Chapter One
Research Questions and Theoretical Background

Synopsis
The research questions related to Dalit exclusion are rooted in political and social history. In this thesis I am mainly studying it from the point of view of English Language Education. Dalit life revolves around experiential reality and not merely based on evidence that can be observed. That is the reason why autobiography is a popular genre with Dalit writers. While the theoretical background is basically historical — in connection power with resistance, the research questions broadly aim to show how English Language Education is a multifaceted reality which is intertwined with the Dalit history and consciousness.

1.0. Aim of the present study
The aim of this present study is to investigate what attitudes Dalits have towards English language in the present arena and how these attitudes are related to and affected by social, economic and cultural background and mother tongue. I would like to look into the attitudes of Dalits from the perspectives of identity, social and economic context. The final aim of this study is to create a kind of motivation for Dalits to look upon English and English education.

1.1. Research questions
I would like to carry the present research work because I have no exactly answers for the following questions:

➢ What are the attitudes of Dalits towards English and English education?
➢ What are the factors that may motivate the Dalits towards English?
Do Dalits assume that learning English is necessary for their employment?

Do Dalits assume that learning English is necessary for their social and economic mobility?

Do Dalits assume that English language is necessary for their social identity and social inclusion?

1.2. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that Dalits have positive attitudes towards English and English education and believe that their socio-economic and political awareness motivates them to look upon English. It also hypothesized that English and English education would transform the lives of the Dalits from age old traditional practices to the present modern way of living.

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the understanding of the educational status of Dalits in India. Dalits are the educationally deprived caste groups in India owing to traditional caste-based discrimination even before the British came to India. The research work basically finds their schooling and college experience and the obstacles and barriers they face during the academic life. The research examines the issues of caste based discrimination and existing practices of untouchability. Traditionally the Dalits are not only educationally deprived but also socially discriminated, politically unheard, economically poor, and religiously treated as impure for centuries. Because of the caste-based hierarchical system in the country there are exclusionary practices in the fields of education as well. Consequently, the literacy of Dalits is far below than the national literacy rate. According to the government of India literacy rate at the moment is 75 percent while in reality this is not at all true, because in the view of the government literacy
means people who can sign their names on the papers when they are taking provisions from government ration stores. Literacy however means the ability to think critically and analyze events from a broad perspective. It does not mean just signing a piece of paper. That has no social or political relevance to the Dalit masses. By denying the Dalits the skills and resources to be able to acquire a critical view of the world around them, the government is actively discriminating against them.

In designing the syllabus and curriculum at the level of school education the upper caste writers are putting whatever they feel is essential to them in terms of religion, caste, mythology, and other related areas that ultimately benefit children of economically developed groups. The syllabus does not take into consideration the different cultures of the students and moreover it does not create or produce any communal harmony among the students.

The research work is dealing with how the Dalit students in the educational field are affected in their educational attainment and enrollment because of their caste status. Dalit groups in India are being discriminated on the ground of their caste status. In education most Dalit students are facing problems of getting admission into private institution due to lack of sufficient finance. Today there are many private schools in the disguise of corporate education. People having sound finance are able to enter private institutions. Due to exclusionary practices in society, Dalits have been excluded from education as well. My work will touch on the politics of exclusion and the resistance to that exclusion by Dalits themselves.

According to Foucault (1976) says that "the analysis, made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law, or the over-all
unity of domination are given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes. It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies" (pp.92-93).

Power is therefore everywhere. The Dalit oppression in the field of education is related to their oppression in other areas as well. As Foucault says power is not related to merely repression by the state but can be observed at various levels. It can be seen as a "the multiplicity of force relations." There are diverse kinds of "social hegemonies" that play a role in preventing Dalits from being able to attain education that will liberate them completely from oppression. At the same time we can confidently say that Dalits are also resisting the domination of upper caste individuals, groups and institutions. Foucault(ibid) says the following about resistance:

Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance
that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships.

At various levels Dalits are also resisting and fighting against the exclusionary practices that are attempting to put them down. They are acquiring modern education and entering higher positions so that they can change the lives of the downtrodden classes. Education is considered as the main driving force of any country's development. No country has made progress in equality and dignified life within the society in absence of quality education and educated people. Education is an integral part of development for the country. Universally, education is known as the fundamental right of the people and it enhances the quality of humanity and dignity. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as laid down in the constitutional fundamental rights Article 26 that:

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”.

Furthermore, education can be considered as the instruments that can bring the social change and economic transformation in the country. Thereafter, it leads the country in the development track. Education plays the decisive role, in the overall process of development in terms of social advancement and economic betterment.

The statement above clearly states that education is internationally the birthright of every individual. But, the violation of this declaration can be clearly seen especially in developing countries of the world including India. There is no much availability of education in India to Dalits, though policies may be favoring the IIT and IIM students
where the Dalit student involvement is very little. The government and its policies are failing in creating facilities at the school and college levels to Dalit students. However, most of the schools, particularly in rural areas of India, have not upgraded to higher secondary school due to lack of adequate funds, getting qualified teachers, school infrastructures and other necessary resources. Most of the schools where Dalit students remained are public schools funded by Government and those schools are neither able to maintain the expected quality education with enough facilities for the students nor are they able to address the need of the students and their parents. The results of the education at different levels are not very satisfactory. Overall we could say that private education has much better facilities and other resources. Consequently they have been showing better performance than the Government provided education.

The educational status is one the major factors that determines the quality of life. The overall educational status of Dalits in India especially in one of the South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh is lower than the other communities in India. If the educational status is low the quality of life goes down. Therefore the life standard of the Dalit is pitiable. The educational attainment of these community people is extremely low; therefore, there are very few Dalits in public services, government employment and political participation in India.

"No 30 children are aware of school education out of 100. One student only entering the college education out of 100 students. One only finishing engineering studies out of 5000 students. One may be becoming physician out of 12000. But 96 per cent of the upper casts students finishing their studies and occupying different higher positions in
the society, where as 90per cent of the students from the Dalit community is losing their positions year by year”. 

Those were the days where the Dalit people were dehumanized because of their occupational duties. In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has been historically associated with occupations such as leather work, butchering, removal of rubbish animal carcasses and waste. Engaging in these activities was considered contagious by upper caste Hindus. As a result Dalits were commonly segregated and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. They are not allowed to enter neither the temple nor a school and required to stay outside the village. But with the touch of missionary education the Dalits entered education. That literally happened in coastal Andhra region and some part of Rayalaseema districts in Andhra Pradesh state. The Mughal and the Nawab rule were limited to the Telangana region in the united Andhra Pradesh state. The missionaries could not enter the Telangana region due to some agreements between the British and the Hyderabad Nawabs (rulers). Missionary education in coastal Andhra was established rather well. Andhra Pradesh state consists of three regions Telangana region (10 districts), Andhra region (nine districts) and Rayalaseema region (four districts). In the two regions coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema districts, the Malas are one of the major groups of SC population when compared to the other SC communities including the Madigas (the next major SC group). The Malas do not have a particular occupational duty where as Madigas were forced to do their occupational duties like skinning out the dead animals, butchering and making shoes etc. They were not able to come out of these ordained duties given by the Brahmins. Therefore the Malas were able to get educated and enter dignified job fields. After
independence constitutional reservations were implemented and many Malas occupied different positions in government jobs. The missionaries worked for the education of the Dalits and for their betterment which influenced the British government. Later the British government proposed to help the depressed classes and promised them special benefits like giving them separate electorates. They set up the schedule for the depressed classes and called for Dalit representation to the round table conference in London, 1931.

In colonial India Dalits were benefitted in terms of health, education and in terms of social respect and self-respect. Here we need to remember one thing that there two categories that are in existence when the British came to India. One is the British rulers and the other one are the Christian missionaries. “The British East India Company turned into a military power in the period of Lord Robert Clive In 1744”. Initially the British company turned into rulers maintained the caste status actively, supported the caste order and the protection of caste was decreed by an act of parliament. The British rulers instructed Christian missionaries in their activities with regard to religious usages of native upper caste Indians. Due to these instructions Christian missionaries could not approach the poor and the various Dalit groups. “They (the Christian missionaries) initially upheld the Varna system and they even accepted caste in Christian church”. Later with the influence of the reform movements like Bhakti, the social reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, the anti-caste movements led by Phule and Periar and the Dalit Movement initiated by Ambedkar, Christian missionaries worked for the education and betterment of the Dalits especially in Coastal Andhra and some parts of Rayalseema districts in united Andhra Pradesh state which were influenced by the British rule.
"The British government, which was at that time also trying to help all other minority communities such as Muslims, Christians, Anglo-Indian and so on, excluded them from the definition of depressed classes, while bestowing on them special benefits, such as giving them separate communal electorates".

The British wanted to keep the promise that they made but could not, because there was a protest from Gandhi that the separate communal award once made might take away Dalits from Hindu society. Gandhi and his followers knew the power of politics. If Dalits and other minorities (not in population but in power) get separated from the imperialistic upper caste society, they may have their own state according to their ratio (in population). Now here in a joint mixed state these minority upper caste communities (in population 15-20 percent) can rule the majority of the downtrodden communities. Gandhi knew this power politics philosophy. That is the reason Gandhi protested against the communal award and went on a fast when no one supported him. Ambedkar was surprised and gave up his proposal for communal award. Dalits were not supported and they did not participate in freedom movement led by the upper castes under the Indian National Congress because they were cheated in two ways. Once they (Dalits) were cheated by the British and now they are being cheated by the Indian upper caste political leaders. The British rulers used the policy of non-interference in local, cultural and religious practices, in order to rule the people of India, in no way they have helped the masses, particularly the Dalits.

In another way the Indian upper caste people already they are the owners on land, labor, capital and organization. Once again if they come to the throne there would be no one doing justice to the Dalits. With this reason in mind the Dalits were really reluctant to
accept the Indian upper caste hegemony over them. They thought that under the British they can solve their problems by having the communal award. When we think of the throne it is not just the physical space for someone to sit on, but it indicates power. We need to look at the statement of Ambedkar which says that “political power is the main key to open all sorts of locks.” Once the British enjoyed this political power and now the imperialistic upper castes are enjoying this political power. This political power can only be possible through education, such a kind of education only can possible by having schooling and having good environment to reproduce good educated child.

“Efforts may be required for various reasons. The child may be deferred by a hostile environment at school or by a physical punishment of a teacher in school and in the home itself”.

In the school no one may be available to help the Dalit child with homework given by the teacher, and moreover no one can help the child with homework at home because the Dalit parents are illiterates. Lack of progress at school may sap the morale of parents and children. In the light of these obstacles, it is easier to understand why so many children are out of school even when their parents express a strong interest in education. This contrast between aspiration and achievements is one of the main concerns of this topic. Educational success amid the era of caste based discrimination should consider the great achievement for the Dalit at the time because the research scholar has been facing not only academic load but also a load from the society at every step of the ladder to go ahead to achieve the goal.

This reflects that there are some barriers that prevent them from going for higher education. In India the education has been developing and improving all over the
country. The literacy rate has been increasing slowly every year. Though the Government of India has made primary education free but still poor families cannot send their children to school but they want to send them to work to earn money in the village or nearby town or city. Because of their poverty they are not able to send their children to school but to do farm work. Another reason is that the parents of Dalits have some kinds of pre-conceived notions that a boy's education is more significant than that of the girl. The gap in educational aspirations between different social groups is narrowing rapidly; these common aspirations give very unequal attention to boys and girls. "Most parents (mothers no less than fathers) expressed much stronger interest in their son's education than in their daughters". This is a notion common to all Indian parents; but turning to the Dalit parents the proportion is more. Generally most of the Dalit parents are not aware of education due to their illiteracy, their unsound financial background, their less population in the educational field, caste tension/politics in the educational institutions and lack of political power in society make parents turn away from the notion of education. Within these parameters parents may not be interested in sending their children to school/college. They are also not that much aware of the importance of girl's education. Psychologically the parent's minds are filled with the pre-conceived notion of so-called Hindu ideologies which say that sending a girl for education is a sin. Physically and mentally they (Dalit girls) may be threatened by the male and female students of non-Dalit communities. Dalit parents have a notion that only the male child can carry the inheritance from generation to generation as India is the patriarchal society. As long as India is the caste or the community based society these notions and mindsets can never be changed.
1.3. **Current Educational system**

The current educational system is in a pathetic condition with class and gender inequalities playing a role in caste inequalities. The teachers in schools have some kinds of pre-conceived notions towards the student's communities. The teachers from the upper castes show discrimination towards depressed community children. Most teachers working in government schools and colleges do not let their children to be with them. Only Dalits and other depressed community children are educated in government educational institutions, even though their ratio is very low due to various reasons. In the schools and colleges run by the Government there are no proper facilities, many in ruined old houses, under the trees where the SC, ST and other OBC children are attending now; out of hundred students only fifteen students are entering high school studies. The Radha Krishnan commission which was formed in 1949 only concentrated on university education but neglected the basic school education. The IIT and IIM educational institutions are given many priorities while basic education is completely neglected.

Now government educational institutions only make children to go for posts such as conductors, nurses and home guards. Completely neglected the Dalits and other depressed classes cannot go for higher positions. If the depressed communities are given quality education they will come to know the corruption of the policy makers. They may be questioned and victimized. With this reason the upper caste rulers are making plots and conspiracies. That is the reason they have violated the educational policies and quality education. The government policies like mid-day meals and free clothes scheme have failed in attracting the children and moreover they started closing schools where there are less than hundred children in a school. According to the Right to Education Act
25% of seats will be reserved for the Dalit and other poor depressed community children in private educational institutions and reimbursement policy should be followed. In real life situations this is not completely implemented. The government is not keeping an eye in controlling the private educational institutions. The latter have no boundaries in taking fees and donations; this is a very tough task for oppressed communities especially for the Dalits because they do not have sound finances to pay and get education in these institutions.

Nowhere in the world especially in the democratic countries where children get basic education in other languages but unfortunately in India we have convent schools, concept schools, public schools and international air-conditioned schools etc., which are English medium schools working for the people and pupils who are financially sound. People who are financially sound can send their children to these schools moreover they can arrange tutors for special learning. Dalit and other depressed communities children who do not have money go to the government schools. Most of the times with so many reasons the children of Dalits remain as drop-outs and push-outs.

Here the researcher would like to bring to light his own village school day experiences. He used to go to school but could not understand what the teacher said, which is why the teacher used to beat him often. Studies were boring and difficult for him. He refused to go back to school no matter how hard his parents tried to make him do so. They fixed him to graze the cattle of his village landlord all through the day. For three years he was away from school and in the period of those three years he found some of his community children who started going to school. He showed some interest in doing so himself. Finally his uncle convinced his parents and sent him to school. But the matter
is the same as it was earlier. There are many different ways in which a child like himself is excluded from the schooling society.

In the present-day society parents in Dalits communities have come to know that education is the weapon to meet all sorts of needs in society. As Ambedkar said in his writings and speeches political power is the only key to open all sorts of locks. The final aim of political power is education as one of the slogans of Ambedkar about Education is (Educate-organize and-Agitate). Many parents, in fact clearly say that education is indispensable in modern society. Originally it is true in the pre-colonial state no one was allowed to study Sanskrit except the Brahmins (the twice-born castes). In the colonial period the British did not allow the Dalit people to be educated. Though the power has been changed from the hands of the Brahmins to the British and although the British brought English education, the fruits of education were not available to Dalits and other depressed classes. Now in the post-colonial India education has not reached Dalits. Due to their lack of education the Dalits have been troubled physically, worried mentally and cheated in all aspects of life. They have lost their power over land, capital and organization. Their labor has been squeezed by the so-called educated upper caste society.

In Bourdieu’s(1984 et al. pp. 1-11) cultural reproduction theory, he argues that the school reproduces the culture and values of the dominant group in the society which would later on work as a form of violence which is called as “symbolic violence.” Furthermore he argues that a school reproduces such beliefs of the dominant groups which later are transferred to “human” values through social structures. In the case of Dalit children in educational institutions, the non-Dalits have been dominating on the
ground of caste status since long. Consequently, it has been reproducing educational exclusion through the social structures. We could look at the parameters as to why Dalit students fail to achieve their goals and why their educational performance seems to be lower than non-Dalits in the same educational institutions. This thesis aims to study the cultural politics involved in education that discriminates against Dalits at the institutional level.

Indian society is ranked mainly by interlocking divides of religion, caste and geography. Whatever the region, caste and place are—only one section of people has been occupying the dominant positions in terms of education. The social and educational innovation, mainly, through English education has been enjoyed by only some social groups i.e. elite from upper castes. However, it became means for those elite to maintain their status in independent India. Consequently, the politics around the English have been understood since the last decade. Throughout India, now, there is an extraordinary belief among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. It is no more working as the status language of the elite class or educated class of the society, rather it became as a 'social leveler' in Indian society. Thus, in the arena of globalization, English has firmly established itself as the language of prestige and has become as a source of social, political, economic and cultural knowledge for many Indian social groups i.e. downtrodden or weaker sections.

Thus in the 21st century, globalization becomes the context for us to examine the politics surrounding Dalit exclusion in English Education. The latter is not just a source of power but also an expression of it. The “untouchable text” is written and rewritten in
multiple ways through the use of English Language Education. My research touches on
the multiple social, political and economic issues surrounding Dalit exclusion.