I. Introduction:

The Poona Pact of 1932 signed on September 24 has changed the Indian Political history and changed the destiny of millions of Dalits across the country. Much water has flown in the Ganges since the signing of the Poona Pact but the condition and the fare of the Dalits in India did not change much for the better, in spite of legal and constitutional provisions made even in the constitution of India. The much needed empowerment of Dalits remains an issue even after more than six decades of independence. Therefore, it becomes imperative to analyze the historical reasons for the Poona pact, the important players who decided the contents of the draft, the forces behind the signing of the pact, its impact on the Dalits and their political participation. Therefore, in this chapter an attempt has been made to understand and probe the contents and aftermath effects of Poona pact from the point of view of different stakeholders.

II. Pre-Independence Initiatives to Eliminate Untouchability:

Hindu society is divided into four Varna, or classes, a convention which had its origins in the Rig Veda, the first and most important set of hymns in Hindu scripture which dates back to 1500-1000 B.C. At the top of the hierarchy are the Brahmans, or priests, followed by the Kshatriyas, or warriors. The Vaisyas, the farmers and artisans, constitute the third class. At the bottom are the Shudras, the class responsible for serving the three higher groups. Finally, the Untouchables fall completely outside of this system. It is for this reason that the untouchables have also been termed avarna or no class. Jati, or caste, is a second factor specifying rank in the Hindu social hierarchy. Jatis are roughly determined by occupation. Often region-
specific, they are more precise than the sweeping Varna system which is common across India and can be divided further into subcastes and sub-subcastes. This is also the case among untouchables. Andre Beteille defines caste as “a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system.”

Jatis in the three highest varnas in the hierarchy—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas—are considered “twice-born” according to Hindu scripture, meaning they are allowed to participate in Hindu ceremonies and are considered more “pure” than the Sudras and “polluting” untouchables. This concept of pollution versus purity governs the interaction between members of different castes. The touch of an untouchable is considered defiling to an upper-caste Hindu. In southern India, where caste prejudice has been historically most severe, even the sight of an untouchable was considered polluting. Untouchables usually handled “impure” tasks such as work involving human waste and dead animals. As a result, until reforms began in the 19th century, untouchables were barred from entering temples, drawing water from upper-caste wells, and all social interaction with upper-caste Hindus (including dining in the same room). These social rules were strictly imposed and violators were severely punished; some were even killed.

Christian missionaries took the lead in adopting the cause of the Depressed Classes seeking to provide welfare for them. By the 1850s, either inspired or shamed into action by the missionaries’ example, Hindu reformers emerged. Jyotiba Phule was one such activist,³ and in 1860 he called attention to the plight of victims of caste discrimination in Maharashtra. British and other Indian leaders soon followed suit,
spurred on in part by reports of discrimination against Indians in South Africa. Thus, in the 1880s, British officials set up scholarships, special schools, and other programs to benefit the Depressed Classes. Forward-thinking maharajas (princes) in “native” states like Baroda, Kolhapur, and Travancore, which were not under direct British administration, established similar initiatives. Dr. Ambedkar, from the Mahar caste of Maharashtra, was one beneficiary. The Mahars had a long association with the British-organized Indian Army, in which Dr. Ambedkar’s father and grandfather had served. One result was that Dr. Ambedkar was able to attend government primary and secondary schools. The Maharaja of Baroda, recognizing Dr. Ambedkar’s gifts for scholarship, sponsored his study abroad, first at Columbia University in New York, where Dr. Ambedkar obtained a Ph.D. in Economics, and later at London University, where he earned a DSc. and entrance to the Bar from Grey’s Inn.

As early as 1858, the government of Bombay Presidency, which included today’s Maharashtra, declared that “all schools maintained at the sole cost of Government shall be open to all classes of its subjects without discrimination.” Although a 1915 press note revealed that this policy was not being enforced—in one case, a Mahar boy was not allowed to enter the schoolroom, but was relegated to the veranda—the Bombay government maintained its position on the issue, and, in 1923, announced a resolution cutting off aid to educational institutions that refused admission to members of the Depressed Classes. Other initiatives followed including the 1943 Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Act and the 1947 Bombay Harijan (Removal of Civil Disabilities) Act. In the United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh, the 1947 United Provinces Removal of Social Disabilities Act was put in force. In what is now Kerala, the Maharaja of Travancore announced the “Temple Entry Proclamation” in 1936, in what has been called a “pioneer [effort] in the field of reforms relating to the
eradication of untouchability before independence.” Stating that “none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth or caste or community, be denied the consolations and solace of the Hindu faith,” the Maharaja declared the removal of all bars on those denied entry to temples controlled by the Travancore government.9 Other measures affecting what would become the present state of Kerala included the 1938 Madras Removal of Civil Disabilities Act and the 1950 Travancore-Cochin Temple Entry (Removal of Disabilities) Act.10

(A) The Government of India Act of 1919:

Caught in the turmoil of World War I, Britain focused its attention on Europe, not on India. Nevertheless, the British passed important legislation during this turbulent period that would have a significant impact on the development of Indian governmental institutions: The Government of India Act of 1919. The Act had its immediate origins on August 20, 1917. With Britain in a war for survival in Europe, in need of continued support from India and the Empire, and desiring to avoid confrontation with the Indian independence movement, Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu, in an announcement in Parliament, defined Britain’s India policy as: “increasing [the] association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.11

Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, then Viceroy, embarked on an analysis of the Indian situation, eventually laying out proposals forming the basis for the 1919 Government of India Act. Despite mention of greater Indian participation in politics, the 1919 Act still contained provisions guaranteeing a continued active British presence and dominance: While we do everything that we can to encourage Indians to
settle their own problems for themselves we must retain power to restrain them from seeking to do so in a way that threatens the stability of the country.\textsuperscript{12}

The reforms included devolution of more authority to provincial governments and diarchy, a system in which elected Indian ministers, responsible to the legislatures, were to share power with appointed British Governors and Ministers. The Act also addressed minority safeguards, including the particularly vexing issue of communal electorates. Montagu and Chelmsford firmly rejected communal electorates, characterizing the system as a “perpetual [or] of class division” and a “very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle.” The authors also pointed out another related problem that: A minority which is given special representation owing to its weak and backward state, is positively encouraged to settle down into a feeling of satisfied security; it is under no inducement to educate and qualify itself to make good the ground it has lost compared with the stronger majority. On the other hand, the latter will be tempted to feel that they have done all they need do for their weaker fellow countrymen and that they are free to use their power for their own purposes. The give-and-take which is the essence of political life is lacking. There is no inducement to the one side to forbear, or to the other to exert itself. The communal system stereotypes existing relations.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite their repudiation of communal electorates, Montagu and Chelmsford realized it would be unfeasible to take away communal representation already granted to Muslims by the 1909 Morley-Minto reforms. At Lucknow in 1916, the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League had agreed to separate electorates for Muslims. Britain for political reasons was not willing to risk the combined ire of these Indian groups. Other, including Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Indian Christians, and non-Brahmins, also clamored for special
representation, but Montagu and Chelmsford largely resisted their demands—they did grant the Sikhs (described as a “gallant and valuable element to the Indian Army”) communal representation—proposing instead a system of nomination. If nomination proved ineffective, they proposed reserving seats for communities in plural constituencies, but with a general electoral roll.14

In Britain, the decision against communal electorates was controversial. Indian moderates and some British members of Parliament ( MPs) supported the Montagu-Chelmsford position. (One MP effusively praised the Montagu Report, but lamented that such an excellent product came from a Jew and not a “real” Englishman.) However, most feared an “oligarchy of Brahmins” if communal electorates were not set up for non-Brahmin Hindus.15 Several factors contributed to such “Brahminophobia” a fear that had been developing even before the Montagu-Chelmsford Report Some Britons perceived Brahmins as “untrustworthy,” oppressive towards the lower castes, and subversive regarding British governmental and social reforms. Valentine Chirol, a prominent Times correspondent, published Indian Unrest, in which he asserted that Brahmanism was the biggest threat to the British. The Rowlett Report of 1918, the product of a study on the causes of political violence in India, described Brahmins as “revolutionaries.” Annie Besant, English-born leader of the “Home Rule” movement for Indian independence, accused Brahmins of repressing the lower castes.16

Another important feature of the 1919 Act was the provision for the appointment of a statutory commission after ten years for the purpose of enquiring into the working of the system of government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India…and …report…to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing therein.17
(B) The Simon Commission:

In keeping with the 1919 Government of India Act, the British government in 1927 appointed a commission to assess the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and “whether, and to what extent it [was] desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, or to extend, modify, or restrict the degree of responsible government existing therein.” The seven-member commission was headed by John Simon, MP, and included MP Clement Attlee.18

This “all-white” panel proved controversial. The competence of the nominees was not at issue, but rather the lack of any Indian representatives.19 In protest, Gandhi and the Congress Party, the dominant Indian political party, boycotted the Commission20 and protest demonstrations in India were widespread.21 The Simon Commission toured every Indian province.22 Its findings were based largely on memoranda from the Government of India, from committees appointed by the provincial legislative councils, and from non-official sources.23 The final report contained recommendations for reform. One area the Commission identified was the need to safeguard minorities and other disadvantaged members of Indian society. Noting that “the spirit of toleration has made little progress in India,” the Simon report detailed the plight of the Depressed Classes in particular, which it saw not only as a problem of caste, but as an issue with distinct political overtones. Based on its assumption that the “true cause of communal conflict...is the struggle for political power and for the opportunities which political power confers,”24 the committee saw the improvement of the Depressed Classes’ situation as hinging on increased political influence.25 Several options emerged, including pursuing a system of nomination, creating separate electorates, and reserving seats in government within a general electorate.26
In its consultations, the Simon Commission found that most provincial governments supported a nominating system. The Government of Bihar and Orissa, for example, asserted that a nomination was best since the Depressed Classes were too backward to choose their own representatives. Despite these arguments, the Commission discarded the idea, arguing that the Depressed Classes needed opportunities for training in self-government.

Support for separate electorates was strong among the Depressed Classes. Their representatives proposed combining separate electorates and reserved seats. They also demanded a wider franchise, since property and educational requirements significantly restricted their right to vote and to participate in government. The Bengal Depressed Classes Association, for instance, lobbied for separate electorates with seats reserved according to the proportion of Depressed Class members to the total population as well as for adult franchise. The All-India Depressed Classes Association proposed separate electorates for each of what it termed the four major groups in India: the Brahmins, Muslims, Depressed Classes, and Non-Brahmins. The governments of Assam and Bombay supported similar concepts.

The Simon Commission rejected separate electorates for the Depressed Classes: Separate electorates would no doubt be the safest method of securing the return of an adequate number of persons who enjoy the confidence of the Depressed Classes, but we are averse from stereotyping the differences between the Depressed Classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others. However, they retained the concept of reserving seats: The Commission recommends that in all the eight provinces there should be some reservation of seats for the
Depressed Classes on a scale which will secure a substantial increase in the number of Members of Legislative Councils drawn from the Depressed Classes.\textsuperscript{32}

Seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes in general constituencies and these seats would be filled by election, based on a broadened franchise. The Commission also recommended drawing up rules to ensure the competency of candidates for reserved positions. In addition, provincial governors would have the power to nominate or allow non-Depressed Class members to run for election. Competency was of particular concern to the Commission. Members questioned whether enough qualified candidates would be available if seats were reserved according to the proportion of Depressed Classes persons in the population. As a result, the Commission suggested, “the proportion of the number of such reserved seats to the total number of seats in all the Indian general constituencies should be three-quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the total population of the electoral area of the province.”\textsuperscript{33} Again, these measures were regarded as strictly temporary, with the goal that an improvement in the Depressed Classes’ condition would eventually make reservations unnecessary.

\textbf{(C) The Round Table Conference:}

In 1931, six months after the Simon Commission’s report was published, a Round Table Conference convened in London to review the Commission’s proposals and how they might be incorporated into a new constitution. This time, there were Indian delegates from various interest groups. Dr. Ambedkar represented the Depressed Classes, along with Rai Bahadur R. Srinivasan. Gandhi and his Indian National Congress were conspicuously absent, refusing to participate on the grounds that Congress alone represented Indian opinion.\textsuperscript{34}
How to treat minorities was a major topic at the conference. Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald chaired a subcommittee to focus on this problem. Dr. Ambedkar and Srinivasan appealed for separate electorates and adult suffrage. Separate electorates were designed to be temporary. After ten years, general electorates with reserved seats would replace separate electorates with the consent of the Depressed Classes and enfranchisement of all adults. In the end, the subcommittee could not reach an agreement, a general reflection of the entire conference, which was inconclusive.

A second Round Table Conference convened eight months later. Dr. Ambedkar and Srinivasan again attended. Gandhi also joined, representing the Congress. Having taken up the cause of the Harijans (“Children of God,” a term the Congress leader coined), Gandhi adamantly opposed separate electorates, especially for the Depressed Classes. Arguing that untouchability was inseparable from Hinduism, he linked creation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes to alleged British “divide and rule” strategy and asserted that the group should be included in the main body of Hindus. As a result of staunch opposition from Gandhi and the Congress on separate electorates, the second conference was inconclusive and the minority issue remained unresolved.35

Dr. Ambedkar originally had misgivings about separate electorates as well, but was compelled to ask for them at the second Roundtable Conference when he felt the Depressed Classes were in danger of not gaining any concessions.36 Earlier in the conference, Dr. Ambedkar had attempted to compromise with Gandhi on reserved seats in a common electorate, but Gandhi, who had declared himself spokesman for India’s oppressed, rejected Dr. Ambedkar’s proposal, and denounced the other delegates, including Dr. Ambedkar, as unrepresentative. At the same time, Gandhi
attempted to strike a deal with Muslims, promising to support their demands as long as the Muslims voted against separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. It is apparent that political considerations might have also motivated Gandhi to adopt this position. Given the failure of the conference to settle minority representation, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, who had chaired the committee on minorities, offered to mediate on the condition that the other members of the committee supported his decision. The product of this mediation was the Communal Award of 1932.

(D) A Turning Point: MacDonald’s Communal Award and the Poona Pact:

MacDonald announced the Communal Award on August 16, 1932. Based on the findings of the Indian Franchise Committee, called the Lothian Committee, the Communal Award established separate electorates and reserved seats for minorities, including the Depressed Classes which were granted seventy-eight, reserved seats. Unlike previous communal electorates set up for Muslims and other communities, the Award provided for the Depressed Classes to vote in both general and special constituencies, essentially granting a “double vote.” However, in keeping with earlier special concessions to minorities, MacDonald asserted: His Majesty’s Government do not consider that these special Depressed Classes constituencies will be required for more than a limited time. They intend that the constitution shall provide that they shall come to an end after 20 years if they have not previously been abolished under the general powers of electoral revision.

Gandhi, who was in the Yeravada Prison in the city of Poona at the time because of his civil disobedience campaign, reacted by declaring a hunger strike “unto death.” In his opposition to the Award, he compared the creation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes to the “injection of a poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever.” Others were similarly critical of the
Award. Dr. Ambedkar felt too few seats were reserved for the Depressed Classes. Rajah, another leader of the Depressed Classes, opposed the separation of the community from the Hindu fold. As a result of widespread disapproval of the Award and Gandhi’s hunger strike, a new agreement, the Poona Pact, was reached on September 24, 1932. The Pact called for a single (non-Muslim) general electorate for each of the provinces of British India and for seats in the Central Legislature. At the same time, specified numbers of seats, totaling 148 for the provincial legislatures and to be taken from seats allotted to the general electorate, were reserved for the Depressed Classes. In the Central Legislature, the Depressed Classes were to get eighteen percent of the seats. Voting members of the Depressed Classes in each reserved seat constituency were to form an “electoral college” to select four candidates from among their number. The Pact also called for “every endeavor” to give the Depressed Classes “fair representation” in the public services “subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down.” Like each of its antecedents, the system of representation of Depressed Classes by reservation outlined in the Pact was intended to be temporary, continuing, “Until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in the statement.”

(E) Gandhi V/s Ambedkar on Poona Pact:

The Poona Pact set in motion what one student of caste in India has termed “Dr. Ambedkar’s qualified victory over Gandhi and the Congress.” Although Dr. Ambedkar had given in on the common voting roll, he had ensured that specified numbers of Depressed Classes legislators, nominated by members of those Classes, would be included in Indian provincial and national legislative bodies. The number of reserved seats was higher than in the Award. Gandhi and the Congress had little choice. Unless they came to terms with Dr. Ambedkar on reserved seats,
they risked a break-up of the Hindu electorate with potentially serious political consequences: To subtract them [the depressed classes] from the population on which the provinces’ Hindu representation was calculated would make a critical difference to the subcontinent’s electoral arithmetic, particularly in Bengal and the Punjab where the balance between Hindu and Muslim was so close.

The Poona Pact is significant in that it initiated a pattern of political compromise between “caste” Hindus and the Depressed Classes in the allocation of legislative representation and government jobs. Although, much has changed in India, seventy years after the Pact 81 of the 543 members of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, are from what were formerly known as the Depressed Classes and 79 of them hold reserved seats.

A by-product of the Pact was the highlighting of the underlying problems between “caste” Hindus and “outcastes.” Gandhi initiated a national campaign to eliminate the evils of untouchability. Six days after the Pact, with help from wealthy industrialists like the Birlas, he started the Harijan Sevak Sangh (Servants of the Untouchables Society) and its weekly journal Harijan. The serious gulf in Hindu society that continues until now along with the reservations system is evident in an exchange between Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar in the February 11, 1933, issue of Harijan. Having asked Dr. Ambedkar for a greetings message for the inaugural issue of Harijan, Gandhi received a blunt reply: I feel I cannot give a message. For I believe it will be a most unwarranted presumption on my part to suppose that I have sufficient worth in the eyes of the Hindus which would make them treat any message from me with respect ...I am therefore sending you the accompanying statement for publication in your Harijan.
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Statement goes like this ‘The Out-caste is a bye-product of the Caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the Out-caste except the destruction of the Caste system. Nothing can help to save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of the Hindu Faith of this odious and vicious dogma.’

In his rejoinder, Gandhi noted: “Dr. Ambedkar is bitter. He has every reason to feel so.” Gandhi continued, commenting that Dr. Ambedkar’s “exterior is as clean as that of the cleanest and proudest Brahmin. Of his interior, the world knows as little as that of any of us.” Affecting humility, Gandhi announced that Harijan “is not my weekly” but belonged to the Servants of Untouchables Society and that Dr. Ambedkar should feel “it is as much his as of any other Hindu.” Then Gandhi went to the heart of the matter: As to the burden of his message, the opinion he holds about the caste system is shared by many educated Hindus. I have not, however, been able to share that opinion. I do not believe the caste system, even as distinguished from Varnashram, to be an ‘odious and vicious dogma.’ It has its limitations and its defects, but there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability, and, if it is a bye-product of the caste system it is only in the same sense that an ugly growth is of a body, or weeds of a crop.

Therefore, according to Gandhi, the “joint fight is restricted to the removal of untouchability,” a fight into which he invited Dr. Ambedkar “and those who think with him to throw themselves, heart and soul . . .” Dr. Ambedkar preferred to carry on the fight through legal and constitutional measures. His legacy is the existing system of reservations. Gandhi, a Hindu traditionalist, sought to inspire Hindus to cleanse the caste system of the evil of untouchability. Judging from his writings, he saw this as an achievable goal.
Gandhi’s Harijan Sevak Sangh continues his work throughout India. While the sincerity of the Society’s efforts cannot be doubted, some Dalits see the organization as paternalistic and condescending. At the Society’s start, Gandhi opposed having a Harijan on the board of directors. Some sense of caste attitude comes from a report in Harijan of some early activities. For example: Under the auspices of the Valmik Achhut Mandal, Jullundur, Punjab, a well-attended meeting of caste Hindus and Harijans was held at Basti Sheikh with Chaudri Daulatram, a Harijan, in the chair. Master Shadiram, a well-educated Harijan, exhorted his brother Harijans to keep clean and give up drink and other bad habits. Bhagat Dhanna Mal, a prominent Congressman of Ferozepur, Punjab, has taken a vow to remove the evil practices of untouchability, as far as it lies in his power to do so. He will gladly respond at his own expense to any call for help from Harijans in any part of India.40

III. Poona Pact: An Overview

During the first Round Table Conference, when Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar favoured the move of the British Government to provide separate electorate for the oppressed classes (Dalit), Gandhi strongly opposed it on the plea that the move would give power to the oppressed classes (Dalit). He went for an indefinite hunger strike from September 20, 1932 against the decision of the then British Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald granting communal award to the depressed classes in the constitution for governance of British India. In view of the mass upsurge generated in the country to save the life of Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar was compelled to soften his stand. A compromise between the leaders of caste Hindu and the depressed classes was reached on September 24, 1932, popularly known as Poona Pact. The resolution announced in a public meeting on September 25 in Bombay confirmed -" Henceforth, amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and
they will have the same rights in all the social institutions as the other Hindus have”.

This landmark resolution in the history of the Dalit movement in India subsequently formed the basis for giving due share to Dalits in the political empowerment of Indian people in a democratic Indian polity.41

“Text of the Poona Pact”

The following is the text of the agreement:-

1. There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of the general electorate seats in the provincial legislature as follows; Madras 30; Bombay with Sind 15; Punjab 8; Bihar and Orissa 18; Central Provinces 20; Assam 7; Bengal 30; United Provinces 20 and Total 148.

These figures are based on the total strength of the provincial councils, announced in the Prime Minister’s decision.

2. Elections to these seats shall be by Joint Electorate subject, however, to the following procedures:

   All the members of the depressed classes, registered in the general electoral roll in a constituency, will form an electoral college, which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the depressed classes for each of such reserved seats, by the method of the single vote; the four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election, shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

3. Representation of the depressed classes in the central legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in Clause 2 above, for their representation in the provincial legislature.
4. In the central legislature, eighteen percent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the depressed classes.

5. The system of primary election to a panel of candidates for election to the central and provincial legislatures, as herein before mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years, unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of clause 6 below.

6. The system of representation of the depressed classes by reserved seats in the provincial and central legislatures as provided for in clauses I and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in the settlement.

7. Franchise for the central and provincial legislatures for the depressed classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.

8. There shall be no disabilities attaching to any one on the ground of his being a member of the depressed classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to the public services. Every endeavour shall be made to secure fair representation of the depressed classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to the public services.

9. In every province out of the educational grant, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to the members of the depressed classes.

Before signing the Pact, the representatives of untouchables from Madras insisted that they would not allow Rao Bahadur Rajah and his followers to sign the Pact and if, if at all they were allowed, Dr. Ambedkar and his followers would not sign the pact. First, Dr. Ambedkar and his followers signed the Pact. Thereafter, Dr. Ambedkar was requested to make arrangement to obtain the signatures of
Mr. Rajah and his followers. After lengthy discussions, it was decided that they would be allowed to sign the pact at the end of the document and in their individual capacities. Accordingly they signed, but it was a matter of great surprise that although Mr. Rajah had to sign at the end of the document, he interpolated his signature in between the signatures of Jaikar and Sapru.

Signatories to the Poona Pact dated 24-09-1932 at 6 p.m. were as under,

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<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
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<td>01</td>
<td>Madan Mohan Malaviya</td>
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<td>02</td>
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<td>Shankarlal Banker</td>
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The Conference passed two resolutions as under,

1. This Conference confirms the Poona Agreement arrived between the leaders of caste Hindus and Depressed Classes on September 24 and trusts the British Government will withdraw its decision creating separate electorates within the Hindu community and accept the agreement in full. The Conference urges that
immediate action is taken by the government so as to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast within the terms of his vow and before it becomes too late. The Conference appeals to all leaders of the communities concerned to realise the implication of the agreement and of this resolution and make the earliest endeavour to fulfil them.

2. The Conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same rights as the other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public roads and other public institutions. This right shall have statutory recognition of the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognitions.

It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so called untouchable classes including the bar in respect of admission to temples (Nayar, Sushila, Vol. VII, pp. 81-82).

The contents of the Pact were immediately cabled to the British government. HMG announced on 26th September, 1932 that it would recommend to the Parliament, for the endorsement of the Pact (pp. 152-175, BAWS, Vol. 17, Part 1). The government’s statement was read in the Central Legislative Assembly by Home Member Haig on the 26th under.

1. The government accepted for recommendations to parliament the scheme of representation for the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures, and certain other matters affecting their welfare adopted under the Yervada
agreement, in place of the scheme of separate electorate in that behalf that had been adumbrated in the Communal Award of 4th August, 1932.

2. It accepted the number of seats in the provincial legislatures assigned to the depressed classes under the Yervada Agreement.

3. As regards the Clauses (8 & 9) in the Yervada Agreement, referring to guarantees for the welfare of the Depressed Classes, it recognised them as a definite pledge of the intentions of the caste Hindus towards the depressed classes.

4. As regards the method of electing, Depressed Class representatives to the Central legislature and the level of franchise, it stated that whilst the Government could not definitely commit itself to the terms of the Agreement as the whole question of representation in the Central Legislature and the franchise was under consideration, the Government was not against it.

5. It recognized the figure of 18 percent of the percentage of the general seats at the centre to be reserved for the depressed classes as a matter of arrangement between them and the other Hindus.

At 4.15 p.m. on 26th September, 1932 Col. Doyle, the Inspector General of Prison came with the document and gave it to Gandhi, who studied it and at 5.15 p.m. he broke the fast (pp. 83-85, Vol. VII, Nayar, Sushila & Kharimody, C.B., pp. 55-7, Vol. 5). The P-P was later incorporated in Government of India Act, 1935. The manner in which Dr. Ambedkar and his colleagues fought for the rights of DCs left an indelible mark in the minds of opponents. This is what they said on it.
1. “Discussions proceeded in a very business-like manner. Dr. Ambedkar and his group acted in concert and showed the greatest discipline. The doctor strongly supported by his colleagues fought every inch of ground.

2. The writer of these chapters desires to place on record here his personal admiration for the courageous manner in which Dr. Ambedkar and his friend carried on the negotiations.

3. Dr. Ambedkar fought and fought valiantly for the cause which he represented and he promised to be a good fighter in the future life of country- (Tejbahadur Sapru and Khairmode, C. 8., Vol.5, 48-49).

IV. Critical Analysis of the Poona Pact:

It is significant to analyse the adverse effect of the provision of the Poona Pact on the political, social, religious emancipation of the Dalits. In what way the loss of separate electorate and double vote affected the social and political strength of the Dalits? How the issue of scheduled castes not being a part of Hindu society as recognised by the British Government, later affected the issue of them ‘being a separate and distant element’ in the national life of a country? What constraints it put for them in the Constitution of free India? How the Poona Pact affected the independent movement of the Dalits? How it created the ‘tools’ of Caste Hindus from amongst them?

We will try to understand all the above in the views of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar himself. We have seen earlier that in his initial reaction on 25th September, 1932 in the Hindu Conference at Bombay after signing the Poona Pact. He defended the communal award and disagreed that separate electorates are injurious to the national interests. He also disagreed with the proposition that the joint electorates are going to be the final solution for absorbing the “depressed” classes in the Hindu Community (BAWS, Vol. 17, Part 1, p. 172).
At another place, Dr. Ambedkar States, “It is true that the Poona Pact gave the untouchables 148 seats, while the award had only given them 78. But to conclude from this that the Poona Pact gave them more than what was given by the Award is to ignore what the Award had in fact given to the Untouchables.

The communal award gave the untouchables two benefits: (i) a fixed quota of seats to be elected by Separate Electorate of Untouchables and to be filled by persons belonging to the Untouchables; (ii) double vote, one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in the General Electorates. Now, if the Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats it also took away the right to do the double vote. This increase in seats can never be deemed to be a compensation for the loss of the double vote. The second vote given by the communal award was a priceless privilege. It value as a political weapon was beyond reckoning. The voting strength of the untouchables in each constituency is one to then. With this voting strength free to be used in the election of caste Hindu candidates, the untouchables would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate, the issue of the General election. No caste Hindu candidate could have dared to neglect the untouchable in his constituency or be hostile to their interests if he was made dependent upon the votes of the untouchables. If the communal award with its system of double voting had remained the untouchables would have had a few seats less but every other members would have been a member for the untouchables”.

The signing of the Poona Pact was followed by the appointment of the Hammond Committee to demarcate constituencies to fix the number of seats for each constituency and settle the system of voting for the legislatures to be set up under the new constitution....
Unfortunately, the Poona Pact having been concluded in a hurry had left many things undefined. Of the things that were left undefined, the most important were two namely; 1. Does the panel of four to be elected at the primary election imply four as a maximum or minimum? 2. What was intended to be the method of voting in the final election. The Hammond Committee accepted the views propounded by Dr. Ambedkar regarding the ‘Panel of Four’ as maximum and ‘cumulative voting system’. This was opposed by Hindus with ‘panel of four’ as the minimum and distributive voting system should be replaced for cumulative voting system.

The caste Hindus did so because the panel of four could give them the best chance of getting into the panel such representative of the Untouchables who was most suitable to the Hindus. The insistence for the system of compulsory distributive vote was the same namely to enable the Hindus to capture the seats reserved the untouchables. Under the cumulative vote the elector had as many votes as there were seats. He may give them all to one candidate or he may distribute them over two or more candidates as he may desire. Under the distributive system of voting the elector had also as many votes as there were seats, but he could give only one vote to any one candidate. Although, the two look different yet in effect there may no difference, because even under the cumulative vote a voter is not prevented from distributing his votes. He is free to give one vote to one candidate. But, the Hindus did not want to take any chance. Their main object was to flood the election to the seat reserved for the untouchables in the joint electorate by using the surplus votes of the Hindus in favour of the untouchable candidate, who happens to be their nominee. The object was to outnumber the untouchable voters and prevent them from electing their own nominee. This cannot be done unless the surplus votes of the Hindu voters were diverted from the Hindu candidate towards the untouchable candidates. There is a
greater chance of the diversion of these surplus votes under the distributive system than there is under the cumulative system. This was the conspiracy behind that.

There were two sorts of Electorates recognised by the Government of India Act, 1935. 1. Territorial and 2. Non-Territorial. Non-Territorial electorates are the electorates which were designed to give representation to special interests such as landlords, chambers of commerce, trade unions etc. Territorial electorates fall into three categories. (i) Separate territorial electorates known in their abbreviated form as separate electorates. (ii) General territorial electorates. (iii) Joint territorial electorates with reserved seats, commonly spoken of as joint electorates. The difference between the above three was as under respectively.

1. Separate T.E. - Candidate and voters of same community.
2. General T.E. - Any candidate and all voters could vote.

The separate electorates of the Communal Award were snatched by the Poona Pact and joint electorate was allotted to the Depressed Classes. Two features of the joint electorate were: (1) The Hindu voters in a joint electorate are almost always in a majority, if not in any overwhelming majority and the scheduled caste voters are almost always in a minority, if not in a hopeless minority. (2) A Hindu voter can vote for the election of a Scheduled Caste candidate standing for the seat reserved for the scheduled castes and a scheduled castes voter can vote for the election of a Hindu candidate, contesting for the Hindu seat.

(A) The Role of Gandhi and Poona Pact:

Even today the false representation of Dalits are overwhelmingly elected through the caste Hindu organisations like Congress, BJP, CPI, CPM at the national
and regional level, whereas, the true representatives of Dalits from their own organisations are being defeated. In the Lok Sabha elections of 2009, the independent SC candidates from their own political party could win only 2 MPs and STs a couple out of a total 119 reserved seats (Vijay Mankar, BVB, ISSUE, 12, 2009). The chamchas therefore still have a say due to joint electorates. The ‘Chamcha Age’ thus started with the Poona Pact by its joint electorate and single vote still continues. Mr. Gandhi is the father of this chamcha age, as he was instrumental in enforcing it on the Dalits. It was Gandhi who unarmed Dr. Ambedkar and ensured that he gives up his demand for separate electorate for the Dalits. I agree with Kanshiramji on this issue, who propounded for the first time concept of ‘chamcha age’ in 1982 (The Chamcha Age, New Delhi, 1982). Thus, the Chamcha Age beings with the Poona Pact. The chamchas are even produced today they are surely the children of Gandhi. But those who are children of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar should revolt against the chamcha age to put an end to the Dark Age.

Proceeding further, the joint electorates disabled the independent efforts by the Dalits and their organisations. The May 2007 electoral victory of BSP at Uttar Pradesh however indicated to reverse the disproportionate ratio of Dalit voters to caste Hindu voters by forming an alliance of Bahujan Samaj, thereby getting majority votes from Dalits (86%) + OBCs + Muslims (17%). Soon however, it lost the elections in 2009 as it was expecting to win over 55-60 seats in the country and form government at Centre. BSP lost due to its semi-concept of ‘Sarvajan Samaj’ and ‘social engineering’. This was nothing but a compromise with Brahmanism (BVB, Issue 12, 2009). It preponderantly relied on the caste Hindus by fielding 20 Brahmans and 8 Kshatriyas and Vaishiyas in UP alone out 80 candidates, instead of building up of Bahujan Samaj (SC/ST/DT/NT/OBC/Religious Minorities). It could win only 2 SC
seats (out of 17 reserved in UP). The other Dalit based parties like RPI, LJP, ILP and others failed miserably. This is all due to the continuing effect of Poona Pact and more importantly by the non-adoption of ‘Ambedkarism’ as an ideology, policy, and programme by them.

Thus, the Poona Pact made not only the Dalits non-representatives but also affected the overall society and nation in many ways. We will see all these in the chapters to follow. The Poona Pact not only denied rights to the Dalits but oppressed the ‘nation in making’ by apprehending the Muslims and isolating the bahujans. The Gandhian nationalism represented the forces of status quo in the name of nationalism over those of change who represented the nation. A nation if to be real must be an equal socio-political community with a humanitarian culture of dignity, fraternity, oneness and wisdom. Gandhi was positively opposed to it. The congress continued to be obsessed all along with the idea of monopoly representation of the nation, of excluding the others specially the new entrants (Dalits, Muslims, Tribals, Backwards) from the political mainstream. The so called Indian nationalist movement (as led by Gandhi and Congress) never felt itself to call upon to sacrifice their caste, class or community interests in favour of their own fellow Indians. Dr. Ambedkar has rightly commented that the slogan of nationalism was being raised not to sacrifice anything but to reinforce the nationalists own traditional and inscriptive privileges based on caste and Hindu religion (Aloysis, G. pp. 213-222).

India till today is not a nation but only a state. This makes us to question; Gandhi is the father of which nation? Nevertheless, Poona Pact not only made the movement of Dalits non-representatives but it also made our democracy non-representative. It became a turning point in the ‘nation in making’. Poona pact became a bar-sinister in the nation in making and thus is a major turning point. All this
happened due to the malevolence of Gandhi and Congress towards the Shudras and Antajayas.42

(B) Dr. Ambedkar himself denounced the Poona Pact:

Even after signing the Poona Pact, responding to the call of humanity and saving the life of Mr. Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar kept on denouncing the Poona Pact till 1947. On the very next day on 25th September, 1932, he repudiated the view that Separate Electorates are injurious to the national interests and that joint electorates are solution for absorbing the depressed classes in the Hindu community. This was nothing but a rejection of the premise underlying the Poona Pact.

Immediately, in April 1933, Dr. Ambedkar pleaded that the panel system must be replaced by single election. He suggested that only those DC candidates should be declared elected who succeeded in getting a fixed minimum of votes of DC from the Joint electorates. Before leaving for London to attend the meetings of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, he demanded a radical alteration of the Poona Pact and suggested that the panel system in the pact should be replaced by a new system according to which only such SC candidates should be declared elected as have succeeded in getting a fixed minimum number of votes of SCs from among joint electorates.

In a public rally on 4th February, 1940 to honour Mr. Tipnis of ILP, Dr. Ambedkar repudiated the safeguards provided to the SCs under the GOI Act of 1935 and the Poona Pact. He stated “The safeguards provided under the government of India Act and the Poona Pact had proved totally inadequate to protect the interests of the depressed classes and that these classes soon would have to direct their attention to formulate concrete proposals and conditions of an elaborate and comprehensive nature on which alone any future cooperation with the administration
would be possible. During the Second World War, Viceroy Linlithgow made it clear to all the parties concerned that the Poona Pact would continue to be in force till it was modified or replaced by mutual agreement. If the terms of the Poona Pact were to be disregarded without the consent of the Scheduled Castes, which would be a matter which would at once attract the responsibility of government.

The All India Depressed Classes Conference of 18th 20th July, 1942 in its 3rd resolution once again emphasized the demand of separate electorates along with a new demand of separate settlements. The working committee of the SISCF on 23rd September, 1944 at Madras passed a resolution. “Political demands of scheduled castes”. In the resolution no. 7 it is stated below.

(C) Joint Electorates and Its Impact on Dalits:

The Working Committee of the AISCF is of opinion that the experience of the last elections held under the Government of India Act has proved that the system of joint electorates has deprived the schedule castes of the right to send true and effective representatives to the legislatures and has given the Hindu majority the virtual right to nominate members of the scheduled castes who are prepared to be the tools of the Hindu majority. The working committee of the federation therefore demands that the system of joint electorates and reserved seats should be abolished and the system of separate electorates be introduced in place thereof.

The demands of separate electorates and denunciation of Poona Pact continued in 1946 till 1947. In June 1946, Dr. Ambedkar sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister Atlee with the subject “A Critique of the proposals of the cabinet mission for Indian constitutional changes in so far as they affect the scheduled castes”. In this he analysed the adverse effect of February 1946 general election in comparison to the primary elections of December 1945 which have already been analysed in the earlier Chapter VII.
In the interview taken by Cabinet Mission, Dr. Ambedkar said that he did not want a Constituent Assembly at all. It would be dominated by the caste Hindus and the scheduled castes being a minority will always be out voted. He put his own proposal, that the tasks envisaged for the constituent assembly should be divided into two classes, (a) constitutional questions b. communal questions. Matters under (a) should be referred to a commission presided over by an eminent constitutional lawyer from Great Britain or the USA. The other members should be two Indian experts and one representative each of the Hindu and Muslim communities. The terms of reference should be the Government of India act of 1935 and the commission should be required to recommend what changes should be made in the act as it stood. Matters under (b) should be referred to a conference of the leaders of the different communities. If the conference failed to arrive at an agreed solution, His majesty’s government should make an award.

Dr. Ambedkar reiterated his demand of separate settlements and separate electorates for the SCs. Dr. Ambedkar claimed that, before they left, the British must ensure that the new constitution guaranteed to the schedule castes the elementary human rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that it resorted their separate electorate and gave them other safeguards which they demanded. He reiterated that so long as these were joint electorates, C voters would be so few that Hindu candidates safely ignore their wishes. Caste Hindus would never support scheduled caste candidates. Separate electorates were fundamental. Without them the SC would never have their own representatives. Needless to say that Jagajivanram under the guise of Depressed Classes League was then opposing the separate electorates and chauvinistically claiming himself to be Hindu. Again in his letter dated 20/10/1946 to Mr. Winston Churchill Dr. Ambedkar raises the issue of the fact
that Congress does not represent the SCs by analysing the result of primary election vis-à-vis general elections. During his stay in London (October-November, 1946) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar addressed a meeting of the Conservative Indian Committee in the House of Commons on 5th November, 1946. In his address, he demanded the abrogation of the Poona Pact and demanded restoration of separate electorate. On 23rd July, 1946 addressing a press conference, while repudiating the Poona Pact he assigned the world ‘treaty’ to it. He also claims the right to break the treaty just as western nations have done in the past.

The atmosphere was getting tense amidst the feeling in the SCs that they were not recognised a ‘separate and distinct element’ in the national life due to the opposition of congress and its fake organisations like Harijan Party. They also held Gandhi and Congress directly responsible for it. The SC therefore started denouncing Gandhi. On 31st March, 1946, he had to face hostile demonstrations in Mumbai. On 1st April, some 50 demonstrators waved black flags and raised anti-congress slogans and supposedly hurled stones at Gandhi’s hut in Delhi, when he was there in connection with the work of constitutional negotiations going on in the capital with Cabinet Mission.

(D) The Impact of Poona Pact on Dalits:

One can conclude that Poona Pact has done. It has denied a new history in making. It enabled the dark age of Hindu social order to continue. It makes us leaderless by the stooges, the false representatives. It has contrived the constitution of India, which for the loss of separate electorates, double vote and referendum could have enabled Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to change the course of constitutional democracy to realise ‘one man, one value’. By all means the Poona Pact has given birth to many problems. But to make these problems as challenges and convert them to possibilities we will first of all take note of the ill effects of the Poona Pact.43
It made the Dalits the political tools, agents of the caste Hindu organisations by defeating the genuine Dalits in joint electorates and orchestrating victory of only such Dalits who are agents, tools of these organisations i.e., the chamcha age is born out of Poona Pact. It encourages the Dalit to stooping of all sorts; political, ideological, cultural and religious thus destroying independent and genuine leadership or the true leadership of Dalits to fight against the Brahminical social order.

It subordinated them as part of Hindu social order by denying a separate and distinct existence away from the Hindus. It thus put a bar sinister for an ‘ideal society’ based on equality-liberty-fraternity-justice i.e., dhamma. By refusing to recognise the Dalits as a separate and distinct element in the national life, it pre-empted the rights and safeguards for the Dalits and other minorities put forth by Dr. Ambedkar in his ‘States and Minorities’ planned to be enacted in the Constitution of India. This is the biggest loss so far so the Pact has done. It thus gave a ‘contrived’ constitution to us in independent India. It prolonged the conversion move of Dr. Ambedkar for 21 years due to the undecided constitutional settlement. Dr. Ambedkar achieved the permanent constitutional settlement of rights and safeguards for SC/ST/OBC in 1948-49. There upon he had to devote 6-7 years to build up a strong foundation for his historical conversion to Buddhism. Had there been no Poona Pact this constitutional settlement would not have been an issue and the greatest conversion to Buddhism could have taken place at least 6-7 years before. This would have given Dr. Ambedkar sufficient time to built up ‘Buddhist India’, which is still awaiting after his demise only after 53 days from 14th October, 1956. It destroyed the independent movement of the Dalits, so necessary for their social, political, religious, cultural and economical emancipation.
It makes democracy meaningless by establishing minority 15% rule over the majority 85%. Democracy to be ‘real’ must be ‘representative’. These representatives must be elected by their own people for pursuing the principles, policies and programmes that they think must be correct to realise liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. Political democracy with joint electorates under the first part the post system deluded with political parties vested in maintaining status quo of caste, caste capitalism and family inheritance makes democracy non-representative and impotent to formulate it into social and economic democracy, which it must be. It is pertinent to note that the joint electorate are being further bifurcated by the ‘delimitation of constituencies’ of SC/ST. They have been vivisected in a way that the constituencies having over 15% SC/ST population have been declared as general seats whereas those below 15% have been reserved. Thus, making the joint electorate further safe for a communal majority of Congress, BJP etc.

Secondly, in the ‘first past, the post system’ with EVMs it has been made difficult for the Bahujan Samaj based parties to win elections. Though, the constitution of India nowhere mentions about the electoral system, ‘method of election, the Brahminical forces have deliberately introduced the system of’ 1st past the post system’ by repealing the Peoples Representation Act 1950. In this system INC, BJP, CPI, CPM are winning elections with less than 505 of the total vote cast. This is making democracy totally non-representative but safe for 15% trivarnika parties. The worst part of these efforts are the introduction of EVMs which can be likely manipulated by programming to register votes for some x, y, z party overwhelmingly. This was introduced by repealing the PRA, 1950, section 61 A. USA and European countries who invented these machines are not using them completely. But our Election Commission seems to be bent upon retaining this manipulative devise.
Lastly, the manipulation of election rules of campaign by financing advertisements ‘paid news’ in electronic and print media up to the day of election. Usage of opinion polls, SMS, e-mails, interviews of leaders are all ways to flout and influence the elections to the advantage of Brahminical parties. They are all done for building up ‘public opinion’ in favour of minority ruling caste based parties like INC BJP etc. All these combined with money power is making democracy meaningless. It is being converted to plutocracy defacto.

It partitioned India by apprehending the Muslims. The Muslims feared that if the safeguards of Depressed Classes can be snatched by the caste Hindus, the same can be done to them. Thus, after Poona Pact, Jinnah came back to India in 1934 and latter took a stand that the Muslims are not a minority but a separate nation. Secondly, the Poona Pact made the AISCF non-representative in spite of it winning maximum percentage of votes and candidates in primary elections of 1945. In the secondary elections of February 1946 it won only 2 MLAs and later ensured victory of only 1 MP (Dr. Ambedkar) in the CA. Thus, in the final decision on POI and Dr. Ambedkar certainly by his suggestions of ‘Council of India’ influenced the Muslims and Hindus both to remain together. The presence of AISCF in the decision of Mountbatten plan would have produced a different picture altogether.

Moreover, if Poona Pact would not have taken place the concept of minority safeguards as constitutional rights would have been guaranteed and neither apprehended the Dalits nor the Muslims. Thus, India could have been a democratic country with FRs, rule of law, federalism and of course, minority rights and safeguards. That would have brought a ‘permanent settlement’ of minority issue and enabled them to become part of ‘Indian Nation’ based on constitutionalism.
(E) Poona Pact and Partition of India:

What impact the Poona Pact had on the Dalits has been explored at length and breadth. But did it have any impact on others? Does Poona Pact have any impact on the partition of India, at least consequential if not direct? Does it have any concomitance with the stand of Jinnah from ‘minority to a nation’? Are the leaders of Congress in a way also responsible for the disunion of India. These questions require thorough inquiry and research.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his book ‘Pakistan or The Partition of India’ has categorically written how the Muslims got alarmed after the Poona Pact and thus their aggression increased. He states “These political grants to the Muslim community by the British government lacked security and it was feared by the Muslim that pressure might be brought upon them or upon his majesty’s government by the Hindus to alter the terms of the grants to the prejudice of the Muslims. This fear was due to two reasons. One was the success of Mr. Gandhi in getting that part of the award which related to the depressed classes revised by means of the pressure of fast unto death. Some people encouraged by this success actually agitated for revision of that part of the award which related to the Muslims and some Muslims were even found to be in favour of entering into such negotiations. This alarmed the Muslim community. After taking into account what the Muslims demanded at the R.T.C. and what was conceded to them, anyone could have through that the limit of Muslim demands was reached and that the 1932 settlement was a final settlement. But, it appears that even with this the Muslims are not satisfied. A further list of new demands for safeguarding the Muslim position seems to be ready.”

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar narrates the failure of Jinnah-Gandhi talks over Chitta Ranjan. Formula in September 1944. He writes “not withstanding this Mr. Gandhi
instead of negotiating with Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League with a view to a settlement, took a different turn. He got the congress to pass the famous Quit India resolution on the 8th August, 1942. This Quit India resolution was primarily a challenge to the British government. But it was also an attempt to do away with the intervention of the British government in the discussion of the minority question and thereby securing for the congress a free hand to settle it on its own terms and according to its own lights. It was in effect if not in intentions, an attempt to win independence by bypassing the Muslims and the other minorities. The Quit India campaign turned out to be a complete failure. Beaten, he started a fast for twenty one days in March 1943, he failed. Thereafter, he fell ill.

Dr. Ambedkar thereupon proceeds to enunciate the reasons for the failure of Gandhi Jinnah talks, in the inherent faults of Chitta Ranjan Formula and the stand taken of Gandhi upon in spite of 18 days discussions. He also gives an alternative suggestion of referring the ‘disputed points of minorities problem including that of Pakistan’ to an international board of arbitration which neither the congress nor the league paid heed to. It would also be pertinent to mention here that it was Dr. Ambedkar who in his 2nd edition of ‘Pakistan or The partition of India’ published in February 1945 suggested the formation of ‘Council of India’ with both legislature of India and Pakistan functioning under it for 10 years. With a referendum of the people in case if they do not want a complete separation. This plan was a solution, which he drafted in form of an act as ‘Government of India Act’.

Dr. Ambedkar advocated the plan on the premise that the decision of a separate country “must be left to be decided by the people who are living on those areas”. A referendum by people in provinces seemed to him the safest and the most constitutional method solving the problem of Pakistan. Dr. Ambedkar also wisely
suggested “Everyone will agree that the procedure must be such that it must not involve victory to one community and humiliation to the other. The method must be of peace with honour to both sides. I do not know if there is another solution better calculated to achieve this end than the decision by a referendum of the people.”

Dr. Ambedkar also suggested the policy and procedure for the “transfer of population” to be implemented by a Commission appointed by both government of India and Pakistan. This procedure also involved the transfer of property, reimbursement of loss of pensionary, currency and most importantly the liquidation of immovable property. Dr. Ambedkar formulated the above “for maintaining a live contact” between India and Pakistan so as to prevent: any estrangement growing up and preventing the chance of reunion, while fulfilling the most urgent necessity of the political freedom of India”.

This book on ‘Pakistan or the Partition of India’ was cited as an authority by both Jinnah and Gandhi. Jinnah specifically advised Gandhi to refer to the book. But neither Gandhi nor Jinnah himself seems to have paid need to the suggestions of Dr. Ambedkar. Had a ‘live contact’ between both India and Pakistan been maintained by the formation of ‘Council of India’ the scenario of partition would have been totally different. The ‘no change’ attitude of Jinnah on the issue of Pakistan and the ‘un-statesmanship’ of Gandhi combined with the ‘impatience and selfishness’ of Nehru, Patel and Menon representing the case of Hindu interests have left to the partition of India. But for the Poona Pact if the AISCF would have won 75 to 78 MLAs under the separate electorates given by the communal award, they would have not been derecognised by the Cabinet Mission. Not only so it would have 20-22 MPs in Constituent Assembly as true representatives of Dalits who could have played a wise role of a third party for a united India based on democratic constitution with
rights and safeguards to its people and minorities respectively. I am imagining them as ‘third party’ because the Britishers were a 2nd party apart from Muslims and Hindus in the issue of partition. They were the least concerned neither for a united nor for a divided India. Thus, Poona Pact is responsible in a way to partition of India as it apprehended the Muslims on one hand and pre-empted the Dalits from participating in the final decision on the issue of partition. Gandhi in his obduracy to deny the constitution rights to Dalits, tribals in 1932 could not have thought how his Guajarati obstinacy could lead to the partition of India in 1947.

The hypocrite Brahmanic stand of Gandhi, Nehru and Congress on minority safeguards and the development of Poona Pact all led Jinnah to take the stand of Pakistan. One important point to be noted here is that the idea of Pakistan as a pure land of Muslims was first conceived in 1930 by Mohammad Iqbal (his forefathers were originally Bharadwaj Brahmins before 4-5 generations) who wrote ‘Saare Jahaan Se Acha Hindustan Hamara’. This was much before Chaudhary Rahmat Ali 1st published a pamphlet published the name “Pakistan” in 1933. Thus, the first amongst Muslims to conceive a separate nation of Pakistan was Iqbal who also happened to be a converted Brahmin. Thus, Sawarkar, Golwalkar the two Maharashtraian so called Brahmin and Iqbal from Uttar Pradesh happened to be Brahmins. At the actual time of partition it was again Nehru, a Brahmin from Kashmir who actually hammed the final nail of partition under very personal influence of Lady Edwin Mountbatten.

Thus, it won’t be wrong if we can conclude that it is ultimately the so called Brahmins who have partitioned India for maintaining the Brahmanism, their caste supremacy of. Not only did they divided the Pan Islamic Empire from Turkey to Bangladesh to become a reality as a one entity but they did not allowed India to
become a super power under Dalit Muslim rule. They together would have constituted around 53% of India’s population in a United India, with Muslims (33%) and Dalits (20%) each. The Britishers with their Mountbatten’s also ensured that in their conflict between Christian and Muslim world, it is the former which reins superior. All the above facts indicate that the attitude of the Congress and its leaders towards the minority problem and particularly for their constitutional safeguards have some bearing on the partition of India. Poona Pact thus, has a consequential effect on this whole issue, which cannot be ignored. Not only it harmed the Dalits it also desecrated the Muslims and also wounded the dream of a united India.

**IV. Conclusion:**

The Poona Act was a landmark resolution in the history of the Dalit movement in India subsequently formed the basis for giving due share to Dalits in the political empowerment of Indian people in a democratic Indian polity. But it was not to be. Dr. Ambedkar and his followers were soon disillusioned. The provisions of separate electorate as envisaged by the communal award were enough to establish political and social identity of the Dalits. This opportunity was cleverly denied by the Poona Pact. Dr. Ambedkar was disappointed and he made his disenchantment known to Mahatma Gandhi in his letter dated February 11, 1933, bluntly refusing to give a message for the inaugural issue of the Harijan”….. “I feel I cannot give a message. For I believe it will be a most unwarranted presumption on my part to suppose that I have sufficient worth in the eyes of the Hindus which would make them treat any message from me with respect. …I am therefore sending you the accompanying statement for publication in your Harijan”. The outcaste is a bye-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcastes except the destruction of the caste system. Nothing can help save Hindus
and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of the Hindu faith of this odious and vicious dogma”.

Dalits continue to suffer from this disability of having an identity till today. Baby Manguram Mugowalia and his associates tried their best through the ad-dharam movement to establish Dalit identity by stating and pleading that Dalits were neither Sikhs nor Hindus. Subsequently Babu Kanshi Ram also rose and disapproved the Poona Pact. He wrote in preface of his book the Chamcha Age that Chamcha age started from the Poona Pact giving joint electorates instead of separate electorates. The purpose of the book was to make Dalit Soshit Samaj of the existence of Chamchas or stooges, and to awaken masses how to differentiate between genuine and counterfeit leadership. The reservation issue is still alive as the Dalits could not be empowered as desired. Moreover, the thinking of Mahatma Gandhi in saving the Hinduism has fallen flat otherwise also. Sikhs have asserted their separate identity independent of Hinduism. The Poona Pact it seems was an act of treachery and fraud on the Dalits. The point is not to blame Dr. Ambedkar as he had no other option as he was a nationalist to the core. He did not want to create friction with the majority Hindus on one hand and stand against the national movement of independence against the British on the other.
References:


4. Ibid, p. 95.


8. Ibid, p. 4-5.

9. Ibid, p. 3.

10. Ibid, p. 4.


17. Butler, p. 78.

18. Nearly 20 years later, Attlee would be Prime Minister when Britain granted India independence.

19. This lack of Indian representation was indicative of the British desire to maintain control of and influence in India, despite rhetoric of “responsible government.” A statement by, Viscount Burnham, one of the panel members, is telling, “[the main purpose of the Commission is] to prevent the dissolution of the British Empire in India.” (R.W. Brock, ed., The Simon Report on India (An Abridgement) (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1930) vi.) Further evidence of Britain’s reluctance to “let go” are provisions in major documents which effectively guarantee a continued presence and element of control. The Simon Report, for example, indicates that “the only practical means of protecting the weaker and less numerous elements in the population is by the retention of an impartial power residing in the Governor-General and the Governors in the provinces.”


26. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) p. 34.
27. The committee from Bihar and Orissa called for the creation of separate constituencies for the Depressed Classes, rejecting the nomination scheme.
28. OSS, p. 31.
29. Ibid, pp. 33-34.
31. OSS, p. 34.
32. Brock, p. 97.
33. OSS, p. 35.
37. The Lothian Committee, which included both British and Indian representatives, was formed in 1932 to study extension of the franchise, women’s suffrage, representation of the Depressed Classes and other related issues. Regarding representation of the Depressed Classes, the committee decided that “provision should be made in the new constitution for better
representation of the Depressed Classes, and that the method of representation by nomination [was] no longer regarded as appropriate.” For the basis of its inquiry, the Lothian committee submitted questionnaires to each of the provinces, asking for input on how best to secure representation for the Depressed Classes and advising that “the application of the group system of representation to the Depressed Classes should be specially considered.” (Indian Franchise Committee, Report of the Indian Franchise Committee, 1932 (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1932), p. 4.


40. Sharma Appendix 1.


42. “Dr. Ambedkar & Caste,” Harijan, February 11, 1933, p. 3.

43. The Harijan Sevak Sangh’s activities are outlined on its website: www.hindusevaksangh.org.