy influential positions in the Assemblies, government offices and other institutions. This would enable them to provide genuine benefits to the community, and actually *implement* public policy and programmes. Thus, the demand made in 1946 by the Dalits for adequate representation in the Constituent Assembly and Legislative Assembly

turns out to be a crucial event in the larger political struggle to acquire an influential role in the state.

Many different political mobilisations that led to independence, particularly the arguments for separate communities and constituencies which ultimately underlay the partition of the subcontinent, had a generative effect on much political thinking and action, including that of Dalit politics. The different conceptions of Dalit communities which existed among the Dalits in the 1930s and earlier, were moulded in the 1940s into a new notion of a 'unified' and a far more inclusive community. If the caste mahasabhas of the Jatavs, the Chamars and the Raidassis had earlier represented 'fragmented' communities, split along lines of caste identity, the emergence of the SCF in UP and its articulation and mobilisation of new and pressing political issues suggested a new conception of *achhut* community. The recognition of, and insistence upon, Dalit difference led to the abolition of *begari* and safeguards in administrative and educational institutions. The assertion of an *achhut* identity became the fulcrum of a new Dalit politics. Like other communities, Dalits utilised the conditions created by Partition politics, particularly the legitimisation of questions of community identity in constitutional discussions to mould an awareness and a politics viable in the newly independent nation.

Dalit, more than anyone else, brought into focus the narrowness of the Congress' (caste-Hindu?) commitment to citizenship, rights, nationalism and pointed to its exclusive character, despite claims to the contrary. Dalit struggle questioned the democratic structure being implemented in India which tended to grant all powers to the majority-- the caste-Hindus, at the cost of minorities-- Dalits, Muslims, Sikhs, Women and so forth. They demanded a constitutional arrangement to safeguard the minorities against the potential misuse of elected bodies by the majority community. Recent developments in the contemporary politics of India have suggested the importance of such

safeguards. This may well be the legacy that these Dalit struggles bequeathed to the politics of independent India; a legacy which continues to play an important role in the democratic governance of the nation.

FINAL PAGE

^Σ I am grateful to Anil Sethi, Chanderbhan Prasad, Dipu Sharan, Dipankar Dass, Nilanjan Sarkar, Rohan D'Souza, Urvashi Butalia and Prof. Ravinder Kumar, for their comments suggestions and support. I am very grateful to Suvir Kaul for his comments and generosity. To a very fine teacher Gyan Pandey; for his support, tolerance and demanded criticism. To my Ph.D. supervisor Shahid Amin for his patience, comments and encouragement. The author is a **Sephis** Fellow (Doctoral candidate), IISH, Amsterdam.

ENDNOTES

1. Shankaranand Shastri, *Poona-Pact or Gandhi* (Hindi Lucknow 1994). First published in 1946. p.76. Translation from Hindi, mine.
2. Ibid. Preface (no pagination).
3. *Begari* is unequal, unpaid and coercive labour demanded by the caste-Hindus as their traditional/religious privilege over the lower-castes and the Dalits.
4. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (Allahabad 1935) Two Vols., pp. 1115-1126 and 1141-1155. Satyapal and P. Chandra, *Sixty Years of Congress: India Lost: India Regained* (Lahore 1946).
5. The term *achhut* or untouchable was also used by the Dalits in their struggles and movements in UP to mean 'pure' or 'untouched', giving it a new radical meaning. This point is also noted by Shastri. He further emphasised that the Dalits should organise under a new separate *achhut* identity and give up their separate caste identities. I use the term *achhut* and Dalit interchangeably.
6. The Poona-Pact was signed between the Dalit leaders and caste-Hindu leaders. The Pact denied separate electorates for the Dalits, which were provided for by the British. Instead they were allotted more reserved seats, where the elections were held separately for the Dalits and the caste-

Hindus. The Pact was signed in good faith, but the caste-Hindus betrayed the *achhuts* by not initiating any pro-Dalit policies.

7. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi 1992), p. 223.

8. *Aaj*.(Hindi daily) 18 February, 1947, the civil disobedience movement was launched by the Muslim League between February to June 1947 and Dalit participation was highlighted by the newspapers.

9. 'Letter from J.N. Mandal, 10 July, 1947, Enclosure I and II: representations by Western Pakistan SCF, Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal, Punjab Ravidass Sabha, Punjab Depressed Classes League, Punjab Municipal Workers Federation', in Muhammad Sadullah (ed.), *The Partition of Punjab, 1947: A Compilation of Official Documents* (Lahore 1983), Vol. I(Two Vols.) pp. 142-9.

10. Sekhar Bandyopahyay, 'From Alienation to Integration: Changes in the Politics of Caste in Bengal, 1937-47'(*Indian Economic Social and History Review* Vol. 31 No. 3 1994) p. 391. Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947* (Delhi 1996), pp. 191-203.

11. For a more detailed discussion of the elections of 1946, see chapter 1 of my unpublished M. Phil. thesis, 'The Making of the Scheduled Caste Community in U.P.: A study of the SCF and the Dalit Politics, 1946- 1948', submitted to the Department of History, University of Delhi, 1996.

12. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religion as Social Vision: The Movement Against Untouchability in 20th Century Punjab* (Berkeley 1982), p. 164.

13. Owen Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India* (New York 1969) pp. 86-7.

14. Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (New Delhi 1997), p.276.
15. It was also put forward at the Simla Conference in 1945. B.R. Ambedkar, 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables', in Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr. Balasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* (Bombay 1990), Vol. IX, Appendix XI, pp.346-9.
16. An important speech in which the British formally offered Dominion Status to India. *Speeches by The Marquess of Linlithgow. Vol. II, Nov. 1938-Oct. 1943*, Government of India (New Delhi 1944) pp. 64-8.
17. Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr. Ambedkar*, (Bombay 1990), Vol. X, 'A Critique of the Proposals of Cabinet Mission', pp. 538.
18. *Papers Relating to the Cabinet Mission to India 1946*. Govt. of India (New Delhi 1946) p.100.
19. Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr. Ambedkar*, (Bombay 1990), Vol. X, 'A Critique of the Proposals of Cabinet Mission', pp. 523-8.
20. *The Pioneer* (English daily) 21 February, 1946.
21. Shastri also recognises a shift in Jagjivan Ram's position. Shastri, *Poona-Pact* (Lucknow 1994) p.50.
22. Nalin Vilochan Sharma, *Jagjivan Ram, A Biography* (Patna undated) pp. 127-132.
23. This paragraph is based from the reports in *The Pioneer* 18, 21, 28 and 29 June, 1946.
24. F. No. 41/4/47-R 'Request from the Scheduled Castes of U.P.'. Secretariat of the Governor-General Reforms, National Archives of India (New Delhi).
25. They further emphasised their relationship with the Congress through the involvement of Chowdhary Jaipal Singh and Kumar Ashram. Jaipal Singh, a Congress MLA from Faizabad

(Lucknow) attended the conference at Meerut. Kumar Ashram was established by a prominent Congressman Algu Rai Shastri in 1924 to undertake *achhutodhar* programme in the Meerut region.

26. F. No. 41/4/47-R, Two pamphlets, 'To Boycott Mahatma Gandhi is justified', and 'The Poona-Pact - A Political Fraud'.

27. Based on the reports of Police Abstracts of Intelligence for the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Weekly, (hereafter PAI) for 1946, CID Office, Lucknow, UP. These are Meerut, Bareilly, Muzaffarnagar, Aligarh, Etah, Etawah, Kanpur, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur and Kheri.

28. PAI, 21 and 27 June, 1946.

29. PAI, 16 August, 1946.

30. *The Pioneer*. 17,18,19,23,25, 29 and 30 July, and 16 August, 1946.

31. *Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly U.P. 1946*, Vol. XXIV. Official Report (Allahabad 1947), pp. 7-8.

32. *Vartman* (Hindi daily). 22 July, 1946. It was argued, in the editorial that the Gandhian satyagraha was used to legitimise a political farce and to satisfy the personal ambitions of Dr Ambedkar.

33. PAI, 26 July and 23 August, 1946.

34. PAI, 26 July and 2 August, 1946.

35. PAI, 2, 9, and 16 August, 1946.

36. PAI, 9 August and 20 September, 1946.

37. PAI, 30 August, 1946.

38. PAI, 20, 22, 27 September and 18 October, 1946.

39. PAI, 8 November, 1946.
40. PAI, 20 September, 1946 and 25 October, 1946. In Agra, in an apparent cultural attack against the Hindus, the Dalits were asked "to boycott Ramlila celebrations". 27 September, 1946.
41. PAI, 22 February and 15 March, 1946.
42. *The Pioneer*. 11 June, 1946.
43. *Aaj* (Hindi daily). 12 August, 1946 and *The Peoples Age* (English weekly). 29 September, 1946.
44. PAI, 18 October, 1946.
45. *Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of U.P.*, Vol. XXXVIII, 25 April, 1947.
46. The first reference is noted in PAI, 20 September, 1946.
47. Dr. Ambedkar was elected on 19 July, 1946, cited in R.K. Kshirsagar, *Dalit Movements in India and its Leaders: 1857-1956* (New Delhi 1994), p. 162.
48. PAI, 20 September, 1946.
49. PAI, 30 August, 1946.
50. PAI, 18 October, 1946.
- ⁵¹ PAI, 6 December, 1946
52. PAI, 6 December, 1946.
53. PAI, 8 and 22 November, 1946.
54. PAI, 13 December, 1946.
55. For a detailed discussion on this issue, Vijay Parshad, 'The Killing of Bala Shah and the Birth of Valmiki', Vol. 32 No. 3 *IESHR* 1995.
56. *Aaj*. 10 November, 1946.

57. PAI, 27 September, 8 November and 13 December, 1946.

58. S. Bandyopadhyay described the politics of SCF as a "separatist" strand among the Scheduled Castes" which "appears to have been marginalised in view of the extended franchise (the results of 1946 elections). He attributes the separatist posture to "ambitious urban middle class leadership, which evinced decidedly more interest in institutional politics than in mass mobilisation". Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (*IESHR* 1994) p. 367, 373, 377 and 381.

59. PAI, 27 December, 1946.

60. I have argued this in Chapter One of my M.Phil. thesis.

61. PAI, 18 and 25 October, 1946.

62. PAI, 13 October, 1944.

63. Ibid. Shastri (1994), p. 116.

64. *The Pioneer*. 2 July, 1946.

65. *The Pioneer*. 18 July, 1947.

66. There is an unmistakable parallel with the recent decision of the Bahujan Samaj Party to form a government in UP with the support of the caste-Hindu party, the Bharatiya Janta Party. BSP leaders argued that as far as Dalit priorities are concerned, there was no difference between the Congress, the BJP and the Samajwadi Party. I say parallel because both Ambedkar and BSP made a radical shift in what received opinion understood as their supposedly 'natural' political position. Since there was already a precedent in Ambedkar's decisive departure to claim a position of *power*, the BSP followed this example and formed the Government in UP. The comparison underlines the Dalit point of view vis a vis the capturing of state power.

67. *The Pioneer*. 10 May, 1947.

68. R.K. Kshirsagar, *Dalit Movements* (New Delhi 1994). pp. 230-2, 235-8, 253-5 and 372-4.
69. I owe this reference to Saurabh Dube. F. No. 108 CF 1f947, DC Nagpur Memo No. 521/CC dated Nagpur 20 November, 1947 to Chief Secy. to Govt. of CP and Berar, Central Provinces Govt., Pol. & Mil. Confidential Dept.
70. *The Leader*. 26 April, 1948.
71. *National Herald*. 26 April, 1948.
72. *The Leader*. 27 April, 1948.
73. *The Leader*. 27 April, 1948.
74. *National Herald*. 27 April, 1948.
75. *Vartaman*. 27 April, 1948, my translation.
76. Owen Lynch, *Politics of Untouchability* (New York 1967), p. 40.
77. Most of these twenty one districts were located in Agra, Rohilkhand, Meerut, Jhansi and Lucknow divisions of the province, mainly in central and western UP. These meetings became a regular feature from April 1948 onwards and were organised almost every week for fortnight. On average, participation by the Dalits in these meetings varied from 400 to 500 persons although in some meetings their numbers rose to 1500 (Aligarh) and 1000 (Fatehpur). These statements are based on the PAI reports for 1948.
78. PAI, 19 March and 30 July, 1948.
79. Roughly translated, these slogans call for the destruction of Hindu society or community, of the Congress government, of the code of Manu, and of the enemies of the *Achhuts*. 'SCF Fatehpur Ka Sandesh'. PAI, 3 and 24 September, 1948. Such slogans were also raised in other meetings at Barielly and Fatehpur.

80. The agitation began in Jalaun and involved around twelve districts of the province located mainly in the Western and Central UP. Based on the PAI reports, 1948. There are no official reports available after 1948, especially the detailed PAI reports. The paucity of sources is further compounded by absence of reports in newspapers.

81. PAI, 6 August, 1948. According to Intelligence reports the protest was mainly organised by the Chamar castes, which constitute, even today, almost sixty per cent of the total Scheduled Caste population in UP. They provided the bulk of agricultural labour to the caste-Hindus and zamindars. In the zamindari areas of Awadh and Saryapur plain they constituted more than 90 per cent of the work force, in eastern UP 96 per cent of the workforce, and in western UP about 70 per cent of the agricultural labour. A.B. Mukerji, *The Chamars of Uttar Pradesh: A study of Social Geography* (Delhi 1980), pp. 94-97.

82. PAI, 9, 30 July, and 13 August, and 15 October, 1948.

83. In police station Bhutta of Bareilly, "the police forced four Chamars to take a dead body to the mortuary". PAI, 13 August, 1948.

84. Official reports mention such instances for areas like Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Jaunpur, Etawah, and Jalaun. In Bijnor "the villagers retaliated by not permitting Chamars to graze cattle in their lands, while in Bulnadshahr the zamindars have begun to curtail the privileges enjoyed by the Chamars". PAI 9, 23 July and 10, 17 September, 1948.

85. This Kind of protest took place in Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Sultanpur, Etawah, Jhansi, Kanpur, Hardoi, Bareilly, Jaunpur, Hardoi, Jalaun, Basti and Hamirpur. PAI, 23 July to 15 October, 1948.

86. *National Herald*. 26 April, 1948.

87. PAI, 18 June, 1948.

88. Harijan Sahayak Department, F. No. 164/1946, Box No. 370, UP State Archives (Lucknow).
89. Shastri, *Poona-Pact* (Lucknow 1994), p. 9. It forms a major theme of his work.
90. *Ibid.*, p.41.
91. Dilip Menon makes a similar point in the context of Malabar in his book, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India in Malabar, 1900-1948* (New Delhi 1994), p. 145.
92. The intelligentsia represented leaders and activists from various caste mahasabhas. Chamars, Jatavs, Ravidassis, Balmikis, Kabir Panthis and the Adi-Hindu ideologues based in urban centres played a crucial role in formulating the new agenda.