

THE DALIT MOVEMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INDIAN
INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

TUĞBA ÖZDEN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

SEPTEMBER 2005

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ABSTRACT

THE DALIT MOVEMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

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This thesis analyses the Dalit Movement with regards to the twentieth century Indian nationalism and independence movement. Within this epoch, India was dealing with both internal and external problems, and this thesis confronts with the process of double freedom movement rolled into one, in India. On one side Indian nation was fighting against the British Imperialism and on the other hand the least level of the ancient Hindu social order *varna*, the Untouchables, were fighting against the higher castes for eradication of their historical backwardness. This solution of both problems pointed out changes in social and political terms.

The mentioned movement under the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who is recognized as the architect of the Indian constitution, aimed to obtain both political and social rights and freedom for the Untouchables. By this movement, Dalits initially managed to attain political rights and to outlaw discrimination among people. And then, in order to facilitate the integration of Dalits within the social sphere, they decided to convert from Brāhmanism to Buddhism in year 1956 and ten thousands of Dalits converted following Dr. Ambedkar.

In the present day, the ex-Untouchables are living under the umbrellas of

Buddhism, Islam or Christianity in various parts of India. Even though the mentioned ex-Untouchables survive normally and non-problematically in urban, those of them living in the rural front against the violence of radical rightist, nationalist Hindus.

Key words: Untouchables, Dalit, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, India

ÖZ

HİNT KURTULUŞ MÜCADELESİ BAĞLAMINDA DALİT HAREKETİ

Özden, Tuğba

Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi : Doç. Dr. Mustafa Soykut

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Bu tez, Hint Kurtuluş mücadelesi döneminde yürütülen Dalit hareketini incelemektedir. Anılan dönemde Hindistan iç ve dış karışıklıklar ile mücadele etmekteydi. İç içe geçmiş iki kurtuluş hareketinde, Hindistan bir taraftan İngiliz Emperyalizmine karşı savaş verirken, öte yandan Hint Kast sisteminin en altında yer alan 'Dokunulmazlar' tarih boyunca maruz bırakıldıkları ayırım ve aşağılamayı bertaraf etmek için bir hareket başlatmışlardı.

Hint Anayasası'nın mimarı olarak tanınan Dr. Ambedkar'ın önderliğinde başlattıkları bu hareketle amaçları gerek siyasi gerek sosyal haklara kavuşmak olan Dokunulmazlar; öncelikle bir takım siyasi haklara kavuştular, insanlar arasında güdülen ayırımın anayasaca yasaklanmasını sağladılar; daha sonra da halk arasında kabul görmek, daha kolay uyum sağlamak için 1956 senesinde Maharashtra'da Dr. Ambedkar liderliğinde on binlerce 'Dokunulmaz' din değiştirerek Budizm'i seçtiler.

Günümüzde de Hindistan'ın çeşitli yerlerinde Budizm, İslam, Hristiyan dinleri çatısı altında yaşamakta olan eski Dokunulmazlar, büyük şehirlerde yaşamlarını sorunsuz olarak idame ettirmekle birlikte, ülkenin kırsal kesimlerinde aşırı sağcı, milliyetçi

Hinduların baskı, tahrik ve saldırılarına maruz kalmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dokunulmazlar, Dalit, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Hindistan

To my father

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses the transition period of India, in both political and social terms. The mentioned transition covers the efforts of Indian nation to overthrow the British rule for establishing an independent India and also the transition efforts of low castes on behalf of elevating their social position until they are equalized with any other Indian citizen.

Being one of the oldest civilisations of the earth, Indian civilizations emergence can be traced back least 5,000 years. Initially Aryan tribes invaded lands of Dravidians around 1.500 BC and cultures of these two foreign civilisations merged. These lands of attraction received many other incursions as well. Aryan invasion was followed by the assaults of Arabian, Turkish and European ones. Those diverse cultures melted in the pot of Indian lands and formed the present day Indian culture.

One of the most distinctive characters of the Indian culture is the *varna* or the caste order. This order categorizes Indian people into five groups. The first four groups are almost sharing intrinsic qualities. They are from top to bottom *Brāhman*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*. Roughly the first group, *Brāhmins* are the priests for spiritual guidance and intellectual nourishment of Indian society. *Kshatriyas* are the warriors to secure and govern India. *Vaishyas* , are traders and deal with agricultural and commercial undertakings. *Sūdras* are the labour class. Besides those mentioned four castes, there is one other group who are considered as outcastes. They are the Untouchables. The Untouchables are deprived of several basic human rights. They are considered to be impure to touch, to live together, to use public possessions or even to pray together.

Naturally, the Untouchables suffered the most by this social order. Even though there had been several attempts to conclude this implementation, they were unsuccessful weak attempts.

The new consciousness of the Untouchables were inspired by Mahatma Phule and initiated *de facto* by Babasaheb Ambedkar. Those were the times of British India. India was governed and economically exploited by the British powers. India, under the leadership of Mahatma Ghandi, was carrying a resistance against the British influence. Nevertheless, there was a group of Indians, who benefited the existence of the British. They were the Untouchables, because the British bestowed them several facilities, from education to career. Now it was the right time for Untouchables to achieve their own liberty. It was the right time for the reason that upper caste Indians were fighting for own freedom and to establish a new India. Before a new India was formed, the Untouchables had to move quickly and prevent founding of the old social order once again. They were willing to finish the degrading *varna* order and become ordinary, equal citizens. Initially all downtrodden people of India unified, including the Untouchables, and became the Dalits, as far as it indicated their political awareness and then they maintained constitutional safeguards for themselves. Under the light of the legal arrangements, the Dalits converted from Hinduism to Buddhism to cease their social integration successfully.

This dissertation explains this process of Indian freedom movement and the Dalit Movement that paved the way to the emergence of modern India. Both movements were against exploitation at all levels; on the other hand while one was realized on behalf of India's revival in all means, the other one was an anti-systemic one. Upper castes Indians were contesting the British exploitation and manipulation in India. They were trying to consolidate their sovereignty by expelling the British. Simultaneously, the Untouchables were historically downtrodden by the upper castes and now they wanted to destroy this order for reaching their own freedom. They were seeking their self-determination in regard to political participation, economic strategy, social and religious freedom.

This work is arranged in five chapters. The first chapter provides a brief political history of India beginning by the colonization period to the end of independence

movement. In the second chapter, the ancient social order of India defined. Within this context focus put on the Dalits and the Dalit Movement. As for the third chapter, the Dalit Movement is introduced with its two prominent leaders Jotiba Govind Phule and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. The fourth chapter is about the attitude of Gandhi and the Congress on the subject of the Dalit movement. In the last chapter, the last step of the Untouchables to discard the effects of ancient *varna* order is mentioned, that was a religious conversion. Moreover, the aftermath of this conversion and the condition of ex-Untouchables are considered.

Methodologically, due to lack of indigenous analyses on the theme of this thesis, writings of extra-regional scholars are widely used in addition to the, autobiographies, speeches and press releases of prominent characters of the mentioned era. Furthermore, contemporary newspapers, party programs and releases of international and non-governmental organisations are scrutinized. The literature is composed of historical, sociological, religious or political analyses, therefore, interpretation and combination of these documents is crucial for not only to appreciate the episode but also to examine the contemporary developments.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND UNTIL INDEPENDENCE

1.1 Caste

The tremendous geographical diversities of India, from snowy mountains in the north to tropical rain forests in the south, from arid desert in the west to alluvial flood plain in the east, correspond with the diversity of human cultures. These cultures exhibit diverse social modes.¹ Stratification of Indian culture is diversified as other Asiatic communities; yet, India's social formation is perceived to be the most developed form of the caste system.² Occupation, functions and skin colour are imperative role-players, in addition to class, caste, tribe, kinship relations, socio-economic conditions and heredity, of this hierarchical formation.

The word caste has its origins in Portuguese as *casta*, which means specie, race or tribe. However, this term does not actually cover the meaning that the Sanskrit word *varna* provides, because, as I will point out in the forthcoming lines, *varna* is the symbiote of Hinduism, and has a religious stratification of the Indian society. It implies the four main and social classes in addition to two outsider groups and all those classes have numerous sub-classes called *jat* or *jati*. *Jati* means birth.³ The word caste is far from illustrating the caste distinctions, *varna ashramas* in Sanskrit, but just collect all of them under one label.⁴ *Jatis* are kinship groups and the members of each, perform very similar occupations. Because local *jatis* denote

¹ Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil, *State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India*, Past and Present, no.123 (May 1989) p. 123.

² Raja Jayaraman, *Caste and Class: Dynamics of Inequality in Indian Society* (Delhi: Hindustan Cooperation, 1981) p. 9.

³ Stanley Wolpert, *India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) p.118.

⁴ Vedantam Vatsala, *Still Untouchable*, Christian Century, 6/19/2002.

occupational identity, common customs, taboos and traditions some sociologists argue *jatis* to be more meaningful unites than *varnas*.⁵

This system is the most deep-rooted organization of Indian society, that is why even though the system is the order of discrimination, such enlightened social reformers as Mahatma Gandhi never dared to attack it⁶, because his faith taught him that *varnas* can not undergo changes, their number and what they were to be were unalterably set in *Vedic* days and described in the sacred books.⁷ Albeit *varna* has its origins in Hinduism, the Hindu caste system has become a part of Indian social life including other religious and ethnic groups as Muslims, Christians, Jews, Mongoloids, Dravidians etc. as well. It is because, several different ethnic and religious groups live together in India and each is as much as Indian as a Hindu. “...whether Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jain or Parsi, the cult of solidarity and tolerance is cultivated there to its utmost.”⁸

The *varna* structure is explained by the *Purusha Sukta* myth.⁹ Among Hindus it is believed that, *varnas* are separate body parts of the creator Brāhma and this sacrificial myth of creation takes place in Rig Veda¹⁰ (Rig Veda, X. 90.12) , which is one of the four main holy *vedas*¹¹ of Hinduism.¹²

⁵ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947* (London: Macmillan, 1992) p.54.

⁶ Wolpert, op.cit, p.118.

⁷ S.V. Desika Char, *Caste, Religion and Country: A View of Ancient and Medieval India* (New Delhi: Sangam Books, 1993) p.47.

⁸ Catherine Clement, *India: Of Crowds And Democracy* in ed. Geeti Sen (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993), p.53.

⁹ Vena Das, *Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 10.

¹⁰ Shanti Swarup Gupta, *Varna, Castes and Scheduled Castes: A Documentation in Historical Perspective*, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1991) p. 13.

¹¹ Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. Still some other books are mentioned to be holy books, for instance Ramayana and Mahabhartar are wide spread.

¹² Beatrice Lamb, *India: A World in Transition* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc. Publishers, 1964).

When the gods spread the sacrifice with the Man as the offering, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation.

They anointed the Man, the sacrifice born at the beginning, upon the sacred grass.

When they divided the Man (*Purusha*)...His mouth became the Brāhmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born.¹³

The ancient code of India, the Laws of Manu, sets the rights and duties of Hindu society. This sacred Hindu book of law is written circa 400BC. Laws of Manu give the details of religious obligations, basic rituals, ceremonies as birth, death, marriage, dietary et cetera. This code prescribes the traditional caste system, as well. One of the leading political figures of India, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar utter in a speech that Manu had proclaimed the gospel, which Nietzsche sought to preach, long before Nietzsche was born. This is a religion, which is not intended to establish liberty, equality and fraternity. It rather proclaims the worship of the superman, who is the Brāhmin, by the rest of the Hindu society. It propounds that the class of the Brāhmin are born to live and to rule. The rest of the society are born just to serve them. This gospel proposes that they no life of their own live, and no right to develop their own personality.¹⁴

Carla Power labels the caste system as a religiously sanctioned form of segregation.¹⁵ Analysing this verse, three deductions are made. First is, because *varna-vyavastha* is mentioned in the book, *varnas* are least five thousand years old. Secondly, this system is divine, because Rig Veda utters that; sections of Hindu society are body parts of the God. Lastly, for the reason that each *varna* is a different piece of *Virat Purush*, then those *varnas* also have a hierarchy within themselves.¹⁶

¹³ Wolpert, op.cit, p.117.

¹⁴ B. R Ambedkar, Ranade, *Gandhi and Jinnah*: Address delivered on the 101st Birthday Celebration of Mahadev Govind Ranade Held on the 18th January 1943 In the Gokhale Memorial Hall, Poona, (Bombay: Thacker&CO, LTD, 1943) Chapter V.

¹⁵ Carla Power, *Caste Away* , Mother Jones, 03628841, (Jul/Aug2001).

¹⁶ Gupta, Varna, *Castes and Scheduled Castes: A Documentation in Historical Perspective*, pp. 13-4.

The definite meaning of the word *varna* is colour. It is maintained in plentiful sources that, distinctions were made to distinguish Aryan invaders from non-Aryans, where Aryans were fair but the indigenous populace were brunette. There are stories about *varnas* being composed in accordance with skin colours. Mahabharata Brigu classifies four *varnas* respectively as fair, reddish, pale and black. Still this proposal is not applicable; it is impossible to match *varnas* with specific ethnic groups since fair-skinned people, Australians, Mongoloids and blacks are basic elements of India's ethnic *mixtum compositum*; and all are assorted with each other. The early inhabitants of Indian sub-continent are thought to be Negritos, and others as Proto-Austroloids like Australian aborigines. As for the recent ages, the dominant ethnic breeds are of Aryan origins, which make Indians to resemble Europeans than Chinese and other Asians. The Mongoloid type people can be detected only in the line bordering China. Still, invasions that India pulled all through the history, brought diverse people to India besides the mentioned types. Even supposing marriage restrictions prevented those types to be blended, yet some marriages occurred, producing a hybrid strain.¹⁷ This is why the Untouchables believed that "the only way to destroy casteism is to make marriage within one's caste unlawful!"¹⁸ The correlation between language and ethnic roots is rough. In the northern parts of India Indo-Aryan and in southern parts Dravidian is spread; the Himalayan tribes speak mainly Tibeto-Burman languages. All those languages have local splinter languages and dialects. Except linguistically homogeneous areas, which are small peasantry places, bi-lingualism or tri-lingualism is common.¹⁹

Within each of the *varnas* and *jatis*, members possess different rights, liberties and different practices of daily life and religious obligations. Some enjoy many privileges, where others are limited by a number of restrictions. Thus, the system is

¹⁷ Lamb, op.cit, pp. 14-6.

¹⁸ Sophie Baker, *Caste: At Home in Hindu India* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990) p. 139.

¹⁹ O.H.K Spate, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography* (London: Methuen&Co.LTD, 1954) pp. 124-5.

much abused.²⁰ For instance the *Shatapatha Brāhman* lays down different sizes of the funeral mound for the four classes.²¹ The caste distinctions, *varna ashramas*²², are determined by purity and high exclusivism. Higher castes are lofty, because of their purity, where the lowers are there due to their impurity. This cleanliness is used both for physical and spiritual connotations. Therefore the inter-caste or inter-*jati* relations are also regulated, according to status of each. In order to prevent *jatis* merging, endogamy is enforced. If this rule was broken, then those people became outcaste. Caste of a newborn is predetermined, because caste is hereditary. Moreover, it is impossible and intolerable to change the caste one belongs to, thus each individual lingers within that caste up until to death. “In theory, the position of individuals and the ascriptive groups to which they belonged were fixed, though in practice, each caste developed myths, which made exceptions for itself, and some quite successfully altered their relative status.”²³ Due to the rigidity of this caste system, the social relations between castes are weak and limited. Superior classes even do not eat with inferior standings. If the rule restricting the marriage among different *jatis* is broken, then the society prohibits this family, they are excluded and sinful. The Hindu caste system is thus the most strict one among other correspondents.

For the reason that each *varna* and *jati* has a certain profession, there is a direct correlation between the economic status and social strata. “...the traditional caste system, while in many ways unique in its cultural features, was nevertheless very clearly a ‘pre-modern’ system. It was correlated with an economic and political structure that is aptly characterized as a ‘feudal’ one”.²⁴ The strictly designed

²⁰ Vedantam Vatsala, *Still Untouchable*, Christian Century, 6/19/2002.

²¹ Govind Sadashiv Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969).

²² Vatsala, op.cit.

²³ Barbara R. Joshi, *Ex-Untouchable: Problems, Progress and Policies in Indian Social Change*, Pacific Affairs, Vol.53, No.2, (Summer, 1980) p. 195.

²⁴ Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India 1873 to 1930*, (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976) p. 66.

economic relations constituted challenge towards modernisation. “Caste economy was based on village economy. That made modernisation difficult. Because the penetration degree was limited.”²⁵ Higher groups enjoy spiritual, administrative and such major jobs, where lower *varnas* and *jatis* are mostly craftsman. The job that higher caste member does is non-polluting for the lower groups. For some scholars, caste was useful for formation of the Indian society, but as the time gone by, bonds among layers changed, they tightened and the relations became so much limited as upper classes wanted to set power relations with lower classes, so defined limits for the inferior classes as well as themselves. “Caste...according to Kasambi, originally had a positive function which enabled Indian society to be formed out of many diverse and even discordant elements, with the minimum use of violence.”²⁶

The four castes are *Brāhman*, *Kshatria*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*, hierarchically. Roughly they are priests; rulers, aristocrats and warriors; landlords and businessmen; and peasants. Duties of the priests, who are namely the *Brāhmins* are to preserve and protect the eternal laws of the *Dharma*, which is the universe. *Dharma* is also the destiny and it is the task of each person to follow own *Dharma*. If the person manages to be a good one, then after death her/his *Dharma* may reborn as an upper caste member. The class of rulers and warriors namely the *Kshatriyas* are the defenders and the guarantors of the safety and security of the community. As for the business people *Vaisyas*, they are the conservers and distributors of wealth. And the fourth *varna* is the division for labourers, they are *Shudras* and they are the working majority involved in the production of essential commodities. Actually, even though there is a clear partition between the twice-born groups as the first three *Varnas*; the *Brāhman*, *Kshatria* and *Vaishya*; the last caste is referred as once born since they are considered to be so dirty to born again and in most districts of India, they are almost equal with the Untouchables, and the distinction among them is not precise.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid, p. 41.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 40.

²⁷ Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits Overcoming Violation and Violence*, Ecumenical Review, 00130796, (July 2002, Vol. 54, Issue 3).

In the hierarchy, the ruling class has a lower status than the religious people. “The sacred and political functions were separated well and clearly, where importance of political was second degree due to well distinction between royalty and priestly-hood.”²⁸ Even though there was a dichotomy between ruling and religious classes, sometimes the ruler asked for more sacred position. So he caused conflict with *Brāhmanical* order. For instance the founder of Jainism was the ruling prince Mahavir, who asked for more sanctified claims and set off a conflict with *Brāhmans*.²⁹

Still there are two other groups, who are not worthy to fall within the caste system so they are outcastes: Panchamas (fifths) -who later known as the Untouchables- and foreigners. *Malecha* tags the foreigners or invaders. The Untouchables are the polluting populace, thus they are entitled with polluting services as dishwashing, grave digging, body washing, cremating, cleaning etc. Foreigners are recognized same as the Untouchables in some places; in diverse parts of India they are treated differently. In his article Clarke maintains that; when the Indian society is investigated through the lens of caste, then two distinct and distinguishable components of society comes out.³⁰ One is the Untouchables and the other is *varna* members. These two components exist within their own geographical, cultural, social, political and economic worlds, and their interaction is proscribed by centuries of religio-social constraints and constrictions.³¹

²⁸ Omvedt, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 59.

³⁰ Clarke, op.cit.

³¹ Ibid.

1.2 Colonization

Asia continent; with all its abundant products, wide spread trade, well established culture and traditions, was the most precious centre of the world. The mist of its religions and culture, the exoticity of its languages, the wealth and progressiveness of Asia drew Europeans to itself. “In the middle of the seventeenth century, Asia still had a far more important place in the world than Europe.”³² The special conditions of Europe, particularly in England and France, pushed them in a nation state building process. As a result of this process, industrial developments and capitalism emerged. It was possible for those states to obtain cheap and copious raw material from the lands of Asia in addition to cheap labour. India offered more of these boons for United Kingdom. This is why; the British named India ‘Jewel in the Crown’. India remained under the British rule from 1858 until 1947.

The riches of Asia were incomparably greater than those of the European States. Her industrial techniques showed a subtly and a tradition that the European handicrafts did not possess. And there was nothing in the more modern methods used by the traders of the West countries that Asian trade had to envy. In matters of credit, transfer of funds, insurance and cartels, neither India nor Persia nor China had anything to learn from Europe.³³

All through its history, India received several conquests from all geographical directions, owing to its richness. Besides the material wealth, India was prosperous with literature, architecture and arts. The early Indian civilization, beginning in the Indus Valley and almost newly unearthed cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, which are the lands that we now recognize as Pakistan, can be compared to Sumerian, Mesopotamian or Egyptian civilizations, because it was developed as much as them. Such a high-culture was an *ultra nemo scit quid contineatur*³⁴, thus attracted attentions of various civilisations, and was invaded for several times. In early times

³² Auguste Toussaint, *The History of the Indian Ocean* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966) p. 88.

³³ Ibid p. 131.

³⁴ An ocean in which what is hidden is not known by anyone.

of history, North of India was invaded by Central Asian tribes. Huns were the next invaders of India and they defeated the Gupta Empire by coming together with other Central Asian tribes. And then, Muslim conquests began. Especially Persian occupations left an everlasting mark in India. As for the 15th century, following the Muslim take over, Portuguese traders were entering into India. For the Portuguese, the experience of *pasar a donde nascent las especerias*³⁵ was extremely important. While the Portugal state was funding navigations to explore economical routes in the direction of India, publishers within the Portugal were occupied by publishing booklets and *portolanos*³⁶ about this country and geographical findings for those willing to cruise towards India. By mid 16th century a new empire was rising in lands of India, the Mongol Empire. European traders, the British, French and Dutch were coming to India in early 17th century. Among the European powers, the British managed to consolidate own rule in India and initiated a new era, whose impact is still visible in the contemporary India. The British achieved to settle their own political rule and introduced Western culture, life style and technology there. So, India met numerous conquests among its aged history, and the colonial trend beginning with the 15th century, which left a different mark on present-day India.

The verb ‘to colonize’ does not mean ‘to exploit’ but means ‘to make your home somewhere’ and implies conveying Christianity and ‘civilization’. However this was not the case.

A ‘colonizing activity’, we have called it, but we must add that the word ‘colonizing’ is not meant in the popular sense; or perhaps we should say that, on the contrary, it was true colonization. Is not peaceful penetration, both economic and cultural, and occurring with the full consent of those colonized, for whom it proves beneficial and lasting in its effects, is not this, in fact, real colonization?³⁷

³⁵ *Pasar a donde nascent las especerias* (Port.): To pass through the lands, where herbs are born.

³⁶ *Portolano* (It.): A booklet analysing a coasts climate, sea, etc. features.

³⁷ Toussaint, op. cit., p. 61.

By the 15th century, European states began conquering and settling in diverse areas of the world, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This trend has political, economic and social aspects. Especially, after the European states managed to form modern nation states and this nation state formation process ended up with capitalism and the colonizing process emerged due to raw material necessity. The colonizers not only spoiled the natural sources, but also the cultural, historical remains, belief systems and social organization styles.

After the first travel of Columbus, who is considered to be the *amplificator mundi*³⁸, Kings of Spain and Portugal shared the world. They had drawn an imaginary line on world map with Tordesillas Agreement signed in 1494. Consequently, Portuguese became the possessors of the lands beyond Eastern border of Spain and Spanish became the possessors of the lands beyond Western border of Spain. The Portuguese immediately launched geographical discoveries. They promoted their existence in India and arrived in Indian Ocean by the year 1498 by using the most lucrative route passing through the East and South Africa and the Persian Gulf. Without encountering other European powers, the Portuguese enjoyed power in India for about a hundred years and made huge profits of the spice trade from Asia to Europe. Afterwards, traders of other European countries' arrived in India. Following the Dutch, Danish, English and French appeared in India. Among those the British and the French became significant and as the result of the rivalry between these two states, the British became the winner of India. As the Munghal Empire began to collapse, the British Company, the East India Company, was the forerunner of European companies to rush in and to settle factories in diverse parts of India. The British achieved this via offering some profits for the local merchants. Moreover, the British appeared so insistent about obtaining trade concessions by the Indian government. Actually, the British existence in India began via the East India Company.

³⁸ Amplificator mundi (Lat.): The one who broadens the borders of the world.

Dr. Ambedkar, who is the chief architect of Indian Constitution and the leader of the Dalit movement, in his writing entitled 'India on the Eve of the Crown Government' lays the justification of the British imperialism.

Unlike the Greeks who did not have even a word for imperialism ... the Romans were the world's first and greatest imperial people and they coined a justification for imperialism that became the heritage of their successor. They proclaimed that they were a people of superior race with a culture too high to be compared with any other, that they had better system of administration, that they were versed in the arts of life. They also proclaimed that the rest were people of inferior race with a very low culture and were absolutely devoid of the arts of life, and that their administration was very despotic. As a logical consequence of this the Romans argued that it was their divine mission to civilise their low lying brethren, nay to conquer them and superimpose their culture in the name of humanity. The British have justified their imperial policy in India by similar argumentation.³⁹

Even though the aim of the British was to make profit of their rule in India, since they began dominating Indian trade and politics, via using the raw material cultivated on Indian lands in manufacturing done in British lands and then by exporting the manufactured goods back to India, on the other side they contributed to the modern development of Sub-Continent. The European rulers of India brought advanced systems of postage, printing, transport. The mentioned developments brought the country together, facilitated the political organization of castes in terms of exchange of views, to inform affiliates of the developments, to coordinate and realize meetings, to record and archive political achievements to transmit the forthcoming generations. The language that British introduced in India served as the link language among different districts. The British also familiarize the Indians with the civil and penal codes. This endorsement brought new principles, be it justice, freedom and equality. Many castes have their constitutions printed by taking the new values in to account. It can be even said that the British existence in India paved the way to a modern social system, by softening the strict caste interactions.⁴⁰

³⁹ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, *India On the Eve of The Crown Government*.

⁴⁰ M.H. Srinivas, *Caste In Modern India*, (The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.16, No.4 Aug., 1957) pp. 530-1.

1.3 The British East India Company

The British East India Company (BEIC) was established as a joint-stock company. This Company was given a special status and Royal privileges, a Royal Charter, to enjoy out the monopoly resting on the East Indies. The mentioned Royal Charter was given by Queen Elizabeth I on December 31, 1600. In the same year William Hawkins, the captain of the ship of East India Company, began trading.⁴¹ The BEIC is brought into being by various forces coming together. The -European world had been divided between Spain and Portugal by a decree from the Church of Rome. The capitalism was developing within Europe. Companies were being formed. The locality of Indian Ocean was under the control of Spain and Portugal, when Portugal was under protectorate of Spain. Philip II, the King of Spain and Portugal had died in 1598 and then the constraint around Indian Ocean dissolved. The other European states were eager to initiate trade, by transporting the goods, especially spices of India. Those were the times, when men were ready to die in search of them, as many did.⁴² Among those European trades companies, one of a British origin began rising in Indies. It was the British East India Company.

The British East India Company entered India as the commercial body. In time, it transformed into a ruling body. "Its only business was to govern India and to get paid very well for this service."⁴³ However, because India was a challenging field and the Company was not a professional governor, it easily lost its control over Indian lands. At the end the power that the Company held was totally transferred to the British Government with all military tasks in addition and the Company dissipated in 1858.

⁴¹ Clement, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴² Brian Gardner, *The East India Company: A History* (New York: Dorset Press, 1990) p.18.

⁴³ Hermann Kulke, Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 240.

By the early 17th century, the Company, which is mentioned as the 'John Company' or 'Company Bahadur', began its trading activities in order to sell manufactured goods of Britain. However, the demand they found was much lower than the demand they expected. After observing the Portuguese traders, they decided to reverse the commercial action, and began selling the authentic items they bought from India in Britain. Actually, not only Britain but also the entire European continent was their target, but the Company was not ready to compete with other European companies. However, due to the laws of England, the Company was permitted to monopolize in the homeland, so it had a full control over the British market. Not only the British market, but also the other colonies of Britain were suitable markets for selling the Indian goods. One other advantage of the Company was, because they did not use middlemen and they used the largest ships on the route between Britain and India, they did not waste any money, thus their profits were higher than the others.

Subsequently, to become the champion of Indian trade, the British needed special concessions of the Indian government. After several unsuccessful attempts, in 1615 Sir Thomas Roe managed to earn the concessions from the Munghal Emperor Jahangir. Sir Thomas Roe returned to his country with a commercial treaty. According to the agreement, the British got the rights to establish factories in diverse parts of India. As for the Indian counterpart, the British promised the emperor for anything asked from the European market. The Munghal Emperor Jahangir was very content with this agreement. He wrote a letter to Sir Thomas Roe and extended his happiness about the newly created link among them. Moreover, he highlighted that all the British traders had to be encouraged to arrive whichever port they wish, and to settle in wherever they would like to settle.⁴⁴

The first goal of the British East India Company was Surat, where many factories were founded. Then the company overtook the places, Goa and Bombay, which were controlled by the Portuguese, initially, and then the influence areas of the Dutch were overtaken by the British agents. Other factories mushroomed in Calcutta and Madras. This expansion was not a threat for Munghal emperor; he invited the

⁴⁴ Arthur D. Innes, *A Short History of the British In India*, (London: Methuen&CO, 1985), pp. 39-49.

British capitalists to the Bengal region of India. The main trade units were cotton, silk, indigo, saltpetre and tea. The concessions were granted in 1615 and when the calendar year was 1647, the Company had 23 factories all around India. However, it was still not the single owner of the command in India. In fact, even though the emperor displayed an unlimited hospitality to the British commerce organizations, the indigenous people and administrators were not that happy with their existence and even they were hostile against them. Besides the hostile local administrators, the other imperial powers were still present in India, and as a result of capitalist competition, the rivalry amongst them was harsh. The British colonizers were vastly adamant to keep the leadership in India and were ready to make all essential measures to disqualify the challenges appear before them. Thus, the second step of the British East India Company to colonize India was by means of gaining political power in order to have rights to control all other challenging elements. The most striking leg of this plan was using the military function. In composing the army, the British did not hesitate to use the local habitants as military personnel, certainly in non martial classes. It is known that out of 200.000 soldiers of the British Army, only 65.000 were the British soldiers and the rest is composed of the native Indians.⁴⁵ After obtaining right to keep military, it also got numerous administrative rights. Those concessions about administration were small contracts; but gave the British government enormous rights to interfere in the domestic and international affairs on India. For instance, the British attained right to mint money or to make alliances, war and peace. In other words, British became a governor partner.

On the other hand, the company was not harmonious at all. Factions aroused. Some of the British commercial companies began to seek independent deals.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, the Company was irritated by those small companies, who were willing to trade independently; hence, by using their power to influence the Congress, the British East India Company formed a lobby for itself and then

⁴⁵ Mustafa Soykut, *Dinler Tarihi Perspektifinden Hindistan Kökenli Dinler ve İdeolojik Çatışmalar*, (Doğu Batı 2004/05), p.98.

⁴⁶ Burke Quraishi, *The British Raj in India: An Historical Review*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press:1995), pp. 20-2.

enforced some new acts. Those acts made it almost impossible for a small commerce company to suspend in India without merging with British East India Company. According to this code, the Royal Charter was nullified in a sense, because from now on, the British companies needed to deserve the permit of the Congress for trading within India. Besides the original British East India Company, new corporations emerged, for instance 'English Company Trading to the East Indies', which was also funded by the British state; however none of them managed to break the domination of the old company, since it both had the largest share of funding from British treasury and the political authority within India. The English Company Trading to the East Indies was also very unrelenting to hold a significant share of the trade; accordingly it competed with BEIC a lot, even though the earliest company seemed almost undefeatable. By the year 1702, both companies merged to form the United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies.

All through the eighteenth century, a struggle between the Company and the British Parliament came into sight. The Company was trying to establish an enduring establishment, where the British Parliament was regretful of the concessions given to them and firm about not making any other favours. Not only the Congress but also the rising power in India, France was another problem for the British Company. Their rivalry was far from being smooth. There were even fights taking place. A very possible war was hesitated due to the foreseen financial consequences. "The struggle for supremacy in India did cost a good deal of money."⁴⁷ At the end, by the year 1754, the expected war began, which is recognized as Seven Years War. The European States were in stress of guarding their territories in the borders of colonies. The concern was not only the Indian Sub-continent, but also African, Asian and American territories under control of the European states. Within the Indian Territory, troops of the French and the Company of Britain came across. As a result of Industrial Revolution, the war methods were shifted and the needs to uphold the armies and economy differed. In order to keep the economy alive and to sustain the military requirements, raw materials had a really big role. This necessity made Britain supreme than the other participants, since the British East India Company

⁴⁷ Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., p. 241.

possessed the fertile field of India. This situation made the Company more strong in the European and even in world market. Unavoidably, the British troops under the control of Robert Clive defeated the French commanded by Joseph François Dupleix in this war. As a result, by the year 1763 the Treaty of Paris was signed. According to the treaty, the French remained trading in small parts of India, which are determined by the British. Those were Pondicherry, Mahe, Karikal, Yanam and Chandernagar. Moreover, French were not allowed to keep military forces in Indian Land. Those limitations did not challenge the French from competing against the British Company. The victory of British did not stop confrontation of local native governors as well, for whom it was not easy to recognize a foreign rule in their homeland. In order to weaken the British domination, those local administrators were encouraged by the French, too. The region contemporarily known as Bengal was *quidam* of those confrontation areas and once again the winner was British. Consequently, the ruling Munghal Emperor Shah Alam left the reign and Robert Clive became the first British Governor of Bengal. One other area of conflict was the Maharashtra district. The precious trade port of Bombay was a disagreement subject between Marathas and the British. It was not so difficult to overtake Bombay for British, so they secured it as a result of British – Maratha War.⁴⁸

1.3.1 The Sepoy Mutiny 1857

Besides domestic confrontations towards the British domination in India, an uprising also took place within the army of Britain in Indian Lands, composed of Hindi speaking native Indians. Moreover, this revolt did not keep within army margins but spread among the civil Indians.

It is underlined in most of the sources that between 1763 and 1856 the foreign rule was not welcomed in India, many revolts, revolts and armed confrontations took place from the bottom level to the top. Especially most of the peasants, workers and

⁴⁸ Quraishi, *The British Raj in India: An Historical Review*, pp. 11-2.

urban middle class were revolting because of the spreading poverty largely due to the rapidly growing taxation introduced by the British officials on peasants and artisans. Because of the British goods entering the Indian market, the local commodities became obsolete. The foreign goods were almost impossible for the locals to compete. As the import and consumption of foreign goods increased, and the provisions made it easy to penetrate the Indian market, local economy began collapsing. Actually, Indian economy turned into an ordinary colonial economy, where raw materials were being cultivated and exported to industrialised states. The developed states, which are the European states, were using the raw materials as the input within their production and the manufactured goods produced by them was imported by the colonial states. This caused a trade balance deficit.

Majority of the institutions were not operating efficiently any more in India, for instance the justice system was displeasing. Neither the police nor the army powers were in an attempt to prevent torture, even though not encouraging it. Sen utters that because Indians lost confidence on the British justice, the British were no more assured of the fidelity of the natives.⁴⁹

Albeit, the lower economic classes were opposed to the foreign rule in India, there was a distinct group, namely Dalits, who were not complaining about the foreign existence, but considered it to be better than the native reign, because it could help them getting rid of the situation of being ignored. This issue will be undertaken in the following chapters.

The mutiny of 1857 is known also as the “First Indian War of Independence” since these uprisings in the Northern parts of India terminated the British existence. The British called it the ‘Mutiny’ because the Indian soldiers, who had helped them to conquer India had turned against them.⁵⁰ In his book Sen narrates that, the uprising of 1857 produced an enormous literature, that no military revolt has produced; and

⁴⁹ Snigdha Sen, *The Historiography of the Indian Revolt of 1857* (Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1992) p. 151.

⁵⁰ Kulke, Rothermund, *op.cit.*, p. 253.

this literature is dominated by the British historians, not Indians.⁵¹ The soldier rioting in Vellore (in Tamil Nadu - 1806), the Kol Uprising (1831), the Santhal Uprising (1855) and the Kutch Uprising (1816-1832) were the most significant uprisings against the British rule in India. Particularly, the army revolts were disrupting for the British forces in India since those upheavals were directly related with their authority. British army sepoys were the native Indians, where sepoy means the native troops in the British army, were angry with the wars they were forced to fight in on behalf of British and Christian interests, be it the Opium (Anglo-Chinese) War of 1840-42, or the Crimean War (Russia-Ottoman Empire) of 1854.

...this revolt of 1857 was neither a national war of independence nor simply a mutiny. It spread over much of the Northern India and affected many strata of the population. The new educated elite did not participate in it for fear of the chaos or restoration of the old order it might bring.⁵²

The British annexed the city of Awadh, which was famed as the wealthy and generous city, in the year 1856 to obtain huge returns. This was an event gathering the anger of majority of Indians. The hatred towards the British Company grew by this occasion and led many Indians to become more conscious about the foreign authority in their homeland.

All the aforementioned aversions caused the native people, led by the army members, to oppose against the British rule. But still what triggered the events was very interesting, which was the use of animal fat to grease the cartridges in new rifles. The cartridges were greased with a mixture of pig and cow fats, and those irritated *Sarrasins*⁵³ and Hindus collectively. Still, this claim is taken as a rumour, since the case is not proved. For Catherine Clement, every factor of peace and unity

⁵¹ Sen, op.cit., p. 5.

⁵² Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., p. 253.

⁵³ Sarrasin (Fr.): The French name used in medieval times, to indicate the Muslims.

boomerangs to turn into its opposite and leads to a massacre. She reminds that the cow is the symbol to save the nature and to preserve this symbol people are killed.⁵⁴

Because the cause disturbed both Muslims and Hindus they allied against the British and revolted with an immense solidarity. The immediate reaction of soldiers towards the British authorities paved the way for marginalisation which means the extremist nationalism was emerged. Among people of India, the mutiny was considered as a kind of national war of freedom. Actions towards foreign settlers and traders were taken seriously and organized activities were arranged. Even supposing entire groups being unified, still the discrimination towards the backward classes remained.⁵⁵ As far as the depleted classes were considered to be unclean, Hindu castes made an effort to keep in a distance with the Untouchables even during the struggle critical of the foreign rule in India. Also Muslims were not alongside with the Untouchables, because the cleanness notion has a pivotal place in the sphere of Islam. When the Untouchables saw the prejudices of allied groups, they became somehow more displeased with the traditional Hindu social system and ideas to get out of this circle began to deepen.

The mutiny began in Meerut and mutineers immediately marched to Delhi. The British were not ready to thwart events. The mutiny began in Eastern India, Bangladesh, which is currently the capital of Bangladesh, and then spread through the West India, to Delhi, covering almost all of the major centres as Bengal, Rajasthan, Aurangabad, Bihar, Orissa, Sambhalpur, Patna, Ranchi, Indore, Jhansi, Jabalpur, and Gwalior. Still, the revolt did not wrap complete India. After a huge part of Northern India was coated by the mutineers, the British could still arrange an army composed of Sikhs to fight against the insurgents, since the mutiny did not affect Sikh and Rajputana territories.

⁵⁴ Geeti Sen (ed.) *Perceiving India: Insight and Inquiry* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993) p. 57.

⁵⁵ Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., p. 253.

This mutiny was crushed by the British in late 1857. Initially the British forces recaptured Delhi and then the other places seized by the sepoys. While taking over those vicinities, the British did not miss to kill the sepoy masses. To take revenge the bodies of the sepoys were thrown into the carcasses of cows and pigs.

The British were not ready to confront such a revolt, so they were late to react and were completely shocked. Moreover, the mutineers were the soldiers, who were taught the war and martial arts by the British. Thus, tactically there were defects and gaps. Furthermore, the treasury was almost empty, which means it was not sufficient to obtain stuff to be used against the mutineers. The power of the British East Indian Company was diminishing day by day. The only backing for the Company within India was provided by the English educated elites.⁵⁶

Professor Ghurye thinks that the Mutiny drove home to the British rulers that the safety of British dominion in India was very closely connected with keeping the Indian people divided on the lines of castes. He quotes the opinions of contemporary Britons like Sir Lepel Griffin and James Kerr, who knew that caste divided the Indian people into small groups and obstructed the emergence of a nationalist sentiment. Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the maxim of 'Divide and Rule' began to be openly preached by historians and journalists.⁵⁷

As a result, several administrative reforms were made. Administrative courts were established. Due to the decisions of this court, the heavy taxes, especially on common consumption materials removed, but still revenue politics of British were not completely removed, most part of the economic and fiscal policies remained. Moreover some measures were taken to balance the uneven competition atmosphere in addition to the decision about leaving all the public offices for the native Indian people. Certainly those developments disturbed the British. In order to settle rebels down, the British chose the way to threaten natives, thus acted brutally and used weapons against them.

⁵⁶ Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., pp. 253-5.

⁵⁷ Srinivas, op.cit., p. 532.

Event though some historians regard the 1857 event as only a military revolt, some others take it as a military revolt ended by revolt of the people, so broadened into a mass upheaval.⁵⁸ Some even mark that, this mutiny was not that big to initiate a national independence struggle but it was only a small portion of an overall revolt and its importance is its role in encouraging the rest of the Indian society to participate.⁵⁹ This way or that way, the Sepoy Mutiny is a milestone in the history of Indian Liberation. The revolt gathered the sepoy and civil populace around the ideology of bringing the British rule down because it was a foreign rule.⁶⁰ It can be considered as the first serious step towards independence and the initial revolt against the British challenge before India's independence. Although the British took the control back, once they lost it in the early phase of the uprising and this encouraged Indians about the independence idea. For the mutineers, the Munghal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was chosen as the commander of their freedom insurgence. However, the British powers managed to consolidate their rule once again in India, thus Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled to Burma (now Myanmar) and died there under British confinement. So the Munghal Dynasty collapsed totally. The previous capital of India, which was Calcutta, was replaced by Delhi now.

1.4 The End of British East India Company

Because the Sepoy Mutiny did not spread all around India and because the mutineers were hushed up, the British had one more chance to reconcile its rule once again in these places, where she lost control during the Sepoy Mutiny. The gap opened by the loss of native soldiers was so big to substitute for the British army; even the technical superiority of the British army was still not adequate to overcome the challenges. One other challenge for the British was the unity obtained among Muslims and Hindus. The class system brought by the Hindu tradition caused the

⁵⁸ Sen, op.cit., p. 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.33.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.39.

Untouchables to be left out of this unity, which paved the way for an alternative ally for the British and an alternative movement for prospect of the Untouchables during liberation process of India.

With the defeat of 1858, some diverse political views also appeared among Indians. For instance 'extremists' appeared. The extremists were absolutely against the British rule in India. They were hardcore nationalists of India. On the other hand, there were moderates, who were not that much critical of the British existence in India. For moderates, the British provided India liberal and modern measures; brought technology and introduced modern education system, constructed modern railways, postal organization, factories and telegram.⁶¹

Whilst such debates were going on among native Indians, the British rulers of India were so much eroded by the 1857 mutiny. As population, land size and diversity it was so hard from now on to control India as a company, and the Company lost its administrative quality. British government, under the prime ministry of Lord Palmerson, offered a bill to the House of Commons to examine Indian affairs under a council composed of those who experienced India. Later the council offered to take over all authority from the Company. " 'All to be mine' noted the Queen."⁶² As a result the British Crown assumed direct control of India, and the British East India Company was dissolved.

1.5 The British Raj

As the British East India Company was dissolved and the powers of the Company were all transferred to the British Royalty, the term for office of British Raj began, from 1858 onwards. The rule of the British Crown in India lasted till 1947, and ended by the independence of India. This smooth transition of power to the Crown

⁶¹ Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., pp. 276-9.

⁶² Gardner, op.cit., p. 289.

was realized by the Queen Victoria in her proclamation of November 1858 to the 'Princes, Chiefs, and Peoples of India'. By the reign of the British Crown in India, the governor general of India was given the name 'viceroy', who headquartered in Calcutta. The Palace of the viceroy in Delhi is now the presidential palace.⁶³ Moreover titling the governor of India as viceroy, the Queen herself got the title Empress of India in 1876. It is well known that the Queen was highly interested in her Indian empire, and thus she even took Hindi lessons⁶⁴, but still never been to India.⁶⁵ Even though the land became a belonging of the British, there was an enormous number of principalities within India and each were governed by the local powers

In order to consolidate confidence she introduced new a new notion in India that made every member of Indian people equal before the laws. This mostly pleased the lower castes and the Untouchables. During tenure of British East India Company, India was not represented in the parliament but the Queen also created a new Secretariat for India within the parliament. Most of the governmental posts, especially the key ones were held by the British and the rule of Crown also made attempts to get out of this precedent, as well. The British rulers were not unfamiliar with the new land of Britain; on the contrary they spent their whole career in India.⁶⁶

The Secretary of State for India, who was Mr. Montagu accompanied by the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford proposed a draft concerning especially the legislation of India. This draft paved the way for the Government of India Act, 1919 that sculpted the Constitution of British India. This Act introduced a national parliament with two houses a small portion of the total Indian population gained the right to vote. Those were the wealthiest or politically clout people. Also the native Indians obtained the right to participate in the government, for the positions of education, health and

⁶³ Clement, op.cit., p.15.

⁶⁴ Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., p. 256.

⁶⁵ Clement, op.cit., p.15.

⁶⁶ Kulke, Rothermund, op.cit., p. 257.

public works provincial ministry and British did not leave the crucial positions and kept chairs in especially tax and law fields. Besides, the mentioned Act brought a high commissioner, who would represent India in London, Great Britain. The act promised to assemble a commission in 1929 to propose some more reforms. By 1928, The Act of 1919 decided to be re-examined and revised by the British Government. A commission was set for this purpose, the Simon Commission. This commission was widely boycotted by various political organisations of India, due to its non-Indian character.⁶⁷ The Congress Party appointed a committee led by Pandit Motilal Nehru, to draft a constitution for India. The committee was representing the British India and it cooperated with the Simon Committee. This Committee invited several groups of India, for exchange of ideas. Muslims, Persians, Christians, Sikhs, and several non-Brāhman organisations were called to this event, excluding the Untouchables. The foreseen constitution was not offering any special provision for the representation of the Untouchables. On behalf of the Untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar made an attempt to meet with the Committee, and he managed; now he was another counterpart of the Simon Commission different from the commission assembled by the Congress. He was trying to obtain reserved seats for the Depressed Classes, and opposed to the nomination principle; moreover asked for a place for the Depressed Classes in the cabinet and recruitment for the Untouchables within Army, Navy and Police. Dr. Ambedkar revealed that, their request is to be treated as a separate minority, from the Hindu community to receive political protection. Even though Dr. Ambedkar was for attaining reserved seats for certain groups, he asserted that he was against granting separate electorates. According to him, this method should be avoided, because it can easily lead to disintegration of different people under a common government and he exemplified this by explaining the European case. Most of the European countries consolidated democracy with success; under each state different group of people live together without objecting to a common electorate.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 274,304.

⁶⁸ Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar Life and Mission*, (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1990) pp. 114-23.

India under British Crown recorded significant steps towards modernization. Significantly, from viewpoint of the Untouchables, India acquired momentum on behalf of human rights. The colonial rule offered various chances for those disadvantaged and downtrodden people of India. They tried to push those people up to the level of ordinary citizens. From the schools established for downtrodden people, to the new justice system that made each and every Indian equal before law without regarding any ethnic or social dissimilarity. The British especially put emphasis on education. Numerous schools were established for the sake of backward classes, and thus the literacy rate boosted. The army of British East India Company was composed of Indians, especially by the Untouchables, and it can be said that it was the first time when the Untouchables were educated. Still, compared to other states, the literacy rates were so low. The city structure was also improved by the British, from the infrastructure to roads. In addition, the British contributed to the development of agricultural structures. Actually this issue is a controversial one, since the colonial states introduced the Asiatic mode of production, which, according to a theory, prevented those colonized lands to become capitalist states, since it promotes the growth of crops and makes the colonized land an import oriented state. Therefore, the involvements of the British Raj in agricultural sphere are litigious. Moreover, during the export process the duties applied on the goods that Britain paid were kept so low, which means United Kingdom, practiced terms of unfair trade in India. It seems that, the most valuable remain of colonial rule has been the transfer of technology and science, because this led India to become one of the prominent technology owners, producers and educators in the world.

1.6 Nationalism in India

When nationalism in India is mentioned, the first name appearing is Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who is recognized as the 'father of Indian nationalism'. All through his life, he worked to melt Indian traditions and Western values in the same pot.

The nationalism was interpreted mainly in two ways in the Indian National Congress and represented by Moderates and Extremists. According to moderates, who dominated Congress for long years, India had to be much more westernized via adopting European style institutions, be it the field of health, justice or education. They wanted to establish local legislative foundations to lift self-government appreciation. As for the Extremist wing of the Congress, they were hesitant in adopting western values, since they were afraid of damaging the Hindu traditions. They were also after modernisation; however they were willing to preserve the Hindu beliefs and customs while modernizing. They were impatient with the small steps that moderates were taking as local legislatures, but they sought full independence; they pronounced their intention to use force if needed to achieve independence. Moreover, Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 strengthened the nationalism ideas as all-encompassing Indian nationalism delivered by Gandhi's support in Khilafat movement.

1.6.1 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

History of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is always considered to be the history of India. He is the father of the Indian nation and the hero of Indian nationalism. He is the one who dared to wage an independence war against the continuous British imperialism and to free India from its dominion. He marked his era with an exceptional style of non-violence.

Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi gained first-hand experiences in three continents-Europe, Africa and Asia. He was well-versed in the traditions and teachings of the major religions of the world. No wonder, he developed into an enigma. He was a peculiar mixture, of the oriental and the occidental, of the ancient and the modern.⁶⁹

Gandhi is the Indian leader, who led the independence movement of India from the British colonial rule. He is best known with his philosophy of non-violence called

⁶⁹ R.K. Sinha, *Gandhian Non-Violence and the Indian National Struggle*, (Delhi: H.K. Publications, 1992) p. 5.

Satyagraha. *Satyagraha* means the true path. According to his presupposition, there is no difference between religious and realistic doings. They are combined with the non-violence principle. He inserted his philosophy into his political vision, as well.

It is known that this thought of him is inspired by diverse faith systems, be it Christianity, Buddhism or Hindu in addition to a novel of Russian author Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom Of God Is Within You*, 1894.⁷⁰ For Tolstoy, ‘a Christian enters into no dispute with his neighbour; he neither attacks nor uses violence; on the contrary, he suffers himself, without resistance, and by his very attitude towards evil not only sets himself free, but helps to free the world at large from all outward authority’. This idea might have inspired the Great Soul Gandhi and might have echoed his own thoughts.⁷¹ Sinha’s explanation clarifies this idea and method. He thinks all living things have the will to live, so the non-violence notion is he logical outcome of this will. The spirit feels its own unbreakable autonomy and understands the others autonomy feelings. She/he wants to survive, and understands the others wish of living. So no one wants to be hurt or killed or to suffer at the hands of others.⁷²

Gandhi was born in Porbandar city of Gujarat district. He belonged to the *Bania* division of *Vaishya* caste. The *Vaishya* caste is the third caste among four castes, so Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was not a member of a high caste. The caste that Gandhi belonged is known to be dealing commerce and especially they are grocers and the name Gandhi indicates this occupation. Gandhi was son of the Chief Minister of Porbandar. Within his childhood memoirs, Gandhi sorrowfully mentions

⁷⁰ Mohandas K. Gandhi *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1948), p. 77

⁷¹ 1992: 48.

⁷² Sinha, op.cit., pp.11-2.

his child-marriage experience.⁷³ At the age of fourteen he was married to a thirteen age-old young girl Kasturbai and this marriage was a piece of their customs.⁷⁴

M.K. Gandhi left India, to study law in London. After experiencing a number of unsuccessful job attempts, he attended in an Indian firm for a post in South Africa, where he faced comeuppance for several times, because he was an Indian. Regardless of caste or education level, Indians were badly disgraced by the British in South Africa, which was also the territory of the British Empire. As he came across with apartheid there, he initiated his first resistance in South Africa in order to improve the conditions of Indians resident there. This is how his political views began to be formed.

1.6.1.1 Satyagraha

His silent and calm confrontation was corresponding to his *Satyagraha* attitude. It was a passive, non-violent resistance. “Gandhian non-violent *satyagraha* was a method of direct action, which allowed for non-cooperation against the government for a temporary period without resort to violence...”⁷⁵ Those people performing this practice resistance are called *satyagrahis*. The method they used was rejecting and opposing to the unfair situation silently, by breaking the rule and suffering for the outcome of protesting it. It is also called as the soul force. “Gandhi’s policy was to avoid humiliating the enemy at all costs.”⁷⁶ At the end of this silence struggle, they managed to persuade those in South Africa to negotiate about the status of Indians. Afterwards he returned to India in 1915 and supported the British by taking place in lines of the British army during the war. However, when he was fed up with the

⁷³ Gandhi, op.cit., pp. 1-11.

⁷⁴ Clement, op.cit., p. 30.

⁷⁵ V.T. Patil, *Mahatma Gandhi and the Civil Disobedience Movement: A Study in the Dynamics of the Mass Movement* (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1988) p. 115.

⁷⁶ Clement, op.cit., p. 48.

British intimidating attitude towards Indians and passing the Rowlatt Act, he stopped supporting them. The Rowlatt Act let the government to arrest Indians without trial. Immediately he initiated his passive resistance once again, nonetheless he could not prevent the violence. On April 13, 1919, the innocent and naturally unarmed three hundred *satyagrahis* were killed and thousands of them were wounded by the fire of the British. The order of fire was given by General Reginald Dyer, whose explanation of this horrible massacre was; he planned punishing the *satyagrahis* and he wanted to make a wide impact on them.⁷⁷ Actually this struggle was ended up with the Amritsar Massacre of 1919. Albeit the Amritsar Massacre was something that Gandhi never wished occurring and accused him self of having made a mistake, this event paved the way for the defiance of British rule in India.

1.6.1.2 Khilafat Movement

In the same year, 1919, Gandhi provided support for the Khilafat Movement of Muslims. Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamit II pioneered the Khilafat Movement. The Ottoman Sultan was the caliph of entire Ottoman Muslims. Anyhow, Abdülhamit II affirmed the Ottoman caliph to be the universal caliph, embracing entire Muslims in the world. He had several aims in doing this. The paramount endeavour of him was preventing the disintegration process of Ottoman Empire via pan-Islamism idea. The second aim was to impede the occupation and colonization activities towards Muslim countries. Many Muslim groups all around the world, including India, easily accepted this *ummah* solidarity. Since it was at the same time a campaign against colonization, Gandhi did not hesitate to support the Indian lap of the Khilafat Movement. This led Hindus and Muslims forming an alliance versus the British rule in India. Already, “Khilafat leaders were eager for Hindu-Muslim unity, without which any non-cooperation movement involving boycott of services was evidently impossible.”⁷⁸ It is also underlined by Minault that the Khilafat was the symbol

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 61-2.

⁷⁸ Sarkar, op.cit., p. 196.

indicating different things to different people, but the anti-British spirit of the movement provided the same consistency for all components of it.⁷⁹ Gandhi set his non-cooperation and non-violence resistance in this movement and put it like that:

I know that withdrawal of cooperation is a grave thing. It requires ability to suffer. I know that it is the right of the citizen to withdraw his cooperation from the state when that cooperation means his degradation. It is a tangible form of showing one's displeasure at the acts of one's government.⁸⁰

By the year 1920, Gandhi concretely commenced his non-cooperation or in other words the non-alignment movement against the British. The aim was to challenge British via pullout of Indian espousal. The initial step of this movement was to set up a total consciousness against the British colonialism in India and to topple it. He called for a nationwide strike, *hartal*. During the Movement, Indians boycotted the imported clothing besides the institutions, be it schools or courts, taxes established or introduced by the British. The non-violence movement became very popular within India. Gandhi asserted that the movement he initiated was a constitutional right of them and in the letter he gave to the Viceroy on June 22, 1920 he reminded the Viceroy of subjects right to refuse assisting a ruler, who is believed to misrule the country. As a result of this non-violence movement, Gandhi became the hero of Indian nationalism and independence deed. The civil disobedience of Gandhi made a substantial impact on the British government in India. It endangered governmental administrations in a number of Provinces and in that sense it embarrassed the government, which was hesitant to come down heavily upon non-violent resistance.⁸¹

On the other hand this movement caused him being sentenced to his longest detainment course. It is known that, Gandhi had the best times, to develop his ideas,

⁷⁹ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 67.

⁸⁰ Clement, op.cit., p. 62.

⁸¹ Patil, op.cit., p. 115.

in prison. During his detainment, he read the book *Civil Disobedience* (1849) by Henry David Thoreau and decided to try this method, but he did not get constructive and affirmative results.⁸² Gandhi was at the age of forty-four, and he was carrying out painstaking struggles over twenty years. He was experienced enough to initiate a real battle now.⁸³

Indians burned their clothes and any other pieces of import. Now they were spinning their own cotton fibres via the customary *chakra*, the wooden spin machine, which became a symbol of Indian nation and now it takes place on Indian flag. From educated urban people to rural backward folks the *chakra* program was taken as the path towards *swadeshi* –self reliance- and also it constructed somehow solidarity between masses and elite⁸⁴, that’s why this movement was the all-India movement. The texture spun short, the *khadi*, became the brand of Gandhi. Besides, Gandhi fasted, for the good, peace and independence of Indian nation.

The next target of Gandhi was to topple the colonial rule and liberate India. In his great effort he was allied with two other prominent names of the Indian liberation struggle, who were Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom Gandhi was to regard as his *guru*⁸⁵ and Hindu Bal Gangadhar Tilak besides Rabindranath Tagore, who is considered to be the one that called Gandhi as Mahatma. Mahatma has a religious, spiritual connotation and it means the ‘Great Soul’.

Mahatma Gandhi was not only a political saint, as he is often projected in some writings, but he was more than that a cool and calculating strategist and shrewd realist. His phenomenal success can be gauged from the fact that he was able to communicate his conviction of the superiority of moral and spiritual power over physical force to all.⁸⁶

⁸² Clement, op.cit., pp. 46,65.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 49.

⁸⁴ Sarkar, op.cit., p. 204.

⁸⁵ Lamb, op.cit., p. 76.

⁸⁶ Gisela Bonn, *Ways of Perception: Between Effusiveness and Rejection Perceiving India* in ed. Geeti Sen (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993), p.26.

Gandhi initiated the liberation struggle by taking up concrete measures like protests. He and his supporters rallied for rights of various groups; be it women, indigo growers or textile workers. Fasting was the most significant method they used for their political, social and economic demands.

It was 1925, when he was elected the president of the Indian National Congress, which “became a great social occasion as well as a political assembly.”⁸⁷ By his presidency, he fasted for the good of the Indian public, organized meetings concerning British rule and related issues besides protesting some Hindu traditions like child marriage. He was also deeply apprehensive with the new language spreading among people, English. He made efforts to promote usage of their national language, Hindi. By 1928, he aroused his rallies especially as a result of the latest Indian constitution imposed by British, without consulting even one Indian. The young politicians were not believers on Gandhi’s non-violence policy. Mahatma Gandhi was then called *Bapu* Gandhi, which means ‘Grandfather Gandhi’, by the young and modern Indian politicians, who were ready to replace the Great Soul Gandhi. They were impatient with British undertakings and initiated violent upcomings. Unavoidable, those upheavals were silenced by the British forces severely. Mahatma persuaded the Congress about accepting the British Raj until the last day of 1929. At the same time he appealed the British government to give India dominion⁸⁸ status by the end of the announced period. Otherwise he declared to initiate new non-cooperation campaigns. He planned to use this interim period to travel around India, explaining people the way to independence, to stop child marriages, to prevent consumption of alcohol, the price of British rule, how to resist and how to carry non-violence out.

⁸⁷ Sarkar, op.cit., p. 89.

⁸⁸As the colonies of British Empire accomplished constitutional progress, then the British Empire allowed self-governance; be it a real or a virtual one.

1.6.1.3 Dandi March

Since British persisted on its exploit of India, Gandhi initiated his famed Dandi March in 1930. This *Satyagraha* was a protest of the British salt taxes. Followed by numerous Indians, the Great Soul Gandhi walked from Ahmedabad to Dandi, which counts almost four hundred kilometres, to produce own salt and to protest paying salt taxes. The foreseen production of salt was illegal, however aspiration of the march was to annihilate the law prevents Indians producing own salt. Even though this demonstration was also of non-violence school, aggressive incidents happened that effected son of Mahatma Gandhi, as well. Gandhi, by this protest rally, managed to convince the British government in negotiating. A series of conference arranged. In the first round table meeting, Indians were represented by Mohammad Ali Jinnah. However, this situation was harshly criticized by the Congress as far as Jinnah was the leader of Muslims in addition to his position against the policies of Gandhi. Because this situation attracted the disapprovals of Hindus, Gandhi was present to represent the Congress. As a result of the negotiations, Delhi Pact, in other words Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed between Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Lord Irwin⁸⁹, in March 1931. By the pact, the British Government consented to free the prisoners detained after the salt demonstrations. Besides, salt production was legalized by means of this agreement. Lastly, it was promising another conference. However the conference, which was held in London, was satisfactory neither for Gandhi nor for other Indian independence seekers. The agenda of the conference did not include any title on power transfer, but rather other topics. It dealt with minorities that caused a catastrophic outcome that each group; Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsees all asked for separate electorate. He was again imprisoned when he was back to home and the latest viceroy, Lord Freeman Willingdon refused to debate with Gandhi. In jail he heard that Dalits and various religious groups granted separate elections by the new constitution and Gandhi warned the government about annihilating it or he would fast to death. Dr. Ambedkar consented to argue with Gandhi on this case and Gandhi managed to convince Dr. Ambedkar. This did not prevent the progress in the status of Dalits. Dalits were now allowed to

⁸⁹ Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, the Viceroy of India from 1926 to 1931.

enter the Hindu temples and because the pollution understanding was partly changed, upper caste people accept food from those traditionally Untouchables. He was still in prison in the year 1933 and that year he founded and edited a newspaper namely *Harijan*. He did not support the orthodox Hindus, who sought prevention of Dalits entering the temples. After his release, he began pursuing policies about reforming India. Gandhi resigned his seat in Congress and he totally stopped his engagement with politics whilst World War II was beginning.

1.6.1.4 World War II and Quit India Movement

Not later than invasion of Poland in 1939 by Nazi's, The Second World War exploded. Mahatma Gandhi was advising his own method, non-violence and non-cooperation, to the wounded sufferers of the war and especially to the victims of fascism. His famous saying advises world people non-violence: An eye for an eye just leaves world blind. His hatred towards Hitler and Mussolini, who was called 'the man with cat eyes' by Gandhi, is well known.

Gandhi did not avoid making deals with Britain by asking them proving their real goal was democracy in that war, as they declared. He meant leaving India totally free. Certainly the British authorities did not accept his proposal. Thus, Gandhi denied being a plaintiff in the war. He began pushing for independence more firmly then. These demand paved the way to Quit India Movement.

Quit India Movement, *bharat chhodo*, began completely in year 1942, when the Congress passed an enactment seeking complete freedom by confiscating the British reign in India.

Winston Churchill sent Sir Richard Stafford Cripps to India in order to ensure British possessing India and "to undermine the insufferable half naked fakir."⁹⁰ The

⁹⁰ Clement, op.cit., p. 96.

thought of Churchill about India is best described by Catherine Clement, who said “When he wanted to justify the Raj, Winston Churchill would say calmly ‘India is an abstraction’. And how could independence be granted o an abstraction?”⁹¹ British wanted to keep India, especially against Japan during the war. However demands for independence aroused within India at the same time. Sir Cripps promised India dependence, if India accepts the British dominion till the end of the World War. On the other side Japan was threatening India by invading. Because India was not strong enough to resist both pushes, it had to make a choice out of two bad things, and India picked the British opt.

Such a dilemmatic situation irritated Gandhi a lot. His goal was clear: to free India. He just decided to make moves towards this ambition, the coined the famed slogan ‘Quit India’. The followers of Gandhi were making rallies all around India for aspiring their liberation expressing their impatience with jingles of ‘freedom has to come not tomorrow but today’. Gandhi encouraged all citizens of India to join the civil disobedience movement and certainly advised to keep in the frames of non-violence principles. This time he wanted to make their wish more visible, thus he called everybody to open rebellion. Because the British did not want to encounter another rebellion in war time, Gandhi was imprisoned again, this time Kasturbai too. Moreover, the rebellions were suppressed via brutal bloody ways that Gandhi would never wish.

As a result, the Quit India Movement was a tremendous defeat for Gandhi and Indians, who aimed to obtain their freedom. This was a huge disillusionment for the Indians in search of self-determination. Britain took this opportunity to blame Gandhi of the violence. Gandhi fasted to deny this claim. His adopted son –at the same time his first secretary- died of acute bronchitis and his death was followed by Kasturbai’s. Gandhi was about to die, too. Churchill decided to release him of the prison. However Gandhi did not die, but healed.

⁹¹ Geeti Sen (ed.), *Perceiving India: Insight and Inquiry* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993) p. 54.

1.6.1.5 The Partition of India

The new Prime Minister of Britain was Clement Attlee after the end of World War II, in 1945. He was planning to free India; however his concern was to divide India into two regions; one for Muslims and one for the others. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was one of the greatest supporters of this idea, as the leader of Indian Muslims. Jinnah was willing to establish a separate state of Muslims; “the country of pure: Pakistan.”⁹²

The Simla Conference was held to make negotiations about the partition of India. In June 1945 at Simla, the Viceroy held separate interviews with Jinnah and Nehru. Gandhi was not a delegate in this conference, and Nehru represented the Hindu segment and still Gandhi was present in Simla. Especially the Muslim party was so much striving in this conference and the viceroy rejected the requests of the Muslim side. Besides, the Pakistan foreseen in the conference was found ungovernable, because Pakistan itself would be divided into two segments separated by more than a thousand kilometres.⁹³ The Simla Conference ultimately failed in its objective. It showed that neither the Viceroy Wavell nor the Congress were ready to answer the demands of Muslims, like separate electorate in the coming elections. This Conference adjusted the attitude of Congress towards the British friendly.⁹⁴

The new leader of India was Nehru, who was charged by the Viceroy Wavell. Nehru proposed ministry Mohammad Jinnah, and refused by him. Moreover, Jinnah decided to take some more severe measures to make people understand how Muslims are decisive on having a separate state. This was ended by bloody, brutal and extremely violent acts. In his book, Clement narrates that Muslims forced many

⁹² Clement, op.cit., p. 100.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 100.

⁹⁴ Syed Shameem Hussain Kadri, *Creation of Pakistan* (Lahore: Wajidalis. 1982) pp. 303-16.

Hindus to convert and massacred them.⁹⁵ Even though Gandhi was no more an actor of politics; he fasted to put an end to this bloodshed and cruelty.

As for the Dalits, their most prominent leader, Dr. Ambedkar favoured this partition as far as he believed that the population density was not corresponding to the city and state boundaries of India. Ambedkar regarded Muslims as a distinct nation, but they were a minority within Indian borders. This partition would let altering the boundaries of where Muslims and Hindus lives, and free the minority group from the domination of Hindus. Gandhi and his deputy, Jawaharlal Nehru denied existence of a religious communal problem. Actually, Dr. Ambedkar was neither supportive of Muslims nor their opponent. For him, India had a problem of minorities. He feels that the minorities cannot be left to the mercy of aggressive majority as he puts it. Like the Muslim case, a similar communal problem was present among downtrodden classes and upper castes of India.

1.7 The Freedom Movement

India's way to freedom was long and slow proceeding. Under the guidance of Great Soul Gandhi, India exhausted a lengthy and controversial process. Three key episodes are the milestones are recognized within this gradual course. Those are the times, when the British Government enacted new laws regarding India in 1909, 1919, 1935.⁹⁶

The 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms of Lord Morley led the establishment of provincial legislative councils, where the members were elected. Those were not legislative councils but only advisory bodies. The legislative power was held by the Viceroy. Morley underlined that he did not realize those reforms to pave the way towards a

⁹⁵ Clement, op.cit., p.66.

⁹⁶ Lamb, op.cit., p. 73.

parliamentary democracy.⁹⁷ Already some MPs were challenger to establish a parliamentary democracy in India, because they were not clear about giving India a kind of self-rule since they could not estimate where would it end and they were afraid of the British Empire's disintegration.

If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily to the establishment of parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it.⁹⁸

Lord Morley

The next Viceroy of India, Samuel Montagu planned and announced to establish new bodies in order to penetrate self-governing, responsible institutions working in coordination with the British authorities. Thus he run Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and released the India Act of 1919. As a result diarchy system was formed. This means in provincial level legislative bodies founded, where the native Indians carried the legislation function. Those provincial were given the right to enact laws in particular fields. Still, this given right to legislation does not mean that British gave up dominating the Indian politics. In the newly found provincial legislative bodies, the MPs could enact laws concerning education, agriculture, health *et cetera*. Nonetheless they were not allowed to enact laws pertaining to monetary or fiscal policies like taxes. Those mentioned financial policies were perform by the British. Moreover, the British government, represented by the Viceroy, held the right to veto any law enacted by the provincial legislatures.⁹⁹

The third important move is the India Act of 1935, which lasted the diarchy giving the provincial legislative bodies the right to enact laws in any subject. Now the provincial councils were responsible for the Central Government and the Viceroy

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 74.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

only dealt with foreign affairs and defence matters. This was the utmost progress en route for self-determination.¹⁰⁰

On one hand there was the Congress Party, and on the other the Muslim league, where respectively one was led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Pandit Motilal Nehru, who can be recognized as the father of Jawaharlal Nehru, “the most important fellow freedom-fighter of Gandhi’s for India’s independence.”¹⁰¹ The two groups were acting together since especially the Mutiny of 1857. The two parties met in December 1916 and declared their unity with the Congress – Muslim League Pact or the Lucknow Pact. The aim was to establish a united achievement in the national emancipation. This move was not found anxious by the British, and even a declaration was made saying that the unity among Indian citizens pleases Crown as far as India is an integral part of the United Kingdom. Certainly British did not responded rigorously, because they were making preparations for the largest concessions to be taken via the Act of 1919.

By the Morley-Minto Reforms in other words by the Government of India Act of 1919, new and Western political notions were brought in India. The reforms provided partial roles to the Indians within legislative councils of India’s provinces. The members of the legislative councils were elected, while the members of the central council were appointed. Besides, the governor general was not responsible to the legislative councils. On the other side, Britain provided herself the largest allowances by making the viceroy in India only responsible to the Crown and the government in London but not the legislative and judicial bodies of India. The Indians, who bodied the opposition by getting conscious about the developments, were silenced by the British. Sometimes the British took severe measures towards the opposition, and the events resulted with the massacre in Amritsar. Unavoidably, they collected the annoyance of Indians, among those who were protesting this event, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The Muslim leg of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Bonn, op. cit., p.27.

the protesters who were excited with nationalist ideas aroused when caliphate resident in Ottoman Empire was abolished. As they became more enthusiastic for independence and self-rule, they began mobilizing the masses for this purpose. The Muslim movement did not become a distinctive progress but they joined in the lines of freedom struggle on entire India basis. The Muslims participated in the movement of Gandhi and in return Gandhi backed the Muslim demand for the caliph. Turkey rejected the Muslim dream of caliphate, since she became a secular republic. The unrest within India continued up until the World War II continued and then the way towards the independence got clearer. Those were the times, when dispute amongst Hindus and Muslims was taking place after the failure of Simla Conference and Gandhi disappeared from active politics. He was now the *Bapu* Gandhi, walking with his stick and travelling from one village to another, talking, staying with all Indians, be her/him a Hindu or a Muslim and advising them solidarity and freedom, rather than British dominion and partition. In his speeches, he made citations also from Koran and Bible. Those were the days that people were talking about the Muslim partition, thus Gandhi's reciting of Koran was criticized by some Hindus and they called him 'Mohammad Gandhi'.

On 15 August 1947 the Indian flag was raised in place of the Union Jack. The colours of Congress –orange, white and green- bore Emperor Ashoka's wheel in place of Gandhi's spinning wheel. Speeches all through the night paid homage to 'the Father of Nation' and crowds, drunk on freedom, shouted: 'Vicory to Mahatma Gandhi!' The Mahatma himself called the day a 'spiritual tragedy' and spent it fasting.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Clement, op. cit., p. 105.

CHAPTER II

THE DALIT MOVEMENT

2.1 The Untouchables

The Untouchables consists the fifth group within the Hindu caste system. Actually, the *varna* order is composed of four castes, and the Untouchables are the outcastes. They are one of the groups composing the Dalits. The others are the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and *Sūdras*. *Sūdras* are compiling the fourth caste, who are mostly labourers. Scheduled Castes and Tribes are defined by the government act of 1935. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes'. They are listed in the constitution in order to facilitate the arrangement of the quota system. Lastly, the Dalits arrived on the scene by the unification of all of the mentioned downtrodden groups; the Untouchables, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the *Sūdras*.

The Untouchables are dishonoured; politically, religiously and socially isolated; economically exploited. The relations of the Untouchables with the affiliates of the *chaturvarna* is arranged and defined by the notions of pollution and purity and karma.¹⁰³ They are considered as the Untouchables, because of being perceived as impure and less human. The purity notion is dressed on the higher classes; on the contrary the Untouchables are polluting by birth and perpetually dirty. The Untouchables had right to touch neither any member of upper classes not their staff, because they were regarded as spoiling the cleanness of superior ranks. The cleanness remark is not only to indicate spiritual purity but also the physical hygiene. They do not have any social relations with upper classes. They live in the places they are shown and cannot move anywhere else then the Untouchable zone, they cannot share public places and they are relegated to contaminating tasks,

¹⁰³ Balkrishna G. Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*, Journal of Asian & African Studies, (February 99, Vol. 34, Issue 1) p. 271.

ignominious jobs as cleaning, sewage cleaning, farm cultivating or cremating. Trade was banned for them. Hence they are not allowed to enter schools, temples; cannot claim land even though it is legally theirs, the foodstuff they cook cannot be consumed, they are not permitted to touch the water tanks in common usage and even cannot wear shoes in the presence of upper caste members. They have no access to health services, non-toxic water, public parks; public offices even have no access to *dharmshalas*, which is a kind of hotel. As far as this social system is a part of Hinduism, then it is the Hindu Gods decision.

...the natural plague that could be taken as a Divine fiat against the oppressors mainly targets, in fact, the broken and crushed ones of the earth. Thus, it is Dalits' water that turns to blood, Dalits' houses that are swamped with frogs, Dalits' grounds that are crawling with gnats, Dalits' foodstuffs that are infested with flies, Dalits' livestock that are dying with disease, Dalit bodies that are festering with boils, Dalits' huts that are destroyed with thunder and hail, Dalits' fields that are destroyed by locust, Dalits' living areas that are covered in darkness, and Dalits' firstborn — and every born — son and daughter who are felled by death.¹⁰⁴

The Untouchables are alleged to be so tainted that they ought to keep in a distance from upper caste affiliates. Yet their shadows are supposed to the same extent polluting. "Without Brāhmans, of course, we might think there could be no Untouchables, since only those who considered themselves 'gods on earth' might be arrogant enough to believe that the mere touch of another human being brought defilement."¹⁰⁵ Before the Untouchables arrive to a public place, in some districts they had to inform the others about their Untouchability.

By 400 A.D. the Chinese traveller Fa-Hsieu described a world in which the *Chandalas* (Untouchables) are named 'evil men', and dwell apart from others. If they enter a town or market, they sound a piece of wood in order to separate themselves, hen men knowing who they are, avoid coming in contact with them.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Clarke, op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Wolpert, op. cit., pp. 128-9.

¹⁰⁶ Joshi, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

When an Untouchable touches an affiliate of a higher *varna*, then the touched has to clean her/him self, and sometimes she/he has to be purified via religious appeals. From their touch, to their shadow and sound the Untouchables were deemed to be totally dirtying. Moreover, it was an offence to break rules and to contact with a higher caste person, so any act of disrespect had a punishment with the utmost rigour in turn.¹⁰⁷ In disgracing Untouchables, Clarke found out an irony. According to Clarke, while on one hand the upper caste members do not pay any attention to the Untouchables and even do not consider her human, on the other hand they need them, which is because they consolidate their stature and power over the bodies of the Untouchables. They are elevated and powerful but they keep this power by the backwardness and subjugatedness of the Untouchables.¹⁰⁸

Due to the censuses held regularly in every decade, it is known that the percentage of the Untouchables were always around 20% of the total population. Among the Untouchables communities of India, Mahars are the most crowded community and they are followed by Chambaras and Mangs. The Mahar segment of the Untouchables regard themselves as the descendants of original inhabitants of India, the real owners of the soil of India, who were oppressed and enslaved by the Aryan invaders. Those ideas were voiced by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalit movement, and the issue will be considered in the coming chapters.

The Untouchables are the weariest, most loathed and the most miserable people that history can witness.¹⁰⁹ Untouchables were even deprived of the right to pray to a Hindu deity; which has always been a high caste privilege.¹¹⁰ The Dalits meet the priest only very special days of life, like birth, marriage and death. In those religious

¹⁰⁷ Wolpert, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Clarke, op. cit.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, B.R. Ambedkar, *Frustration*.

¹¹⁰ Sagarika Ghose, *The Dalit in India: Caste and Social Class, Social Research*, (Spring 2003).

ceremonies, the priest gave them information about the relationship between the divinity and the people. Even though the priest treated them as part of his religion, he gives the information because it is a piece of the ceremony, but not to teach the people the religion or to incorporate them.¹¹¹ The Brāhmins were not seeking to create a rigid uniformity in their religious community. Rather, they were following a discriminating and elitist route. One of the ancient religious Hindu texts, the Dharam Sutra states that:

If a Shudra listens to a recitation of the Vedas, his ears shall be filled with melted tin. If he recites Vedic texts, his tongue shall be cut out...He, who tells [religious] law to a Shudra and he who teaches him religious observances, he indeed together with that Shudra sinks into the darkness of the hell called Hsamvritta.¹¹²

The aforementioned hymn in Rig Veda portrays four castes as different fractions of the supreme creator Brāhma. Within this stanza, Untouchables are not mentioned as any element of their idol. This connotes religiously, Untouchables do not signify any spiritual meaning, and thus they are less eminent than the other castes as parts of the Brahma. This is the religious explanation of why Untouchables are left overdue, why not considered as a part of ordinary life and as a piece of the general public, why they are dejected. The frustration which is their fate is the result of the unpropitious social environment born out of the Hindu social order which is so deadly inimical to their progress.¹¹³

Untouchables do not have right to study, right to be cured, right to possess assets, they do not have the right to live where they like, can not shop among upper Varna members and the list of bans on them continues so on. They were surrounded within the borders drawn by superior castes and forced to be servants. The *Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu) says ‘*No Cha shudraya matim dadyad*’ which means ‘do not allow

¹¹¹ Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*, (Calcutta: SAMYA, 2002) p. 21.

¹¹² Joshi, op. cit., p. 1.

¹¹³ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, B.R. Ambedkar, *Frustration*.

the lower classes to learn'. They live quite different from the other Indians, they are different from the way they are nourished to the languages they speak, the rituals they practice. Their right to education is very limited. Either they cannot enter schools or gathered in one separate class, in diverse parts of India, or in some places Untouchables even can not study. Experiences of an Untouchable child are described as follows:

As a child, Rajkumar was often told that he was not welcome at the government school. 'My teachers said an education was wasted on a Chamar' he said, referring to those traditionally relegated to skinning animals, one of the most degrading tasks in Hinduism. 'Why do you come to school? You should be sweeping the roads,' they said. They told us to go to the fields to collect fodder for their cattle. Forced to sit in the back of the class and beaten for even minor infractions, few of the children from the caste group known as Untouchables, or Dalits, stayed in school long enough to learn to read and write. Rajkumar, 33, was one of the few Dalits to graduate from his school, and one of the rare few in his village to ever go on to college.¹¹⁴

This prohibition prevents the Untouchables from becoming skilled at professions. The lines of work for the Untouchables are drawn by the social mechanism consequently the Untouchables are backward cumulatively. For the reason that the jobs they can work in are limited around cheap-labour vocations, the economic and accordingly social conditions of Untouchables are miserable. "...Untouchables are socially conspicuous, economically vulnerable."¹¹⁵ The severe poverty they live in brings a number of problems amongst. This brings the question that whether Untouchables were disgraced keenly to exploit those people economically. Because, Untouchables were subjected to a kind of discrimination as racism, a hidden apartheid, such as their circumstances are awfully akin to blacks tarnished to be Negroes and exploited by the rest. Actually, Untouchables were kind of economic slaves as well, as far as they were forced to only engage with degrading jobs, and dispossessed from countless indispensable rights, even from right to faith. Conversely, it is one of the themes for Indians to praise themselves that slavery

¹¹⁴ Martha Ann Overland, In *India Almost Everyone Wants to Be Special*, Chronicle of Higher Education, 2/13/2004.

¹¹⁵ Joshi, op. cit., p. 6.

never existed in the history of Indian civilization; and the Untouchability institution is less harmful than slavery.¹¹⁶

Still there is a paradox. The Untouchables are 'Untouchables' due to religious vindications of Hinduism, but on the other hand the Untouchables can even not enter the temples to pray. This paradox makes religious explanation about the Untouchable section of Hindu class formation invalid. From this point of view, caste system of India seems not to be a religious but an economic categorization. As a result, it is not wrong to seek other reasons, than religious motives, of substandard situation of the Untouchables.

2.1.1 The Dalits

The history of India has largely ignored the Dalits. They claim to be the real inhabitants of the ancient cities Mohanjodaro and Harappa until the Aryan invasion in 1500 BC, but then they escaped into the forests and tried to preserve their culture there. The invaders enslaved them, when they caught. Eventually they became the 'Untouchables'.¹¹⁷ The foreign influence in India, especially the British manipulation, was existent since seventeenth century. The idea of India's independence was spreading around twentieth century. The double struggle for liberty was rolled into one, where the *varna* members were eager to overthrow the foreign admin in order to get the control back, establish a self rule and to consolidate the traditional Indian system; but on the other hand, there were lower classes and outcastes, who were not propagating against the foreign govern as the four *varnas*. For the Untouchables, the British were the enemy of the enemy. Still best from the two bad options was the British administration, because at least the British unfasten the Untouchables out of some bans by providing those people particular basic rights. While on one hand the British policies regarding elevation of low castes were in

¹¹⁶ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, B.R. Ambedkar, *Which is Worse? : Slavery or Untouchability?*

¹¹⁷ Jagdish Parikh, *The Dalits of India*, East Island Journal, 10410406, (Winter92/93, Vol.8, Issue 1).

accordance with humanitarian sentiments, on the other hand there was a secret agenda, which was to make the lower castes look up to the British for protection¹¹⁸ and to facilitate the divide and rule policy via inflaming the caste tensions. Actually, the British were not acting as the great crusaders, but instead they were like the champions of the social reforms in India, in the eyes of the Dalits. However, at the same time it was the British escalating the bans on Dalits to enter the Hindu temples because and using the *Manusmriti* while formulating the civil code, because it was the key to consolidate the social control. So, the British rule was largely by proxy. Nicholas B. Dirks says that “under colonialism, caste was appropriated, and in many respects reinvented, by the British.”¹¹⁹

The oppressed classes were no more naive towards the old social caste system, but rather enthusiastic to be involved within the political, social and economic routine as any other associates of the society. In fact, Untouchables were aware of themselves and insurgent towards the structure, which oppresses them since nineteenth century. As the time passed by, the way they expressed their complaints about their social, economic, political and religious positing shifted and found its last form by appearance of Dr. Ambedkar. Around ideas of elevating rank, entire suppressed, concealed people assembled for settling own shared target. Gokhale describes the Dalit movement as the “unity of purpose and action among the lower castes and the Untouchables.”¹²⁰ Those people included the Untouchables as well as many other clients of diverse despondent groups. For this reason the Dalit does not signify a caste, a definite class or a group of people. The Untouchable and the Dalit terms cannot be used interchangeably. It is rather an all-encompassing brand. It covers all poor, unfortunate, displaced, disadvantaged people of India, so it is a common denominator summing up the Untouchables and other downhearted Indians.

¹¹⁸ Srinivas, op. cit., p. 532.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Original Caste: Power, History and Hierarchy in South Asia* in McKim Marriott (ed.) *India Through Hindu Categories*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 61.

¹²⁰ Balkrishna G. Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*, *Journal of Asian & African Studies*, (February 99, Vol. 34, Issue 1) p. 271.

Dalit means the oppressed and it comes from the Marathi language¹²¹, the language of Maharashtra, where the Ambedkar Movement was born. The poetic term Dalit, which reflects the consciousness of disgraced Indian people to eliminate the historical injustices and discrimination, is a quite new one. In fact, there is no class or caste namely Dalit. In earlier times, they were known as “Untouchables” and “outcaste” inhabitants. They were predestined to occupy with jobs that did not bestow them sufficient economic returns. Moreover they did not have any say in governance. “Such groups were pre-literate, and they lacked the political and educational skills that would have allowed them to engage directly in the new modes of formal and organized political activity that were coming to dominate political life there towards the end of the century.”¹²² Among numerous labels to define them; depressed class, Untouchables, exteriors, *atee shudras*, broken men, *avarn*, *antyevasin*, *asura*, *nisada*, *chandala*, *raksasa*, *dasysa*, *dasa*, *panchama*, *damai*, *asprishya*, non-Hindu, protestant Hindu, non-conformist Hindus, *downtrodden*, *antyaaja* and *and harijan*, are the most common terms in addition to Dalit, which has a political connotation and marks the struggle of them against the *varna* order.¹²³ The word *harijan* was coined by Gandhiji due to its meaning ‘people of god’. But this term was rejected by Ambedkar, as far as that still had a separating denotation. All the names other than Dalit have degrading nuance and in year 1919, British Administration changed these terms into Depressed Classes or Scheduled Castes and Tribes. In different parts of India, the Untouchables are called with different titles. Most of these terms are known to be expressions of hatred towards the Untouchables and other low layers of the Indian social hierarchy. Still, the people degraded by the traditional Hindu order abhorred Brāhmins the same way, because of being made serfs eternally. This mentioned detestation and impressions of the *Varna* system was reflected by the language and many proverbs were created. Among numerous sayings the following proverbs exemplify how upper castes were seen by the lower:

¹²¹ Soykut, *Dinler Tarihi Perspektifinden Hindistan Kökenli Dinler ve İdeolojik Çatışmalar*, p. 98.

¹²² Rosalind O’Hanlon, *Maratha History as Polemic: Low Caste Ideology and Political Debate in Late Nineteenth Century Western India*, *Modern Asian Studies*, (Vol. 17, No. 1, 1983) p.6.

¹²³ Joshi, op. cit.

“Give the *bhat* the verandah and he will take the whole house”, “There are three bloodsuckers/butchers in this world: the bug, the flea and the Brāhman”, “Set a Brāhman to kill a snake”, “Bribes to a clerk, gifts to a priest”, “A cat that will not lap milk and a Brāhman who refuses a bribe”, “Brāhmans are made to eat, *Bhavaiyans* to play and sing, Kolis to commit robbery, and widows to mourn.”¹²⁴

Chronologically, they were recognized with the term Untouchable and outcaste. ‘Depressed class’ and ‘scheduled caste’ were the phrases offered by the British, and the second expression ‘scheduled caste’ has a legal connotation. The term ‘scheduled caste’ came out by the Government Act of 1935. They were ‘scheduled’, because the constitution put schedules listing the names of the Untouchables.¹²⁵ According to the censuses held since 1941, the percentages of the Scheduled Castes were also recorded and it is seen that their proportion to the total population had never been so low, and this percentage rose every year. In the year 1941, 13.49% of the Indians were the Scheduled Castes; this means out of 295,808,722 Indians 39,920,807 were the Scheduled Caste members. The climb of this percentage was recorded by regular censuses and as a result it was found that in 1951 14.40%, in 1961 14.67%, in 1971 14.60%, in 1981 15.47% in 1991 16.48%.¹²⁶ As for the 2004 census results of India, concerning Maharashtra state, which is the centre of the Dalit Movement, there are 77.800.000 Hindus, 12.000.000 Muslims, 5.838.000 Buddhists, 1.058.000 Christians, 1.300.000 Jainists, 980.000 Scheduled Castes and 850.000 Scheduled Tribes.¹²⁷

Then Mahatma Ghandi pronounced the new term *Harijan*, meaning children of God. Dr. Ambedkar rejected Ghandi’s expression, in view of the fact that the Untouchables found the newly proposed word still debasing and statically underlining the inequality of the social structure. *Harijan* word did not offer any

¹²⁴ Omvedt, op. cit., pp. 71-2.

¹²⁵ Makhan Jha (ed.), *Scheduled Castes Today*, (New Delhi: M D Publications Pvt Ltd, 1997) p. 2.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Soykut, op. cit., pp. 111-2.

change in the situation of the Untouchables or did not present a new identity, but simply in a populist manner aimed to keep lower classes under control by showing them that governing ranks did not abhor them. In a way the label by Gandhi mentioned lower castes being external pieces of the Indian societal order, thus essentially did not incorporate lower castes to the system. The lower ranks of Indian society “disliked its patronizing tone and rejected the strategy of reliance on higher caste noblesse oblige with which it is associated”¹²⁸ he used ‘protestant Hindu’ phrase. Finally the term Dalit was invented to signify struggle of deprived communities. None of the words used instead of Dalit before had such an inspiring and exciting effect. The word Dalit was activating, reviving, revolutionizing to all demoralized Indians. The Dalit idiom feels a denial of pollution, karma, and justified caste hierarchy.¹²⁹ Hence, the term Dalit became acceptable for all opponents of Indian caste system.

For a low caste or Untouchable, being a Dalit is gaining political identity, as far as they a mission of destroying the caste system, making downtrodden classes apparent in India; obtaining basic human rights, having a say in governance, being able to rise in social and economic areas. “Dalit is the group once known as ‘Untouchable’ that languishes beneath the caste system.”¹³⁰ The word Dalit signifies their anger, their protest, anti-caste objectives and political awakening of depressed classes of Hindu caste society. “The term Dalit has become apposite, assertive expression of pride in Untouchable heritage and a rejection of oppression.”¹³¹ Not only political, but the Dalit word also provides a cultural identity to underprivileged Indians, because it denotes the other fanatic opponent of Brahman class, who are considered being Aryans. The Aryan invaders are believed to destroy the Indus Valley civilization, displaced the native Indians, and established a new culture within Indian lands. This new culture was imposed as the superior, the high class culture, where the local

¹²⁸ Joshi, op. cit., p. 4.

¹²⁹ Eleanor Zelliott, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1992) p. 267.

¹³⁰ *Uttar Chaos*, Economist, 8/30/2003.

¹³¹ Joshi, op. cit., p. 3.

culture was oppressed and brought about as the inferior one. This is why Dalit is just the opposite of Aryan and Brahman culture. Dalit term indicates the modification of Hindu social system, besides that, it also expresses the resurgence expectation of those, who have been exploited since this ancient system was established. The term Dalit eliminates the negative meanings of all other expressions labelling Untouchables and brings a self-expression with the resistive eloquence.

The term Dalit, expressing the politically awakened Untouchables, is raised from the root *dal*. The Sanskrit verb *dal* means to break, to split, to open, to go down and crash. Dalit is the adjective form of the verb *dal*. We find this word *dal* on page 471 of the prestigious Oxford Sanskrit English Dictionary, new edition, 1964, edited by the world - famous Sanskrit scholar, Sir Monier Williams. The word Dalit is existent in diverse Indian languages, including the Dravidian. According to the dictionary, Dalit means burst, split, scattered, dispersed, broken, torn as under, destroyed, crushed.¹³² The same root 'dal' is present in other Indo-European languages as well. For instance in English, 'dal' or 'tal' means 'cut'; then 'dale' means 'valley' and 'tale' means a piece of life to tell. In German 'thal' is tailor, one who cuts. The same root is present in Hebrew, perhaps by coincidence. In Hebrew, 'dal' means poor or weak. The contemporary meaning of Dalit is believed to be used by the nineteenth century Marathi social reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. Phule used it to express the brokenness of the outcastes and the Untouchables as victims of Indian caste society.

To give a definition, Dalit represents the politically, socially and economically exploited, distinguished and victimized Indians. This word symbolizes the awakening of the entire oppressed Indians, be it the Untouchables, *Shudras*, Scheduled Castes and Classes and any others, especially due to treatment prospected by Hindu traditions. It is a rebel counter to traditional Hindu caste system, inequitable social order and economic exploitation of groups. Since first flames of this uprising one more point changed, which is about religion. In early times, victims

¹³² <http://www.ambedkar.org/News/WhatIs.htm>

of the long-established order criticized the classification, blamed upper castes and particularly the Brāhmans, but not the Hinduism. For instance, Chokamela, one of the Untouchable saints is known by his avowals mostly disapprove of the Untouchability association of the Indian social body. He dislikes the situation of being Untouchable, he rebels against upper castes, and he warns people about not minding the bans on the Untouchables. The literature on Chokamela has no signs of his opponent posture towards Hinduism. Nonetheless, Hinduism became one of the controversial themes of this argument. The wounded people of India decided to heal themselves by getting rid of the source of the problem, which was marked as Hinduism. At the last resort a huge number of Dalit associates converted from Hinduism.

Teltumbde explains the darkness of the information concerning the efforts waged by the oppressed classes in addition to place and orientation of Untouchability institution within the traditional Indian social structure.

The mythologized history of India does not provide many clues to the direct rebellions of the oppressed masses against their oppression. But it is inconceivable that they did not take place at all over a long period of two millennia that nibbled at their existence every moment with a divine contrivance called caste. The extraordinary success of this contrivance of social stratification is as much attributable to its own design that effectively obviated coalescence of the oppressed castes and facilitated establishment and maintenance of the ideological hegemony as to its purported divine origination. None could ordinarily raise a question as it meant incurring divine wrath and consequent ruination of the prospects of getting a better birth in their next life. Thus the caste system held society in a metaphysical engagement and at the same time in physical alienation with itself.¹³³

The new constructed identity, Dalit, was used and popularised by Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit Panthers by early 1930s. However, the earliest use of this term goes back to Mahatma Phule, who pronounced the word Dalit to imply all depressed Indians. We

¹³³ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, Anand Teltumbde, *Theorising The Dalit Movement: A Viewpoint*.

also know that a newspaper was published for lower ranks of Indian castes. The name was “Dalit Bandu”, which means friends of Dalits.¹³⁴

In order to avoid meaning controversies, I will not use the Untouchable and the Dalit expressions interchangeably. All through the thesis, the Untouchable word will maintain to describe the lowest strata of *varna*. As for the word Dalit; it provides the label for the revolutionary Indians who are composed of both the Untouchables, outcastes and also some *varna* members who face hardships of old social classification.

2.1.1.1 Initiation Of The Dalit Movement

Even though the awakening of the oppressed people began around eighteenth century, emergence of “conscious and vociferous Untouchable opposition to the social values and religious hierarchies of Hindu society”¹³⁵ leading social reform movements became visible by the second half of the nineteenth century. So “the Dalit movement in the familiar sense of organised resistance of the ex-Untouchables to caste oppression may not be traced beyond colonial times.”¹³⁶ Still this does not mean that the struggle of low and out castes did not exist in early times. In his article, Teltumbde utters that the history of this struggle is as old as the caste itself. However by the Dalit movement, where the Mahars of the Maharashtra state were the backbone of the mentioned movement, this struggle took a more organized path with a well-settled political sight and a decisive purpose. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar the leader of the Dalit Movement, was from the Maharashtra state, as well. The first signs of arousing iconoclasm were noted by an official of UK, Mr. Cradock, the settlement Commissioner of Naghpur District in year 1900 was noted as follows:

¹³⁴ Atul Chandra Pradhan, *The Emergence of the Depressed Classes*, (Bhubaneswar: Bookland International, 1986) p. 125.

¹³⁵ Joshi, op. cit., p. 25.

¹³⁶ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, Anand Teltumbde, *Theorising The Dalit Movement: A Viewpoint*.

Mahars will not remain for years downtrodden and are already pushing themselves from the state of degradation...They have established a school of their own community...He at present lacks education and self respect, but these will come, and the day may not be far distant when a Mahar will be found among the ranks of the native magistracy (Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of Naghpur District, 1900).¹³⁷

The anti-Brāhmanical movement stimulated especially by the appearance of Jotirao Phule, besides Shahu Chhatrapati. In his book, Omvedt warns reader of not considering the movement as isolation but in the context of the general colonial situation and the efforts of Indians to respond to it.¹³⁸ Actually, not only the non-Brāhman but also the Brāhman political evolution and motion gained pace by the presence of the colonial rule. The challenges by the West carried Indians to think about development, reform and elevating India to the level of colonial power ruling herself. However, Omvedt stresses that, such considerations were prompting the requests and interests of elites, upper classes. That is why they did not opt for a “social revolution” but for “modernization”, revitalization of the old society.¹³⁹ They offered initially a well-industrialized India, thus the first step for modernization was providing modern technology, modern training and education for western style production. This is especially done to avoid the answer that Weber gives for the question ‘why capitalism could not develop in Middle East’. For Weber, it was because of the Asiatic mode of production. Thus, it can be deduced that, after the arrival of the British in India, modern technology and development entered India. In Middle Eastern states, after the penetration of colonial powers, the agricultural production gains speed, not the modern production systems. However, India chose to boost industrial development. The aim was to adopt capitalism in India on behalf of modernization. If they boosted agriculture, they believed they could neither develop capitalism nor modernisation. As a result, Indian elite wanted to launch capitalism in their state. The Marxian view explains why Indian elites asked for

¹³⁷ Joshi, op. cit., p. 23.

¹³⁸ Omvedt, op. cit., p. 98.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 99.

capitalism. It is because; the capitalism is a form of 'class society' to Marxists. Class society is the traditional social structure of India. "Caste, in short, represents a differentiated form of 'symbolic capital'.¹⁴⁰ Thus, capitalism fits the social structure of India. The resistance of Indian elite against the colonial power was not to protect Indian labour against the exploiting power, but to establish own economy and modern industrial systems; to become liberated in means of government; and to upgrade both political and economic existence of Indian elite. Albeit in their confrontation against colonialism, they were not after protecting the rights or liberating the labour power, the serf people namely *Shudras* or the Untouchables. Because, with the old social system, the lower classes served ostensible 'elites' as a compulsory role. The *Sūdras* and the Untouchables served the elite, but in turn they were not paid. It was a religious role, to serve the upper castes. But by the rise of capitalism, labour could become a piece of the economic relations and in turn producers had to pay for the services provided by the people they previously ignored. Moreover, adopting capitalism brings adopting European values as well. Accordingly, many other reforms executed relating to women's position within Indian society. The education opportunities for women recovered in addition to banning the mourning of widow women. There are some other reforms beginning with education; which still were the improvement offered for elites of Indian society.

The nationalism raised against colonial power was not an all encompassing one, but rather enveloped only the minority who recognized themselves with the Aryan identity. The nationalism mentioned by them was a nationalism of upper caste people only. "They adopted the 'Aryan theory of race', which had the implication of identifying them ethnically with their British conquerors rather than the majority of their fellow countrymen, which traced civilization in India from the Aryan conquest, and which gave a new pseudo-scientific justification for the caste hierarchy."¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ David West Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: The Nattukottai Chettiars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) p. 213.

¹⁴¹ Omvedt, op. cit., p. 99.

Hence, the revolution they pushed cannot be considered as a social revolution. It was barely to improve the position of high caste members before the colonial rule. The entire population of India was not taken into consideration. Still the majority of the Indian population was composed of those ignored people, as members of lower layers of the caste system: *Shudras*. Even though this was a discriminative revitalization movement, numerous scholars regard it as a very precious step towards evolution of old, traditional and colonized India. For these scholars, at least an impulse was recorded for any revolution. Because the demands for social revolution from lower layers of the society heard just after the elite effort for modernization. Phule voiced the forgotten people of India first. He articulated that the modernization movements going on in India had to become a social revolution to break the walls of the caste system and make India a genuinely developed one with equal social lines. For him, to achieve a real improvement, initially the dominance of a particular class had to be defeated. To defeat the domination was only possible by down-falling the traditional order, as far as the so-called 'elite' is the construction of the ancient Hindu social system. A series of reforms were required in lines of caste to weed out the colonial rule and make India a developed power in the region. However, priestly Brāhmans were not to agree with the idea to make amendments in ancient Hindu hierarchical organism or to challenge Brāhmanic values. Some fanatic Hindu upper castes have committed brutal massacres toward the Dalits, who desire betterment in their social position. On one hand the oppressed people of India, creating the majority, were seeking social reforms; nevertheless on the other hand The National Congress was rigid about the issue of excluding social revolution heading from the agenda. In spite of this, the 'social revolution' notion had already entered the National Congress and was strong enough to set off breaks within the Congress.

Mainly two groups came into view: Moderates and Extremists. The British rule in India brought a nationalism fashion in India. However, echoes of nationalism diversified as the aforementioned two groups. One group was after improving India via using the British as a stepping-stone and for the other group the British rule

was completely interference to Indian affairs, and India was being abused by them. The desire for change and new social formation was what Moderate wing of National Congress sought. The Moderates were aspiring for more Europeanised institutions and educational system, more equality, justice, law and liberty breezing into India. Gokhale was leading the Moderates and Mohammad Ali Jinnah was within lines of moderates.

Alternatively to the Moderates, the Extremists were rigidly rejecting any of the changes and opposing against the entire Europeanistic values, because they were afraid of damaging the Brāhmanical instructions. The prominent leader of the extremist view is Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who a journalist was, distributing ideas about revitalization of free India based on Maratha traditions and recognized as one of the architects of free India. According to this standpoint, independence is the principal requirement for a nation. Any measure should be used without hesitation in order to achieve it. Tilak expressed this view by his famed sentenced which was sloganized “*Swaraj* is my birth right and I shall have it”. The extremists were after *swaraj* and moderates were after *swadeshi* that these words connoted respectively independence or self-rule and self-reliance. Unavoidably the extremists were also after modernization, yet the innovations they were planning to propose were framed in Hindu instructions. To modernize the ancient route was not an easy task, certainly. Particularly, Tilak and other extremists were opposed to destructive institutions and practices as the *varna* order, the Untouchability, *sutee*, child-marriage et cetera. On one side they did not want to destruct their primeval path, thus the innovations had to be carried out with the utmost care. In fact, it seemed almost impossible to modernize the existing system, thus new ideologies were required.¹⁴² Like Gandhi later, Tilak believed in non-cooperation with British rule; but not in non-violence. On the contrary it is known that he took direct action.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Omvedt, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁴³ Lamb, op. cit., p. 76.

The aforementioned theory concerning the Aryan race was the first conjecture extremists embraced. According to the theory, namely The Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), semi-agrarian Western people conquered India in 1500 BC. They forced indigenous people to move, and settled in the places emptied by native inhabitants. German linguist Max Mueller provided this new theory. He settled this theory while a group of scientists including Mueller were considering a comparative study of Western and Sanskrit languages. As the parallelism among European and Indian grammars discovered Mueller adopted the theory. Those people, Aryans, are considered to be the upper castes of the Varna system, and non-Aryans are *Shudras* and outcasts. Thus, by this theory Indian elite had a chance to claim ancient superiority and now they had an evidence of their dissimilarity with masses. They tried to convince the rest about their relation with the existing imperialist power, the British. There is a problem with political use of this theory. The theory only proves the relativity among the languages, but does not make any references to the contemporary Indian elites and their physical, racial commons together with Europeans. The research was not a genetics study, but on linguistics. Moreover, there is not a clear-cut physical division among Brāhmans and *Shudras*. Aryans are mostly considered to be fair skinned, but still the majority is dark skinned. Thus, Mueller's theory is misused. Their aim was to constitute a new, superior and modern culture with the so-called Aryan background. The new national sentiment was sought among racist scheme. However, because this new nationalism understanding was not an all encompassing one, it created domestic struggles, rather than strengthening India against exterior foes. The Western identity only underlined the borders among castes. Inevitably, this racist trend created radical opponents, even among the lines of Brāhmans and Kshatriyas. Radicalization caused avalanche of abhorrence on Brāhmanic traditions and Hinduism, and Joratio Phule began organizing "non-Aryan"s against this system.

2.2 Jotiba Govind Phule

The Greatest *Shudra* of Modern India, who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule.¹⁴⁴

Sarkar asserts that, it was Phule, who first pronounced the anti-Brāhman affection in Maharashtra, with his book *Ghulam-giri* (1872), and his organization, the *Satyashodak Samaj* (1873) emphasizing the need to save the “lower classes from the hypocritical Brāhmans and their opportunistic scriptures.”¹⁴⁵

One of the foremost social reformers of India and an important social thinker of 19th century, Phule was born to a *mali* caste, family of gardeners, in Phoona. He forfeited his life for Human liberation to the deprived segments of Indian public. For this reason, he initiated the *Satyashodak Samaj* movement, meaning the truth seeking movement, to obtain a non-Brāhmin order and to release depressed classes from Brāhmanical dominance. His most famed work namely ‘Slavery’, which is ‘*Gulamgiri*’ in Hindi language, was published in 1872. He is best known with his struggle towards the inequalities of Indian society, ignorance and slavery. He mobilized the backward classes in order to discard the humiliating and degrading social structure and to bring equal and just social order that does neither include discriminative classification nor leave women behind because he desired a welfare society. It is believed that the first person to coin the word Dalit is Phule since he is considered to be the initiator of the modern anti- Brāhmin movement.¹⁴⁶

According to biographies written about him, Phule read a book of Thomas Paine namely Rights of Man, which familiarized him with the ideas of rights, equality,

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, *Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability: Religious*

¹⁴⁵ Sarkar, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁴⁶ Felix SJ Raj, *Religion and Dalit Identity: The Research for Equality and Dignity*, The Statesman, (Calcutta, May 25, 2001).

unity, solidarity, justice, and social transformation. One other event that triggered his motivation about social change is about one of his experiences. It is known that Phule was dishonoured and embarrassed due to his caste in a marriage ceremony of a friend by superior caste members. This event grinded Phule about the social hierarchy and he sharply decided to make contributions to the betterment of Indian society.

Phule took measures to be disposed of the Brāhmanical domination and to engage women in social sphere. Jotiba Govind Phule is branded to be the first Indian initiating the education of women. It is known that he opened a library for the usage of the Untouchable children, two orphanages of Brāhman widows and a school of non-Brāhman girls. He put emphasis on intellectuality and education, especially the education right of down trodden children and women, thus he demanded free education for all inhabitants of India likewise the technological and scientific development, launching human rights, economic independence, brotherhood, equality, removal of mediators, Brāhmins in religion and many similar constructive factors for a fair society. To realize his aims he established the *Satyashodhak Samaj* on September 24, 1873. This institutions establishment was highly related with the inspirations from St.Kabir. *Satyashodhak Samaj* aimed to seek truth, highlight the importance of human rights, remind Indian society that all humans are equal by birth and what elevate their level are their own equalities, this is why the *Samaj* made vital contributions in education of lower castes and also girls, for instance they established school for making a priest for non-Brāhmin students, which was unheard of till then. Mahatma Phule exempted poor and downtrodden children from payment of education fees.¹⁴⁷ Still the welfare issue was important because improving the standards of *shudras* and the Untouchables was the imperative of *Samaj*. *Samaj* depreciated the magnitude of notions like rebirth, penance, and such rituals of Hinduism and Indian tradition that was believed to add value to or remove it from people. Thus, *Satyashodhak Samaj* was completely opposed to Brāhmanical elitism. The *Samaj* asserted the essential of saving lower castes and outcastes from Brāhmanical dominance. The notions of equality, brotherhood and non-requirement

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.ambedkar.org/jamanadas/TilakGandhi.htm>,

of the middlemen in religious matters were the great ideals of *Satyashodhak Samaj*. Phule also distressed the prominence and even the existence of priests, clerics that points the highest caste of Brāhmans. Actually Phule and his followers apprehended that, the existing social and resulting systems of Hinduism must at least be changed or totally be collapsed to save the Untouchables from their disgraced standing within the ranking.

Because Phule and his institution Samaj were after education since they believed it to be the most precious standard to lift a society up, attempts began to expand education. The education system proposed by supporters of Phule was to be under control of the government, to make it fair. Principally Samaj underlined the importance of primary education, so supported the idea to make it compulsory. By the year 1882, Mahatma Phule submitted a presentation to Sir William Hunter, the Chairman of the Education Commission, in which he sought compulsory primary education. Moreover, the education of women was particularly underscored below this title. The education curriculum had to be defined well according to Samaj principles, in a way that this system had to be useful in daily life, help people to find jobs, to join in the routine production and economy to better conditions. It was decided to incorporate occupational lectures in the system. The leading professional skill was agriculture and the one of the goals was to load agricultural knowledge to the teachers to spread this competence. One other feature of teachers proposed by the Samaj was to select them out of low castes to create a fair educational system.

Phule and his supporters initiated a campaign to overthrow landlords and moneylenders, who prevented economic improvement of farmers and led to injustice. Among his countless efforts, allowing the Untouchables to fetch water from public wells is an important step. The pureness issue for the upper classes was a kind of taboo, and this restriction caused the depressed classes to be affected of pollution, lack of hygiene and influenced easily by epidemic diseases. They even faced with thirst. Samaj devotees gave a hand for the orphans by constructing orphanages and food centres to feed children. As a challenge towards Hindu

traditions, Samaj did not hesitate to criticize Vedas the religious books and the religious customs, branded those rituals misleading, made exertion to prevent widow infanticides, opened Maternity Homes to save the widowed women, even women of upper castes and encouraged widow re-marriages.

Mahatma Phule also made contributions literature. Presumably, his writings were drawing the attentions to the inequalities of Indian society, fight among Brāhmins and non-Brāhmins, cruelty of ignorance and peculiar religious customs.

2.3 Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar has been the predominant character in the Dalit Movement. was a member of a class of the Untouchables, within the Mahar community or caste. Even though being born in an illiterate community, he managed to complete his education of law in United States and United Kingdom; moreover he earned degrees from Columbia and London Universities. He returned India back in 1923. Because he received an advanced and modern education, he was an open-minded leader and had a wide vision. He was after fresh and up to date view patterns rather than the traditional ones. He sought equal rights for every citizen of India and he was unpleasant with discriminative nature of conventional Hindu social structure. His demands also included separate representation, the right to use tanks and enter temples.¹⁴⁸ He is also recognized as the architect of the Indian Constitution of 1950 and Nehru's Minister of Law. He became the chief of the Dalit movement. Some believe that it is Dr. Ambedkar, who coined the word Dalit for the first time.¹⁴⁹ He pursued "the policy of reserving quotas in education, government jobs and employment of the Scheduled Castes."¹⁵⁰ Underlined by Zubrzycki, this system of

¹⁴⁸ Sarkar, op. cit., p. 243.

¹⁴⁹ Raj, op. cit.

¹⁵⁰ Khilnani Sunil, Book Review of *Worshipping False Gods: Ambedkar and the Facts Which Have Been Erased* (Foreign Policy, 00157228, Winter 97/98, Issue 109).

reservations or quotas, made the Untouchables and downtrodden or low classes, and gave them proportional representation in legislatures, government jobs, and educational institutions.¹⁵¹ Still, in one aspect the quota application seems to be involving downtrodden to education and politics, on the other it makes system more open for corruption. According to ‘*In India, Almost Everyone Wants to Be Special*’ article of Martha Ann Overland, even though the quota system is not generally affirmed by states, it is not the case for India.¹⁵² Since the first constitution of India was enforced in 1950, quotas or the reserved seats comprise important place from governmental recruitments to the parliament memberships or the student registrations to higher education institutions. The mentioned quotas or the reserved seats are set for the sake of the Dalits, the Untouchables, the scheduled castes and tribes. In India, because it is believed that the Hindu majority would scarf up the downtrodden people and the minorities, so on behalf of protecting their rights and cultures the quota system is a functional pattern. Moreover, the quota system in India is not only for protecting the agitated groups, but also the families of the heroes, like the children and the grandchildren of those, who fought against the British existence in India and died. Also there are quotas in the universities for physically handicapped and specially talented students in sports, fine arts and performing arts. Also the women quotas subsist beside the mentioned ones. So, for about 80 percent of the population qualifies for a quota.

Dr. Ambedkar also organized protests against the caste and gender discrimination that put Untouchables and women off countless rights and led women “numerous incidents of abuse, rape and kidnapping by police and outsiders.”¹⁵³ Especially the Dalit women were subject to a greater discrimination on three basis; one because they are low caste; two because they are the Dalits; and three because they are women. According to Clarke, the abuse of the Dalit women is a kind of show off by

¹⁵¹ John Zubrzycki, *Lower Castes Still Stuck on India’s Bottom Rung*, Christian Science Monitor, 8/29/97.

¹⁵² Overland, op. cit.

¹⁵³ Janet A Contursi, *Political Theology: Text and Practice in a Dalit Panther Community*, The Journal of Asian Studies, (Vol. 52, No. 2, May 1993) p. 329.

the upper castes. They use bodies of the Dalits in order to express the power they have over them. That is why the Dalit bodies are subjected to various kinds of violence. “The extension of violence against the Dalit body is extended to violent rape of Dalit female bodies. The shaming of the Dalit communities through acts of violently violating their women folk is a tactic used by caste communities to demonstrate the power they have over all Dalit life.”¹⁵⁴

Dr. Ambedkar is best known with his saying “I will not die a Hindu”¹⁵⁵ As Contursi notes, an important aspect of cultural struggle is the syncretism of religion and politics.¹⁵⁶ Dr. Ambedkar and his followers blamed *Manumriti* as the spring of inequalities within the Indian society, and they did not hesitate to burn the book of Laws of Manu. As a result, by a conference, he asked entire downtrodden people of India to leave Hinduism and to convert. This was the only solution to free enslaved people of India according to Dr. Ambedkar. Moreover, “the position of Untouchables and lower castes in Hindu society is such the possibility of leaving Hinduism has always been attractive.”¹⁵⁷

The Untouchables (and India’s tribals) have fared better in access to the political arena than have low status minorities in most democracies, though their ability and/or willingness to exert actual political influence are the subject of constant debate. Access itself is guaranteed by a policy introduced before Independence by one of the early Untouchable leaders, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, who argued that, given existing prejudice and socio-economic handicap, Untouchables would have to be guaranteed proportional legislative representation if their interests were to be protected in an independent India. Untouchable political influence at the time was negligible –Ambedkar was one of only a handful with a university education and national political experience- but he was able to take advantage of the multi-cornered independence negotiations between the British colonial government and the major Indian parties to win

¹⁵⁴ Clarke, op. cit.

¹⁵⁵ Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*, p. 271.

¹⁵⁶ Contursi, op. cit., p. 321.

¹⁵⁷ Gokhale, *The Sociopolitical Effects of Ideological Change: The Buddhist Conversion of Maharashtrian Untouchables*, p. 273.

British, and eventually Indian National Congress, commitment to guaranteed representation.¹⁵⁸

Dr. Ambedkar established the Independent Labour Party by the year 1936 in order to struggle for the rights of the Untouchables and to seek solution to the socio-economic inequality question, via the political arena. Moreover, like Mosaddiq of Iran, Dr. Ambedkar was also after nationalisation of Indian sources like industry and agriculture. He supported special representation, reserved seats in the parliament for the downtrodden people of India. Even though he managed to enforce this political system, Ambedkar revealed his sorrow that about ineffectuality of it.

The contributions of Dr. Ambedkar into the formulating the Indian constitution are impossible to overlook. Before telling about the Ambedkar's role in formulation of Indian constitution, it is better to clarify the notion of constitution. Dr. Ambedkar defines constitution in his article titled 'The Constitution of British India' as follows:

A constitution is the study of the organisation of the state for the State is an artificial person, which claims the right to punish, to possess property, to make contracts and to regulate its rights and duties as between itself and the subjects and also as between the subjects themselves.¹⁵⁹

As Hart maintained in his article, two definitions are the most common, where one says a constitution is a nation's actual institutions and their development, and the second says a constitution is a document, a code of fundamental law, struck off at a particular historic moment.¹⁶⁰ The second definition is found too mechanic by Hart that for him a constitution is not something prepared by a given formulation. It is rather composed following the path led that constitution's emergence. As for the

¹⁵⁸ Joshi, op. cit., pp. 209-10.

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, *The Constitution of the British India*.

¹⁶⁰ Henry C. Hart, *The Indian Constitution: Political Development and Decay*, Asian Survey, (Vol. 20, No. 4, April, 1980.) p. 429.

Indian society, this nation experienced a transition from colonial hands to free governance. Moreover, the society itself was based on a classification, where a huge number of people were left behind. Thus, main principles of the Indian constitution are justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, which led the Ambedkar movement as well. Dr. Ambedkar helped adopting a western style of societal relations in the constitution, for all citizens; and the Article 15 banned any kind of discrimination among citizens, besides the Article 17 abolishing specifically the practice of the Untouchability in any form. Actually, as far as Hinduism is based on a distinction and classification of people, then in a sense this article disallows practice of Hinduism. In regard of recovering the equality principle a number of other articles were inserted in the constitution. Those articles are 46, 330, 332, 334, 335, 341 and 342. They mention the standard of preserving injustice by caring economic and educational interests of the weaker in addition to providing reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the House of the People for ten years and this term was extended for several times. Numerous articles were formulated to support those pieces.¹⁶¹ Albeit the Untouchables and low castes were branded as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and offered some privileges as reserved seats, reserved posts et cetera, many sources as the article of Corbridge, argue that those rights and positive discrimination benefits were monopolized by elite groups called the creamy layer in India.

Even though both Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar were seemed to be after liberation of Indian state and justice, they were not lined in the same row. As Corbridge also states in his article, Dr. Ambedkar stood closer to the left wing of the Congress, not to Gandhi.

¹⁶¹ Stuart Corbridge, *Competing Inequalities: The Scheduled Tribes and the Reservation System in India's Jharkhand*, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, (Vol. 59, No. 1, February, 2000) pp. 66-7.

CHAPTER III

POSITION OF GANDHI AND CONGRESS TOWARDS THE DALIT MOVEMENT

3.1 Gandhi's Harijans

As far as their standpoints towards the Untouchability problem of India were distinct, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar were political rivals. Actually, Gandhiji was concerned with the idea of freeing India from the British dominion and ignored the Untouchables, but paid effort only to silence them. He was neither willing to demolish the traditional Hindu social order nor bestow the Depressed Classes separate representation in the Congress. On the other side, Dr. Ambedkar was the voice of the Untouchables in the Indian political scène. Ambedkar expressed the wishes of the Untouchables that can be concisely listed as basic Human Rights and political representation.

The term coined by Gandhi, *harijan* to define Dalits, was not accepted by the Dalits, since this word still had a denotation of exclusion. Actually, as Omvedt believes hat Gandhi did not mobilize the lower castes and the Untouchables into a well-organized national movement; but the middle class, the bourgeois and upper-caste Indians. They were already controlled by the Congress Party. This conservative consolidation of the Indian national movement has left the masses of the population still immersed in poverty and caste degradation.¹⁶²

The Congress Party was an elite organisation, dominated by Brāhman professionals in addition to some upper class merchants. Those people were totally different from

¹⁶² Gail Omvedt, *Gandhi And The Pacification Of The Indian National Revolution* in ed. Robin Jeffrey *India: Rebellion to Republic Selected Writings 1857-1990* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991.) pp.2-8.

the rest of the Indian society by even clothing and language, so they were separated from the masses. Still Gandhi was aware of the fact that, integration of masses into the movement was vital. In order to close this gap, the Party opened auxiliary branches in towns and villages of India. However, this did not work. Omvedt explains this due to the reality that the problem was not reaching the masses. The problem was the feeling of disturbance of the elite by the integration of masses. Mahatma Gandhi took some measures on behalf of the Untouchables, by his own. One of them was Temple Entry Movement, in which Gandhi declared that he would fast unto death if the trustees of certain temples open to the Untouchables.

The anti-caste non-Brāhman movement was there since nineteenth century, but the question was brought to issues like temple-entrance allowances, thus Dalits raised their case as preferring the British rule to Brāhman one. By 1920s, low and outcastes supported the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi. The symbol of entire Indian people, including downtrodden classes was Gandhi, in this resistance. But then they, the lower classes, shifted from the Congress lines and attacked to landlords by developing own movement. Omvedt names it as the inability of Gandhi; he could prevent the deepening radicalism between classes and gather them under the common interest. The Dalits interpreted the independence movement as throwing off both the British and the Brāhman rule including dominance of landlords.¹⁶³

There is another view explaining that Dr. Ambedkar neither found the term *harijan*, coined by Gandhi, friendly; nor found Mahatma Gandhi in cooperation with themselves in the case, as far as Gandhi gone to fast unto death in order to prevent Dalits granting a separate electorate as Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. Gandhi wanted to prevent Untouchables obtaining such rights because in the eyes of Gandhi, the Congress was representing all Indians, where Dalits were no exceptions. Mahatma Gandhi dedicated his life to Hindu-Muslim unity and believed that a separate electorate would bring the Untouchables a distinct nationhood sentiment, which would pave the way to a distinct state and thus to the disintegration of

¹⁶³ Omvedt, *Gandhi And The Pacification Of The Indian National Revolution*, pp.2-8.

India.¹⁶⁴ One of the principles of Mahatma Gandhi was *sarva dharma samabhava* meaning equality of all religions. Even though the Depressed Classes were deprived of the right to worship, they were considered as Hindus, so they were not benefiting from this understanding of Great Soul. In the eyes of Gandhiji, the Untouchables were factionists, who were breaking the unity among Hindus. Ironically, Dr. Ambedkar owed the same idea plane with Gandhi; he was also a supporter of unity within India and disintegration was the last thing he would desire. Dr. Ambedkar was an opponent to the politics of both Hindu elites and Muslims; because they break India up. Ambedkar was not willing to divide India and establish a separate *Buddhistan*, rather he claimed Indian nation and he cared for the equality within Indian nation. This is why he called for a public conversion.

Ambekar points a problem, which is the general belief that Congress represents all, including Dalits. In one of his writings namely 'What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables' Dr. Ambedkar avows that politics in India has two main facets, which can be indicated as foreign politics and constitutional politics. The foreign politics of India deals with India's freedom exertion from British Imperialism. As for the constitutional politics Dr. Ambedkar implies the consideration of free India's constitution. These two aspects of Indian politics are commonly failed to differentiate, and this can be seen easily by observing the foreigners, who are interested in Indian political affairs. Those foreigners become adherents of the Congress and ignore the parties representing Muslims, non-Brahmins, Dalits. In the eyes of the foreigners, the Congress represents the all. For Dr. Ambedkar, the foreigners only see the solidarity maintained under Congress during the independence struggle against the British colonialism, and they miss the constitutional politics of India. Ambedkar states that this failure is a result of position of the Untouchables. The Untouchables left the Congress propaganda unchallenged and lingered silent. The Congress represented all against the common case against the British rule in India. However, as for the constitutional politics, the bases of parties differentiated. Under constitutional terms, Gandhi's party, Congress

¹⁶⁴ Wolpert, op. cit., p.129.

did not maintain the sufficient space for the Untouchables. The Congress was engaged with the idea of fighting for freedom, but still this does not ensure that its aim was to constitute democracy in India. While pursuing freedom, the Congress left the Untouchables behind. The Congress was not trying to free the Untouchables, from the social, economic and political cage that they were put in. Ambedkar stresses that most of the notions are fallacious and misleading. For instance there is a distinction between the freedom of a country and the freedom of the people in the country. The freedom of a nation is the focus, nevertheless the nation, which is a unit politically, is divided into classes, socially and people of a class are not promised the same freedom.

3.2 Caste, Freedom and Democracy

The parliamentary democracy in India has problems. In principle, parliamentary democracy promises equality, freedom in return of some duties. To ensure this, a system is formed where people are voiced in legislature, the decisions taken by the legislature are enforced by the executive and justice controls the legality of the operations under legislature and executive. Still this system does not function well in India. Normally, equal adult suffrage is a *sine qua non* of parliamentary democracies. Nonetheless, the political system in India has failed to assure to the masses the right to liberty, property or the pursuit of happiness, consequently wrong ideology and wrong organisation from the beginning, as Ambedkar articulates. The wrong ideology is omitting the social and economic democracy. Those two are missed, because liberty swallowed equality in India. Typically, in organisation of democracies there are two main groups, rulers and the ruled. The rulers spring out among the lines of ruled and become rulers. This is not the case in India. The rulers are fixed and the ruled people never take place among rulers. This indicates that government of people is never formed in India. Ambedkar counts seven universal reasons for this situation, and he conveys those points as threats towards democracy.

First is, all through the history, there has always been a struggle of power between rulers and the ruled. Secondly, rulers find it easy to dominate over ruled by the status prestige and power they hold. The third is, neither the regular elections nor the equal adult suffrage prevents preceding rulers to reach the rank they held, but they keep it. The fourth is, the ruled has a constant belief that they will always remain as the ruled and the present rulers are the natural leaders, who are going to linger as leaders for ever. The fifth thing is the incompatibility of a governing class with democracy, there should not be a governing class, but people elected among ruled should be rulers for a certain period. Sixthly, a constitution offering an adult suffrage is not adequate to make self-government and democracy real. The important thing is to capture the power of the preceding governing class to keep the power to govern. The last point is, in some countries bearing parliamentary democracy, adult suffrage is not sufficient to incorporate the masses to the governance, but also other factors are needed. So, the Congress did not remove the governing class, rather Congress left it as a governing body for ever. By leaving the down classes a side from the political system, the governing body made itself invincible. So the Congress fought for the freedom of the governing class, according to Ambedkar. Moreover, the freedom fight of Congress was not to create a free and democratic India, but to restore the ancient social, political and economic systems once again.

Ambedkar marks that the ruling class in India is definite and they are the Brāhmins, even though from outside people think that it is detected via elections. Brāhmins are the ruling class by birth as far as they are considered to be *Bhudevas*, which means gods on earth. High or less, majority of the Hindus gather under the belief that a Brāhmin is regarded sacred. It is a well established ancient belief. In earlier times Brāhmins were immune to punishes, even if they committed a murder, due to their sacredness. Besides having natural governing leaders, the second challenge to the system is the controversy between the Congress and the Untouchables, because of the Congress deliberate Untouchables as unattached component of India's national, religious, social, economic and political life. The Congress is dominated by the Hindus. The Untouchables are Hindus in territorial sense, as inhabitants of

Hindustan, but not in religious sense. The Untouchables are deprived of hearing the holy texts, entering the temples, going to the same places of pilgrimage and regarding the same totems sacred. So, Untouchables and Hindus are not participating in the same prayer. They are isolated from each other in maximum even shadow of an Untouchable never intersects with a Hindu's. According to Dr. Ambedkar, even though they are Hindu's, still they are distinct from each other.

3.3 Congress' Dalit Perception

Ambedkar expresses that, the Congress made two mistakes. One is it did not make clear to sign over constitutional safeguards of common in opposition to separate social groups. The second mistake of the Congress is, its attempt to define other groups according to their religions. Ambedkar strictly opposes to the idea uniting social groups under religious terms and he asserts that, if it was a true path to define social groups, then there would be a united European society, and no Italians Germans, British et cetera. Still, religions do not coincide with social groups in India, like in the example of Sikhs and the Untouchables, because the only difference among them is faith, but they are socially united because they marry each other, they live in the same places and even while a son of a family is a Sikh the other may be a Hindu. However, for instance Untouchables do not dine with Brāhmins. Ambedkar concludes that Hinduism and social unity are incompatible and Hinduism is the greatest obstacle to Hindu unity.

Ambedkar accuses the Congress of not accepting the Untouchables as a separate body. By considering the Untouchables as affiliates of the same social unit they belong, they keep the Untouchables under their domination. When they accept that they are separate from Hindus, then they will have to share governmental positions with the Untouchables. A separation between two groups brings political recognition question. When the Untouchables are recognized, then also constitutional safeguards will be needed to protect them against the autocracy of genuine Hindus, as

maintained by Dr. Ambedkar. In framing the constitution of the European constitutions, social groups are not taken into account; however, in India it is compulsory. This is because these groups in India are anti-social. Some of the groups in the mentioned lands are non-social, but non-social nature of a social group does not make it essential to be recognized in the constitution. The castes are anti-social in India. Especially the relation among four castes and the Untouchables is anti-social. When the Untouchables are not recognized in the constitution, then they will be deprived of relentless amount of human rights; from travelling in the same compartment with members of any caste to wearing jewellery or bearing land. This is why the Untouchables need constitutional safeguards. The mentioned safeguards were listed by the Untouchables in Resolutions passed by the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation in Appendix XI as (i) Guaranteed minimum representation in the Legislature; (ii) guaranteed minimum representation in the Executive and (iii) guaranteed minimum representation in the Public Services.¹⁶⁵ Ambedkar demarcate the aims of those guarantees as to prevent the Untouchables being pressured by the Hindu majority.

Ambedkar does not find the optimist claims of the Congress members accurate. The Congress alleges that the institution of Untouchability vanishes, so no need to give the Untouchables a different status than Hindus. While on one side Dr. Ambedkar hopes it to be true, on the other he wants to guarantee the destruction of this institution by constitutional terms. Moreover, the view of Ambedkar about the Untouchability vanishing is slightly different from the view of the Congress. As a touch-me-not-ism, Untouchability vanishes, but they are still socially segregated. What is vanishing is only one aspect of Untouchability, for Ambedkar. The Untouchability is not only a religious but also an economic system. This system allows upper castes to exploit Untouchables. Thus, it makes hard for *varna* affiliates to be disposed of such economic comfort.

Still, providing separate electorates for the Untouchables is also not a solution for Ambedkar. Even though, by the separate electorates the Untouchables would be able

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*.

to send own representatives to the parliament, as far as Hindus vote for Hindus and Untouchables vote for Untouchables, a social unity cannot be obtained. Ambedkar utters that; such a situation would not make Untouchables happy. They are after a social unity and an atmosphere of independence in all terms of economy, political and social, at the same time.

3.4 Ambedkar Versus Gandhi

On one hand, Gandhi seemed to be a challenger of the *varna* order, since it favoured the discrimination, but on the other hand he did not dare to devastate such an entrenched social institution, thus did not go far beyond calling Untouchables as Harijans. What Keer points out in his book is, it was much easier for Dr. Ambedkar to lead and reach the Untouchables, compared to Mahatma Gandhi, because he sprang from amongst the Untouchables themselves, so knew how they thought and felt. Keer asserts that, Great Soul Gandhi was a reformer and where Ambedkar was a social reformer, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal.¹⁶⁶ The slogan of social reformers was 'social reform before political reform', however Dr. Ambedkar claims that the Congress forced it to be forgotten by the slogans 'politics first, politics last' and 'politics by each, politics by all'. The difference between a reformer and a social reformer is; a reformer restores the old structure, where the social reformer overthrows the old system and builds a new one, which exactly suits with the positions of Gandhi and Ambedkar. While Ambedkar was trying to abolish the Untouchability system totally and appeals for a political, social and economic order, in which all citizens are equal, Gandhi wanted to smoothen the peoples regard of Untouchables, by naming them *Harijans* and allowing them entering the Hindu temples.

The reason why Ambedkar did not join the movement of Gandhi for the political independence of the country was his disbelief for democracy and independence. He was conscious about the order Gandhi aspired. That was the ancient traditional

¹⁶⁶ Keer, op. cit., p. 59.

Hindu order, which enslaved the Untouchables. Ambedkar aimed to bestow his people civic, religious and political rights that they were deprived by *varna ashramas*. In this struggle, he knew that he has to struggle against both the supporters of the caste system –this means the majority of Indians– and the British governors of Hindustan, for political rights.¹⁶⁷ In his exertion, he put big emphasis on self-elevation, to reach a consciousness about own human rights. He said “education is something, which ought to be brought within the reach of every one”¹⁶⁸ and demanded cheaper higher education for low classes. The second step of Ambedkar in education field was to criticise the teachers of Untouchables, coming among the Brāhmin lines. Even now he was declaring that education was not enough by its own, but some aggressive measures are needed for a more quick solution. He directed Untouchables to rush into temples and not to hesitate using public water wells. He advised his people to fight for own liberation, because universally, liberty is never received as a gift.

This attitude of Gandhi’s and the splitting objectives of Muslims attracted the reaction of Ambedkar bedkar. Ambedkar voiced his disapproval by a speech. In this speech, he complained about being condemned for criticizing Gandhi’s and Jinnah’s policies. Dr. Ambedkar uttered that even though he also did some mistakes, it is better to be a critic than keeping silent and accepting any guidance from those, who makes drastic mistakes. According to Gandhi, those who accuses him forgets two things. One is, his hatred is not personal, but it is because he wants a settlement and he is so impatient and fed up to wait for the ideal settlement. The second thing is, He thinks no one can hope to make any effective mark upon his time, and bring the aid that is worth bringing to great principles and struggling causes, if he is not strong in his love and his hatred. He asserted that he hates injustice, tyranny, snobbishness and hypocrisy, and his hatred embraces all those who are guilty of them. This is why he tenders no apology for his criticism of Gandhi and Jinnah. He accuses them for impeding India’s progress. Dr. Ambedkar believes that, these two men, Gandhi and

¹⁶⁷ Keer, op. cit., pp. 59-73.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 84.

Jinnah, ignored everything but their competition. One became ‘mahatma’ the other ‘Qaid-i-Azim’. One was rejecting being the spiritual leader of Hindus, and the other was denying being the spiritual leader of Muslims. One had the Congress and the other had the Muslim League. This competition prevented settlement in Indian politics. Moreover Dr. Ambedkar complained their inattention about the Untouchability question. For Ambedkar, there have been many mahatmas in India promising to eradicate the inequity within the caste society of India, via elevating the downward classes. However, these promises were never completed, they failed.

Both Dr. Ambedkar and most of the Untouchables believe that Mahatma Gandhi also failed in his anti-Untouchability campaign. Babasaheb Ambedkar lists three reasons for this failure. One is, the Hindus did not respond to the appeal of Mahatma, about the amputation of the Untouchability institution from Indian society. Second is, Gandhi did not want to irritate the Hindus. He did not want to use fast unto death or *satyagraha* against Hindus to terminate the Untouchability. His explanation was that *satyagraha* could only be used against the foreigners. As last point, Gandhi did not want to strengthen the Untouchables, because he was afraid of the probability that the Untouchables could establish own state by disintegrating India. This fear is based on the idea of ‘Two Nation Theory’ of Brāhmans, who separate themselves from the rest as Aryans and non-Aryans. This view of separation was accepted by Dr. Ambedkar, as the leader of the Dalit Movement. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a supporter ‘Two Nation Theory’ and this conviction paved the way for the partition of Muslims from India.¹⁶⁹ Hence, Gandhi did not want India to have a partition experience once again.

From the theological aspect, for Dr. Ambedkar, the main question was positing religion and men. Which is for the other? Men for religion or religion for men? Because the Untouchables were in a quarrel with Brāhmanism, it seemed that they were against religion. However, Dr. Ambedkar set that, the Untouchables are not opposed to religion; they can even die for the religion, which takes care of them.

¹⁶⁹ Soykut, *Dinler Tarihi Perspektifinden Hindistan Kökenli Dinler ve İdeolojik Çatışmalar*, pp. 98-9.

Nevertheless, Hinduism does not take care of the Untouchables, but rather pushes them aside from all spheres of life; this religion prevents them even from worshipping and praying. As the voice of the Untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar always found this ban meaningless and addressed that “the image of the god in temple should be accessible to all, who wanted to worship it, without any discrimination, binding or condition.”¹⁷⁰ The religion that the Untouchables are assumed to be affiliated, Hinduism, spoils the social harmony among the all Indians, by laying *varnas*. Those *varnas* and duties and rights of each is chartered in *Manusmriti*, which is the backbone of Brāhmanism. At the same time, this holy text was the one labelling a portion of the Indian populace as the Untouchables. Thus, unavoidably Babasaheb Ambedkar was in a position to attack the sacred text, since it was the “symbol of unjust social laws.”¹⁷¹ Mahatma Gandhi did not attempt to bring those mentioned *varnas* to an end. As the leader of the Untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar declared for several times a temple is not tainted the presence of an Untouchable.

Thus he always stressed equality and importance of eradicating *varna* order. Rather than subduing this embedded but disgracing institution, Mahatma Gandhi favoured making minor variations in the status of his *Harijans*. Nevertheless for the Untouchables, these endeavours seemed like tricks to silence them. While it was important for the Untouchables to be equal, in all means, with the others, the religion they belonged impeded them from obtaining it. The inequality that the Untouchables complained is brought by the religion itself, so the only way was abolishing Brāhmanism, which is a product of pure ignorance and cruelty, totally or to convert, where the second option sounded more logical and practical. Actually, conversion was the most meaningful way to balance the social discord continuing since long years. “Ambedkar defined religion as something that offered you prosperity or elevation first in this world and than salvation; the former should be the first article of faith of every religion.”¹⁷² The Untouchables expected to be supported by the

¹⁷⁰ Keer, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 106.

¹⁷² Keer, op. cit., p. 92.

Great Soul, since he was after peace, freedom and welfare of the Indian society. A divergence appeared among Gandhi and Ambedkar, because the Great Soul did not do more than naming them slightly smoother and living in a district namely Banghi Colony, where the Untouchables lived, in Delhi.¹⁷³ Ambedkar believed that, the equality and freedom, after which Mahatma Gandhi ran, must be for all, but not for a specific upper genre of the Indian nation. For several times Babasaheb Ambedkar pointed out that Gandhi has to experience the same degradations, prohibitions and the feeling of being excluded, in order to support the Untouchable case. Ambedkar always underlined that, even though Mahatma Gandhi began dealing with the Untouchables problem even before himself was born; the Congress did nothing beyond giving formal recognition to this problem, so the Congress is not sincere. If it were, then it would fight for removing Untouchability. During a conversation Dr. Ambedkar said to Gandhi that, the Untouchables are deprived of homeland and religion, they are treated worse than animals, they suffer from injustice, they even cannot get water to drink, so it impossible for the Depressed classes to be proud of their lands, as far as they also win Human Rights. Even though the Untouchables are considered to be Hindus, in India Muslims and Sikhs are more advanced in political, economic, social and religious fields than the Scheduled castes and tribes. When Dr. Ambedkar told Gandhi that they deserve adequate representation, but Gandhiji, as the top of Indian politics, replied that he is against it, because this would be suicidal.¹⁷⁴

In year 1956, half-million Hindu Dalits converted to Buddhism for divesting themselves of the Hindu caste discrimination. However, in the eyes of Mahatma Gandhi they were still Dalits and were still members of the Hindu religion. This view springs from the philosophy that Buddhism is a branch of Brāhmanism.

As the relations between Islam and Christianity have not always been peaceful, the relations between Hinduism and Buddhism have also not

¹⁷³ Clement, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁷⁴ Keer, op. cit., pp. 165-7.

been an easy going relation right from Buddhism's beginnings. Although there are occasionally references in the original Buddhist sutras and scriptures to Hindu deities and *upanishadic* concepts, these have been considered as part of the Buddhist *upāyaya*, a device or 'skillful means' to make a greater appeal to the larger Hindu society, where Buddhism was considered not only as an independent religion, but also as the predominant religion of India for centuries after the Buddha's *mahāparinivāna*. Among the supporters of this view is the renowned T.W. Rhys Davids. An example of this is the mentioning of *ātman* or the self in the *Mahāparinivāna Sutra*, by a religion that embraced the doctrine of impermanence and the rejection of an unchanging soul. The so-called *upanishadic* debt of Buddhism lead many modern Indian scholars to claim that Buddhism is indeed an offshoot of Hinduism and that many of the ideas and the main message in Buddhism was already present in early forms of Buddhism. Among these scholars is Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, who explained the agnosticism of Buddhism saying that oldest forms of Hinduism were neither polytheistic nor pantheistic and that in fact Buddhism was a mystery religion like Taoism and the early forms of Hinduism. Therefore the message of Buddhism was far from authentic and was in fact a reiteration of the Vedas.¹⁷⁵

In fact, both Babasahed Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi fought against the Untouchability institution of Hindu social order. However where the aim of Dr. Ambedkar was eradicating the entire *varnashram* structure and the Untouchability, Mahatma acted less radical and he offered to reconcile the ill sides of it. Mahatma believed that it was possible to integrate the Untouchables to the daily life. He made efforts to persuade Indian people about purity of the downtrodden people. From the standpoint of the Untouchables, it was almost impossible to incorporate the Untouchables to the world of *varnas*, the upper caste members would never accept them in their own spaces. For Ambedkar, until the Brāhmanic structure is not destroyed, the Untouchables can never be freed; so a political guarantee must protect Untouchables, but 'social freedom' aspect is not less important than legal one. In words of Ambedkar; 'So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you'. Ambedkar and Gandhi

¹⁷⁵ Mustafa Soykut, *Two Cases of Heresy: The Christianity-Islam and Brahmanism-Buddhism Relationships in Particular Comparison to Turco-Ottoman History*, in *Ad Est Dell'Europa, Storia, Cultura e Società tra Età Moderna e Contemporanea*, Strumenti 12, Giuseppe Motta (ed.), (Viterbo: Edizioni Sette Città, 2004) pp 4-11.

remained as political rivals, because they never found out a common point for solution of the Untouchability question of India.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONVERSION, AFTERMATH AND CASTE TODAY

4.1 The Conversion 1956

According to Dr. Ambedkar, “the architect of the new the new nation’s constitution”¹⁷⁶, only way to free from Brāhmanical slavery and to create an alternate cultural identity for Untouchables of India was to convert from Hinduism to some other belief system that does not leave any people out of the social system. So, the conversion was a rebel against the Hinduism and its artefact Untouchability. “As Kappan, an Indian theologian says, it was the Vedic religion which provoked the first crisis of culture and religion in India.”¹⁷⁷ Balkrishna Gokhale names this conversion as a spin-off from the Theosophical order.¹⁷⁸ According to him, this movement was a modernization movement of the submersed masses of Untouchables, where the impetus came from the Western influence ushered by the British rule in India. Dr. Ambedkar initially arranged a conference in 1936 to release his ideas of conversion. In this conference he called the depressed classes to leave Hinduism, since it confined the majority of Indian people and only worked for the interests of a minority. O’Hanlon asks the question of the changes involved in the content of such a folk tradition, popular attitude to it, when it is taken up and made into a self-conscious political attitude.¹⁷⁹ According to his article, identification of those people with the Maratha past but not with the Brāhmanical order is an important factor.¹⁸⁰ He underlines the fact that Phule also used ancient glorious tales,

¹⁷⁶ Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*.

¹⁷⁷ Raj, op. cit.

¹⁷⁸ Gokhale, op. cit.

¹⁷⁹ O’Hanlon, op. cit., p.7.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.7.

events and some other figures to highlight the non-Brāhman identity.¹⁸¹ As for the religious nuance of non-Brāhmins voiced especially by Phule, the author says that it derives from an ideal of dedication to the service of a community with a vision of creating prosperity and equitable social arrangements reflected as intentions of a just creator.¹⁸² And in addition he utters that, the idea that non-Brāhmins of Indian society comprised a unitary social group emerged only in the late 1800's.

The final decision came twenty years after this conference. During this period, he evaluated a number of belief systems to convert in. He fluctuated between Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Sikhism. Naturally, as far as this movement was a liberation act, he did not make any pressures to any group, but he announced that it is up to each group, each caste to determine about the faith that they would be subjected to. In this process, he announced that, his motto was to find a religion which is egalitarian, and revering anti-caste features. He initially advised his followers to choose Islam, if they decide to convert and praised Islam with his saying 'I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity.' His concluded with conversion into Buddhism. According to Dr. Ambedkar, the new religion of Dalits should not be in a clash with existing Indian values, life style and practice. The new religion must be the one that the majority of Indians are familiar with it, so they would not find it odd. Most importantly, it should not have a discriminative nature. In last analysis, he decided on Buddhism, because any other religion could be abandoning the Indic tradition.¹⁸³ "He rejected Christianity and Islam because, though formally egalitarian religions, they did not face in their origin the task of fighting the caste system. The only Indian religion, for Ambedkar, which arose and grew out of the struggle against the caste system and never succumbed to it was Buddhism."¹⁸⁴ The philosophy of Buddha, residing on suffering made Dr. Ambedkar more fascinated by Buddhism, since Buddhism is in consistency with traditional

¹⁸¹ O'Hanlon, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁸³ Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*.

¹⁸⁴ Raj, op. cit.

customs of India and it has a social message counting justice, law, liberty and equality. “Ambedkar noted that the Buddha created his *Sangha* as a model of casteless society.”¹⁸⁵

Lord Buddha initiated a radical critique of contemporary religion and society. He was forthright in repudiating the caste system and the notion of ritual purity associated with it. One of his famous sayings is:

No Brāhmin is such by birth,
No outcaste is such by birth.
An outcaste is such by his deeds
A Brāhmin is such by his deeds¹⁸⁶

Buddha did not offer a god to pray to and the main question that Buddha was concerned was the issue of suffering and how to reach happiness of mankind. The idea of eradicating misery from human and search for happiness was directly corresponding to the ideology of Ambedkar and Dalitism. So, Dr. Ambedkar opted for Buddhism regarding to both practical and philosophical reasons. While he was willing to save the Untouchables from the Hindu social order, at the same time he did not want to bring them in a clash with the Indian cultural heritage.¹⁸⁷ According to Teltumbde, Dr. Ambedkar preferred to be a Buddhist, due to Buddhism's some specific features, as the pure democratic criterion of ‘happiness and welfare of many’, the emphasis on morality, the rational approach, compatibility with modern science. Buddhism is compatible with modern science with its radical outlook; it lacks three *sine qua nons* of religions, these are belief in God, permanent entity and set of rituals, that is why it is hardly qualified as a religion.¹⁸⁸

Gokhale also maintains in his article that for Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism was the religion of reason and compassion, the Buddha challenged Brāhmanical priestly

¹⁸⁵ Raj, op. cit.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Contursi, op. cit., p. 322.

¹⁸⁸ Teltumbde, op. cit., p.28.

assumption and iniquitous social hierarchy, but not Hindu gods.¹⁸⁹ As Contursi mentions in her article, Buddhism was exactly in opposition with the *Brāhmanical* order, because Buddha was critical of the belief about the infallibility of the Vedas, the ritual sacrifice, the *varna* order and the doctrines of transmigration and karma.¹⁹⁰ Gokhale also stressed the opposite character of Buddhism against Hinduism and stated “Buddhism was intended to be a counter ideology that would combat the penetration of *varna*, offer an alternate interpretation of the situation of the Untouchables, and provide a basis on which they could unite politically.”¹⁹¹ According to Buddha, everything has to be open for rational examination and Vedas are not exception, this is related with freedom of thought. Taking Vedas perfect and not questioning them doubtful, it seems that those books serve interests of a specific group. She explains that Buddha does not deny the sacrifice notion at all, but he utters that Brāhmins do not realize true sacrifice but they sacrifice for personal benefits. Besides, the *Chaturvarna* order, which means division of the Indian society into four main castes, is unequal, unjust and discriminative. It is graded on graded inequality; moreover it is legal and penal.¹⁹² This system causes masses becoming slaves of a minority. Buddha’s rejection of karma is precisely related with this system. The *varna* order is a result of karma belief. The transmigration of the soul does not take place as a hereditary process in Hindu belief. Buddha says, a child takes all features from her/his parent, but as for the soul, according to *Brāhmanical* faith, it is directly related with the past life of the child. Both Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar find this view in conflict with the scientific laws of hereditary. When the karma issue becomes a social category, an unhealthy society and social order come into view. The Untouchability is an outcome of bad deeds of the person, not the society. Buddha also was opposed to violence. “Violence is a significant part of daily life...Dalit activism also leads to confrontation with criminal elements and with fundamentalist Hindus, who view Dalits as competitors for jobs and

¹⁸⁹ Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*.

¹⁹⁰ Contursi, op. cit., pp. 323-5.

¹⁹¹ Gokhale, *The Sociopolitical Effects of Ideological Change: The Buddhist Conversion of Maharashtrian Untouchables*, p. 272.

¹⁹² <http://www.ambedkar.org>, B.R. Ambedkar, *Who Were the Shudras?*

educational benefits.”¹⁹³ Dr. Ambedkar mentioned that, Buddha only let use of force only when it would be useful for implication of justice. Besides all the rational reasons, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar preferred to convert in to Buddhism because according to him, the Mahar Untouchables are the real descendants of the original inhabitants of India, but they were enslaved by the Aryan invaders. The faith of those people was Buddhism before they were constrained by Aryans.

According to an Indian historian, S.K. Chatterjee, the original Indians were the Shudras (the serving caste people) today’s Dalits. These were the pre-Aryan people, who lived for thousands of years on the Indian soil. The Aryans are said to have come into India around 1500 BC and made the local people their servants and slaves. The Dalits are the descendants of the earliest settlers of India. Because of the long history of oppression, they have lost their self identity as full human beings.¹⁹⁴

This is why Dr. Ambedkar felt as the real owner and even the master of Indian lands and refused to be torn away the society, to be discarded from each and every basic right and to be enslaved by the late comers of Indian Indians.

Ambedkar refused to be a supplicant at the temple gates. These temples and their deities had little use for him for they had diminished, if not destroyed, the Untouchables’ human dignity. In this he became the first successful Untouchable leader to demand justice, dignity and human rights for millions. Turning his back on the darkened recesses of the temple Ambedkar led millions of his followers into a new dawn with conversion to Buddhism.¹⁹⁵

In order to convert, the political and legal adjustments were also made ready by the constitution out into enforcement in 1950, which bestowed Dalits constitutional privileges to equalize their situation with the others within the Indian social, political and economic spheres. The mentioned constitution banned the Untouchability institution of Hindu social. This constitution put emphasis on justice; social, political and economic equality; freedom of faith, worship, thought and expression; equality of status and of opportunity; promoting dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. It also provided the Dalits compensatory

¹⁹³ Contursi, op. cit., p. 330.

¹⁹⁴ Raj, op. cit.

¹⁹⁵ Gokhale, *Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar*.

discrimination. However, it is well known that even though the Untouchability is not there in existence, it is still in the mind of forward class. Laws are not enough to alter mentality.¹⁹⁶

On 14 October 1956 hundred thousands of Dalits proclaimed their conversion into Buddhism under leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The conversion idea sparked in 1930s, but it happened in 1950s. This is due to the new articles of the Indian constitution. Dalits had to ensure the new life foreseen by the conversion idea. This guarantee could only be given by the channels of law, the constitution. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's contributions to the safeguarding commentaries are countless. In 1950, article 17 of the Indian Constitution was designed to abolish the practice of Untouchability. In the same year reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Tribes principle was introduced. By 1955, penalties for those, who continue to function Untouchability added to the Constitution. Those developments show that, initially, the Dalits prepared the basis for their rights, but law functions on their own cannot abolish social function, that's the motive pushed Dalits to "abandon the religion, which had oppressed and denatured them and re-entered their original faith."¹⁹⁷ The decision to convert into Buddhism was solely Dr. Ambedkar's personal preference.¹⁹⁸ Albeit the majority of the Dalits converted into Buddhism under the guidance of Dr. Ambedkar, some other Dalits preferred among the mentioned religions of Islam, Christianity and Sikhism. The new religion was only a tool for Dalits to gain new identities in order to be integrated in the Indian society. By giving up being Hindus, they probably had the feeling of revenge against the humiliation. They were strangely belonged the religio of the ruling class, but now they quitted it. What they sought was not a new way of praying but deserving equality and to obtain human pride in addition to what Anand Teltumbde tells in his article 'Theorising The Dalit Movement': constituting an anti-theses to oppressive aspects of the Hindu religion. Teltumbde, articulates that, whatever religion they

¹⁹⁶ Bhakta Das, *A Glimpse of the Scheduled Castes and their Socio-economic Development in Assam* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1989) p.29.

¹⁹⁷ Gokhale, *The Sociopolitical Effects of Ideological Change: The Buddhist Conversion of Maharashtrian Untouchables*, p. 275.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 275.

convert in, the conversion signifies an overriding hatred towards the Laws of Manu, the religious code of Hinduism, which restricted all those people being a piece of ordinary society. Gokhale describes the conversion event as follows:

The conversion ceremony took place in a large compound located near a hostel for Scheduled Caste students, which had been established by Ambedkar's People's Education Society, in Naghpur. The day chosen for the ceremony was auspicious, according to Hindu religious practices as well as those of Buddhism. The ceremony was directed by the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), the political party of the Mahar-Buddhist movement. After Ambedkar announced the date and the venue, SCF men travelled through the villages of Maharashtra publicizing the event and exhorting their communities to come to Naghpur in order that they might embrace Buddhism along with their adored leader...The crowds were in a festive and joyful mood, anticipating, as some informants put it, their liberation. In accordance with instructions given by the SCF, people were dressed for the most part in clean white clothes. They were aware that an event of deep and lasting significance for their personal lives as well as for their social existence was about to take place. The conversion ceremony began at nine in the morning, with Chandramani Mahasthvir, the most aged and venerable Bhikkhu in India, administering the Buddhist oaths (*tisarana*) to Ambedkar. The *Tisarana*, which were repeated three times, expressed allegiance to the *Dhamma*: "I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the *Dhamma*; I take refuge in the *Sangha*". The crowd at the ceremony, waving the ocher flags of Buddhism, numbered at almost 500,000. Shouts of Jaya Buddha (Victory to the Buddha or Long Live the Buddha) and Jaya Bim (Victory to Ambedkar) filled the air. After Ambedkar accepted the Buddhist oaths, he himself administered *tisarana*, the *panchasheela* (five principles), and the twenty two special vows that he composed to the crowd.¹⁹⁹

Even though India had realized its liberation movement and in 1950 the new constitution was enforced by abolishing the practice of Untouchability. Still, the conversion took place after the enforcement of 1950 constitution. This is because, "though the constitution had outlawed the practice of Untouchability, its reality in myriad of villages continued to sear the lives of its victims. The Untouchables had been granted concessions but their human dignity had yet to be redeemed."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Gokhale, *The Sociopolitical Effects of Ideological Change: The Buddhist Conversion of Maharashtrian Untouchables*, p. 276.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

4.1.1 The Aftermath Of The Conversion

Gokhale states in his article that the results of the Buddhist conversion may be evaluated in individual and collective measures.²⁰¹ The aim of the conversion was to divest of the *varna* order. For the individual aspect, the conversion was successful. The objective was to remove the tainted image of Untouchables with the pollution idea and the enslaved, oppressed identity. It was aimed to replace those demoralized identities with dignity and humanity. Buddhism satisfied that wishes well because it was clearly opposed to the alienated society, but just persisted for equality and justice. Buddhism would bring unification and it would easily prepare the basis for a political alliance. The collective aim was not accomplished fully since 1956, Gokhale affirms, but only the relationships amongst low-caste communities changed. The conversion led another distinction between Mahar-Buddhists and other Untouchables with low caste Hindus. The Mahar Buddhists won constitutional benefits leaving the mentioned others aside.²⁰²

Being a fraction of the Hindu religious and social order and at the same time being kept away from the social sphere and any kinds of rituals, the low and out castes were in a conflictual situation. By the conversion they acquired a new sense of dignity and *manuski*, which means self worth. They began learning the Buddhist practices to participate and to pray. A new identity consciousness produced by the new religion. The converters had instituted two major institutions regarding education before conversion. One is People's Education Society (PES) established in 1945 and the other is Bauddha Jana Panchayat Samiti (BJPS) founded in 1941. In the aftermath of the conversion, they critically took the functioning of those institutions serious. The organizations served not only for school education aspiration, but also to enlighten the way of graduates, to teach the new religion and

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid, pp. 272-3.

to facilitate their cultural transformation in forming the new professional middle class. Still Gokhale states that, the conversion did not make huge differences in material conditions of those people subsequent to the conversion; thus the effort of Ambedkar movement to eradicate sentiments of inferiority was invalidated.²⁰³

4.2 Caste and the Dalit Question Today

The sacred, caste-based discrimination of centuries came to an end by the year 1950 constitutionally, and in 1956 a massive conversion facilitated the integration of ex-Untouchables to the civic sphere. The constitution endowed profitable jobs, higher education opportunity, governmental recruitments, positions in parliament, and the civil service for the Dalits as any other citizen of Indian state. Thus, even though the caste discrimination is legally forbidden, state of India foresaw an affirmative discrimination towards the former downtrodden classes. However, in the enforcement of positive discrimination, new problems appeared for the higher class members. Due to the ratio of candidates and the seats; it was quite easy for candidates of backward classes to find a position in an institution and even on behalf of filling the reserved seats for the Untouchables, some inappropriate people were chosen. As for the seats left to the high-class candidates, a vehement competition was taking place. As a result, high-class members were complaining to revise this system. Still most of the degrading jobs in India are carried by the Dalits, and those who are bearing occupations, trading and dealing with politics are Brāhmanic people in general.

Dr. Ambedkar, while on one hand waging efforts to elevate status of the Untouchables to the level of ordinary citizens, on the other hand he stated that it is impossible to believe that Hindus will ever be able to absorb the Untouchables in their society.²⁰⁴ Dalits are more than 160 million people, which means one sixth of

²⁰³ Ibid, pp. 280-3.

²⁰⁴ <http://www.ambedkar.org>, *With the Hindus*.

Indian society and they constitute 95 percent of the illiterate Indians.²⁰⁵ The given numbers are sufficient to display the development in the status of the ex-Untouchables. Eventhough the Untouchability is banned by the constitution and they granted entire Human Rights they still remain the backward portion of the modern Indian society. Not only in educational terms, but violation of Human Rights still continue.

Only by scanning the daily newspapers, it is easy to observe the maltreatment towards the ex-Untouchables. ‘Dalit boy beaten to death for plucking flowers’, ‘Dalit tortured by cops for three days’, ‘Dalit witch paraded naked in Bihar’, ‘Dalit killed in lock-up at Kurnool’, ‘Seven Dalits burnt alive in caste clash’, ‘Five Dalits lynched in Haryana’, ‘Dalit women gang-raped, paraded naked’, ‘Police egged on mob to lynch Dalits’. Those are every day events of India reflected by the media.

The caste system, though illegal in India, remains in force socially. Dalits are not allowed to enter upper-caste houses, fields, or temples. They cannot draw water from village wells or wear shoes while passing upper-caste areas. They remain landless and poor.²⁰⁶

Statistics compiled by India’s Crime Records Bureau in year 2000 indicate that every hour two Dalits are assaulted, every day three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered and two Dalit homes are tortured. It is hard to challenge those crimes as far as police, village councils and government officials are supporting the caste system. These circumstances pave the way to unreported crimes. Police either do not report because this institution is a defender of discrimination or can not due to the social or political clout of liable one(s). Even abuses, ranging from murder to torture, by the police are prevalent. Thus, rather than lack of laws, lack of enforcement prevails. These law and order problems unavoidably lead to blood shed. Especially Dalit women are real losers since they face triplex oppression, by being a low caste member, being a Dalit and being a woman. They are frequently beaten and

²⁰⁵ Hillary Mayell, *India’s “Untouchables” Face Violence, Discrimination*, National Geographic News, June 2, 2003.

²⁰⁶ Manpreet Singh, *Quitting Hinduism*, Christianity Today, 12/9/2002.

even raped. 2001 report of Amnesty International reveals that extremely high number of sexual assaults occurred towards Dalit women. Moreover, rape victims are murdered in common.²⁰⁷ Especially in rural areas, caste discrimination still goes on. The educated urban people are less concerned with the caste notion but since the majority of Indian populace lives in the rural areas, it can be inferred that the discrimination the quantity of discrimination events are unignoreable. There are relentless loads of villages today remaining completely isolated by caste. Besides Raids on villages, burning villages and massacring or burning houses and vehicles are common violations. “Caste feeling is so embedded in people that they accept it as normal” says Theodore Sathyanandan, coordinator of the Christian Dalit Liberation Movement.²⁰⁸

There are events taking place, which can be considered as massacres, towards the ex-Untouchables of India. One of the two events that can be considered as national shame for Indians is Babri Masjid Pogrom and the other is Gujarat Pogrom. A pogrom is a massive violent attack on a particular ethnic or religious group with simultaneous destruction of their environment like homes, businesses or religious centres.

Especially after the marginalisation of extreme right wing political parties, like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) the idea to punish those people who converted their religion became up to date and as a result the dose of the violence against the ex-Untouchables rose. The Chief Minister in Gujarat, Modi, a member of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), can be considered to be the one blazing events and stimulate people against downtrodden people of India. In year 2002, the pogrom against the Muslim minority inhabiting in Gujarat was devised by BJP. For about 5,000 ex-Untouchables died and 50,000 of them lost their houses besides mosques, markets, shops and all kinds of public buildings. Numerous villages were destroyed. The

²⁰⁷ Mayell, op. cit.

²⁰⁸ Power, op. cit.

witnesses and human rights groups say police did nothing to stop Hindu mobs attacking Muslims and in some cases herded victims into the hands of their killers. Indian officials conducted several inquiries on this case besides the inquiries held by the non-governmental organizations. The common point they intersect is BJP carried the leadership of the mobs. The party sustained equipments for destructing properties and bodies of Indian Muslims. The president Narayanan declared that he immediately beseeched Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to immediately posit the army in Gujarat for containing the ongoing anti-Muslim violence, however the BJP leader prime minister disregarded his appeal.

The events begin with the Godhra train fire case. The right wing soldiers, *Kar Sewaks*, travelling from Ayodhya to Gujarat burnt alive in the train. *Kar Sewaks* were returning from demolishing Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya. The BJP and RSS authorities declared that Muslims were liable for this event. Indian government immediately charged an inquiry commission to investigate the event and find out the responsible. The results declared by the commission were rejecting the claims of extremist right wing parties. For the commission, the fire was not lit by outsider hands, but rather it seemed to be accidental and from inside the train.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Dalit identity is the illustration of the consciousness of the Untouchables of India. It displays the political, social and economic awakening of all downtrodden people of the *Brāhmanic* order. The Untouchables of India managed to develop the unity consciousness and became organized after the colonization of India. Before the colonization period, since those people have never met a different attitude other than the approach of their environment, they did not unite for the elevation of their situation. However, the existence of the British made sense for them. The British paid attention on their backwardness and developed awareness in aid of the Untouchables. Now they were receiving education and recruitment within the lines of governmental jobs and those steps were lessening the others touch-me-hot-ism perception towards the Untouchables.

The democracy understanding of the Europeans was somehow transmitted to the natives of the sub-continent. This appreciation of democracy brought the Untouchables to aspire political representation and freedom of faith for them. Thus, it was the colonial power triggering the solidarity consciousness of the Untouchables and encouraging them for a rise up. Nevertheless the fixed rulers of India were willing to overthrow the foreign rule and to consolidate their ancient order once again. The Untouchables knew that, the meaning of consolidation of the ancient order meant to fortify the *varna* and to leave the Untouchables out of the social, economic, spiritual and political spheres. So as to prevent the foreseen problems sprang, the Untouchables had to take some measures like manipulating the constitution before the new India was formed. Hence all the mentioned ideas of overthrowing the inequalities among Indians, deleting the backwardness of the Untouchables, making all equal before law were formed due to the inspirations from

the colonial dominion.

While on one hand his colonial legacy was feeding the free will objects of the Untouchables, at the same time the British was taking the advantage of this developing consciousness. The British divide and rule policy corrupted the Indian caste system. India, being culturally, religiously, linguistically, socially and racially a diversified country, was a very fruitful colony for the British policy of divide and rule. With the intention of facilitating the control of such a broad land, the British did not hesitate to encourage separate groups to act unaccompanied by the others within India. In the name of bringing democracy, modernity and reforms the British Government presented the separate electorate idea for the main branches of India. This political structure stimulated initially the Muslims and Sikhs. The newly introduced political system culminated with communal hatred and partition of India into Muslim Pakistan. The British administration eased its job in India by acting as a political liberator. For distinct groups, the British were operating as if it was safeguarding their interests against the aged Hindu system. By doing like that, the British were weakening India, because an India in a pure solidarity could encounter against the British imperialism. Now, distinct groups were in their own peculiar struggle not against the British colonialism, but against the Indian governance.

This policy of the colonial dominion in India affected the Untouchables as well. It is unavoidably true that, the presence of a colonial body had a restraining effect on forming a modern Indian state. Due to its 'divide and rule' policy, the British prevented India being a unified nation in harmony. It rather led to self-realization of ethnic, social, local, religious and linguistic communities. It is the same for the case of the Dalits. By making some favours to the low classes, the British initially got the reliance of them. In the eyes of the Dalits, the British were the enemy of the enemy. The support they needed was provided by the colonial dominion. So they could wage their own independence struggle against the caste system. This rivalry amongst two branches of the Hindu society was for the advantage of the British rule, like any other cut away from this society. The Dalits consisted a huge

percentage of the Indian society, for this reason any tension and hostility between the Untouchables and the rest of the society nourished the British policy. Like the enmity amid Muslims and Hindus, this inter-caste turmoil also provided the British a perfect field to function without restraints. So the eagerness of the Dalits relieved 'divide and rule' strategy. Dr. Ambedkar wore an enmity role against neither against imperialism nor against the British. According to some sources, it was not because he was favouring imperialism or the British, but because he found it impossible to fight it mighty foes all together. In his several speeches he highlighted that British imperialism and Indian feudalism are equally destroying to the Indian nation and to the Dalits.²⁰⁹

Even though there had been several previous challenges against the *varna* order by different segments of the downtrodden people of India, it was the first time that all downtrodden people of India, including the Untouchables, *Sūdras* and other agitated people of the caste system, could be organized to the extend rejecting the *varna* order and making political and social manoeuvres on behalf of bettering their position within the Indian society. These manoeuvres were realized under the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Even though the centre of the mentioned movement was the Maharashtra state, people of other states were inspired by their association and initiated protests against the caste system. It was Dr. Ambedkar arousing the belief and enthusiasm of people to raise their problem and to seek solutions besides organizing people around their case. Dr. Ambedkar died just after the conversion took place. By his death the movement lost its fever and excitement and hitherto Dalits could not carry their case as it happened in the epoch of Ambedkar. So the glorious times of the Dalit movement covers only the time when Dr. Ambedkar guided and the movement was over by his loss. After his death, his trusted lieutenant Dadasaheb Gaikwad held the leadership, who appeared as a natural choice. However, he has never collected the same attraction of the Dalits. Even some of the Dalits blamed him of being a communist and trying to bring a communist nuance to the movement. He was labelled as a communist due to his

²⁰⁹ Teltumbde, op. cit., p. 20.

economic programs. Moreover, some found him intellectually incapable to carry a social movement, because he was not a university graduate.²¹⁰

Today, the implementation of *varna* order and discrimination among Indian citizens is restricted by the Indian Constitution since it was first enforced in 1950. Even though these ancient traditions do not still persist in cities, the rural areas are field of conflict even today. Sometimes the ex-Untouchables are attacked by the Hindu nationalists; they face pogroms and mass killings and the Dalits, who are now Muslims, Christians or Buddhists, are still fighting against the oppressive character of the caste system. Some international organizations are taking some measures on behalf of saving the neo-Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. A sub-branch of United Nations (UN) the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) openly condemned discrimination based on caste and similar forms of inherited status as human rights violations in 2002. In the resolution, India's Dalits recognized as a community discriminated against on the basis of descent. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) passed a resolution in 2004, appointing special rapporteurs, where the Dalits are still oppressed. So the violence committed against the Dalits could be find and as a result those terrorized people could easily refuge to other lands, where they can live in peace. The UN Commission on Human Rights also decided to appoint special rapporteurs to detect and to tackle the entrenched problem of caste-based discrimination. Except Kocheril Raman Narayanan, the tenth President of the Indian republic, the presidency of India has been kept by leaders affiliates of Brāhman families. As for the prime ministers, from Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Choudhary Charan Singh, Rajiv Gandhi, to Atal Behari Vajpayee, none of them applied a special policy concerning Dalits, but nor they missed the state policy of keeping all citizens equal.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p.5.

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