

CHAPTER - V

Education of the Depressed Classes from 1905 to 1921

The Socio-Political Scene at the Beginning of the Period.

a. The Social Awareness for the Amelioration of the Depressed Classes

The Social Reform Movements of the Nineteenth Century had stirred public consciousness over certain social problems. The Indian National Congress and the National Social Conference had been established in 1884 and 1885 respectively. Whereas the Indian National Congress had concerned itself with the political problems of the country, the National Social Conference propagated social reforms in the country. The creation of these two sisterly bodies had provided a national platform for a discussion of contemporary problems - political and social. Thus, the eminent leaders from the various parts of the country could meet at a place, share their views over the various problems and take collective decisions. This contributed to the generation of a spirit of nationalism in the masses. The very consciousness that the people should have a say in the solution of their own problems led them to raise demands for more rights, better facilities and greater share in the public administration.

The National Social Conference used to discuss the pertinent social problems facing the Indian Society in its annual conferences. The provincial units of the Conference would then follow up its resolutions by way of mass propaganda and other such means as would

influence the public thinking. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the various social reform bodies had included the amelioration of the Depressed classes as an aspect of their programmes and therefore, it was but natural that the National Social Conference attended to this social problem as well. For example, the National Social Conference, in its annual session 1899, had regretted that the condition of the low castes in matters of education and social status was far from satisfactory and recommended to the social reform associations in the country to interest themselves in the salvation of the low castes by educating them and raising their status.¹ In 1900, the National Social Conference had laid down that the education and social amelioration of the low castes in all parts of the country was a duty which rested on all those who had the permanent good of the country at heart and recommended that the Reform Sabhas and Associations should make every effort in their power to raise these classes to a position whereby education and industry they might rise above disadvantages of their condition.² In its Ahmedabad session in 1902, the Conference had expressed its distress with the disastrous effects on society of the neglect and indifference to the moral and material advancement of the low castes and recorded its

¹Singh, S.R., Nationalism and Social Reform in India, Delhi, Ranjit Printers and Publishers, 1968, Pp.254-55.

²Ibid.

earnest conviction that the prosperity and progress of the country was deeply involved in effective measures being taken towards the amelioration of their conditions.³ The provincial branches of the National Social Conference had also started evincing interest in the uplift of the low castes. In 1903, the Bombay Provincial Conference at its Dharwar session had held that the existing low condition of the Depressed classes was in itself and from the National point of view unsatisfactory and it had recommended that every well wisher of the country should consider it as his duty to do all he could to rouse self respect in these classes and placing facilities for their education and employment within their reach.⁴ In 1903, the National Social Conference reiterated its previous resolution that the neglect of and indifference to the moral and material advancement of the low castes could be disastrous to the society.

By 1904, the movement for the social emancipation of the Depressed classes had gathered some force. Apart from a general consciousness in the Hindu society that the Depressed classes could no longer be treated in the traditional manner, there were other reasons, too, that necessitated attention to these classes. In the Pre-Industrial society, the village used to be a self sufficient unit and the

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

occupations continued to be more or less the same. The Depressed classes had lived in isolation in two ways i.e. they were isolated within the village society by the other caste groups and they were isolated from their own communities in other parts of the province or the country as the means of transport and communications had not yet developed. Thirdly, these classes did not have any source of inspiration for their development. They did not have their own leadership and the higher caste leaders would not work with them for their amelioration except for sympathising with their poor living conditions. In the early 20th Century, these conditions had started undergoing a change. Under the changing social context, some external forces had also started influencing these classes. The Christian missionary, the emigration agent and to some extent the recruiting officer had taught them to look forward to better life. With their help, the Depressed classes could seek a change of their religion, and sometimes a change in their vocational pursuits, too. Within the Depressed classes, the Christian converts, the pensioned sepoys, and the emigrants who had returned with some savings would not recognize the authority of the higher castes and urged them to solve their social and political problems themselves.

The social thrusts for ameliorating the condition of the Depressed classes were two way pronged. The leadership among the Hindus, except for some orthodox people, was realizing the urgency of ameliorating the condition of these

classes through means of education and industry. The Depressed classes were also growing conscious of their servitude and realizing that they should make efforts of their own to improve their conditions. They had, therefore, started establishing their own organisations. These organisations served as a platform for inter-provincial contacts between the leaders of these classes on the one hand and a platform to demand more rights, better facilities and a share in the administration on the other.

b. The Political Consciousness in the Depressed Classes

Lord Curzon took over as the Viceroy of India in 1898. No Viceroy of greater intellectual capacity had ever come to India so far and none had ever toiled at improving the administration so much as he did. But the strong regime of Lord Curzon, instead of checking the forces of Indian Nationalism, intensified the desire for political advance in the Indians and one of its features was the growth of a militant nationalism. The educated middle class that were supposed to act as intermediaries between the British Officials and the Indian subjects were now themselves educating the public opinion to demand more rights and privileges. Lord Curzon was quite sarcastic in his criticism of the attitude of the Indian leaders and^{asserted} that it was not the Indian nationalists but the British government that could elevate the condition of the Indian masses.⁵ The Indian

⁵Nurullah and Naik, History of Education in India, London, MacMillan & Co., 1951, p.446(quoted).

leadership repudiated such a Curzonian assumption and claimed their right to speak on behalf of the Indian masses. One of the implications of such a political situation was that both the groups viz. the officials and the nationalists took up programmes for the welfare of the masses. The other implication was that the criterion of the political strength of any group came to include the backing enjoyed by it of a larger number of people and not only the support of a few leaders.

Since the National Social Conference had been alive to the problems of the Depressed classes, its influencing the Indian National Congress was natural. Of the prominent leaders who were held in public esteem were Dada Bhai Naroji, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, C.R.Das, Gopal Krishan Gokhale and Annie Besant. The political reform, for these leaders, was interlinked with social reform. They were conscious of the need to ameliorate the conditions of the Depressed classes and urged upon the orthodox Hindus to change their outlook. For example, addressing a public meeting at Dharwar in 1903, Gokhale had said:⁶

'I think all fair minded persons will have to admit that it is absolutely monstrous that a class of human beings with bodies similar to our own, with brains that can think and with hearts that can

⁶Farquar, J.N., Modern Religious Movements in India, Delhi, Munshi Lal Manohar Lal, 1967, p.370(quoted).

feel, should be perpetually condemned to a low life of utter wretchedness, servitude and mental and moral degradation, and that permanent barriers should be placed in their way so that it should be impossible for them ever to overcome them and improve their lot. This is deeply revolting to our sense of justice. I believe one has only to put oneself mentally into their places to realize how grievous this injustice is. We may touch any other animal, but the touch of these human beings is pollution. And so complete is now mental degradation of these people that they themselves see nothing in such treatment to resent, that they acquiesce in it as though nothing better than that was their due. Moreover, is it, I may ask, consistent with our own self-respect that these men should be kept out of our houses and shut out from all social intercourse as long as they remain within the pale of Hinduism, whereas the moment they put on a coat, a hat, and a pair of trousers, and call themselves Christian, we are prepared to shake hands with them and look upon them as quite respectable. No sensible man will say that this is a satisfactory state of things'.

The Depressed classes had themselves started demanding for a better treatment at the hands of other communities. Their demands to the government included political rights, better educational and occupational opportunities and the provision of basic amenities for improving their living conditions. For example, the Mahar community of Deccan and other parts of the Presidency of Bombay had sent in a petition to Lord Lamington in 1904 praying government to give them a helping hand in raising the status of their community.⁷ According to the petitioners, the Proclamation of 1858 had given them the liberty to join the different services, and in times when the British Government had been pressed hard - during the Mutiny, the Mahars had joined the army and shown

⁷ Singh, S.R., op.cit., p.260.

themselves worthy of the confidence of government. But the army had further been barred to them and this had reduced their status to the condition of the menials. Even in the matters of justice, they were being treated with discrimination. The petitioners requested to open the various employments at the disposal of the British Government, provide educational facilities for their children, open the military and police departments to the Mahars, and also provide them other amenities. The petition was signed by 1858 persons representing almost all the districts of the Presidency of Bombay.

In the wake of such a political consciousness in the Depressed classes, the nationalists visualized it necessary to seek their cooperation and to extend them support. Some other factors that might have influenced the nationalists for paying attention to these classes could be that many of them had either visited other countries or read accounts of their societies and their knowledge of the other societies of the world must have broadened the social and political horizons of these individuals. The political scene in the country^{was} ripe to take up programmes for the elevation of the Depressed classes or at least to support such programmes. Two of the events that would have further precipitated the political sensitivity in the Depressed classes during this period were the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the conduct of the Census of India in 1911.

(i) Morley-Minto Reforms and the Depressed Classes

As already discussed earlier, the strong regime of Lord Curzon, had intensified the desire for political advance among the Indians. To pacify the agitated minds, the Government had also planned certain constitutional changes besides taking administrative measures to assert the law. These changes were embodied in the Morley-Minto Reformssm of 1909. Morley-Minto reforms had provided for the association of qualified Indians with Government to a greater extent in deciding public questions. One seat on the Governor-General's Executive Council was reserved for an Indian member. The members of the Executive Councils of the Governors of Madras and Bombay were increased to four. An Executive Council was introduced in Bengal in 1909. The most striking feature of the Act was that it introduced important changes in the composition and functions of the legislative councils. The number of additional members of the Central legislature was raised from sixteen to a maximum of sixty of whom not more than twenty eight were to be nominated from among the officials. The Governor-General had the powers to nominate three non-officials to represent certain specified communities and had also at his disposal two other seats to be filled by nomination. The remaining twenty seven seats were to be filled by non-official elected members, some of whom represented certain special constituencies such as the land owners in seven provinces, the Muhammadans in five provinces and ^{two from} the chambers of Commerce in Calcutta

and Bombay while thirteen others were to be elected by the non-official members of the nine provincial Legislative Councils. In the provincial Legislative Councils, the number of members was raised in major provinces.⁸

An important implication of the Moreley-Minto Reforms was that by conceding to the demand of the Mohammadan community for separate representation by members chosen by the votes of Muslim electorate only, the principle of 'Communal Representation' was introduced which at a later date had become a cardinal political issue and a ground of controversy between the leaders of the Depressed classes and the Indian National Congress. The privilege of separate electorate to the Muslims was in recognition of their being a distinct minority. And such a step, therefore, created a situation wherein the various sub-groups in the Hindu fold would try to get themselves declared as a distinct minority and then claim special rights and privileges. The Depressed classes followed such a course of action for quite sometime.

(ii) The Census of 1911, and the Enumeration of the Depressed Classes

Whereas the Morley-Minto Reforms, 1909, provided a clue to the Depressed classes to claim a separate identity, the Census of 1911 facilitated the same. Prior to 1911, the Census operations broadly enumerated the people according

⁸ Majumdar, R.C., & Others., An Advanced History of India, London, MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1961, Pp.913-14.

to their religions and since the Depressed classes were classified as Hindus, no separate statistics on their population could be known so far. But in the Census Proformae of 1911, a separate column for the identification of the Depressed classes and hilly tribes was created. Such a move of the British Government was suspected as a political manipulation to divide the people and rule them. It was evident that a separate enumeration of the Depressed classes would reduce the population of Hindus. Quite for some time past, some social organisations had started working for the elevation of the Depressed Classes. It was considered as a blow to their efforts and consequently such a policy of the government came under criticism. There were protests from notable sections of the Hindu Society that the Depressed Classes were a part of Hindus and should not be classified separately. The Government issued the following press note to clarify the reasons for creating a separate column to enumerate the Depressed classes.⁹

'The object of the note on the Census returns of Hindus which was recently circulated by the Census Commissioner was not, as has been supposed, to alter the procedure followed at previous Censuses in filling in the religious column of the Schedules or in tabulating the results. There will be no change in this respect. The statement of all persons enumerated as to their religion will be accepted.

⁹Gait, E.A., Press Communique, dated 11th December 1910, Proceedings, January Nos.31-43, Part B, Census, 1911, Education Deptt., p.15.

Those who claim to be Hindus will be entered as such whatever their castes or tribes may beMembers of the low castes such as Mehtar, do not always claim to be Hindus; and Hindu enumerators, sometimes, object to enter them as such. In these cases the practice has been and will continue to be to class them as Hindus in the course of tabulation. The object of the note was to consult provincial Superintendents as to whether it would be possible to give an estimate of the number of persons thus included who cannot strictly be regarded as Hindus and if so what tests should be applied in selecting the castes for the purpose of these estimates'.

The representations on this issue were thereafter ignored and the Census was conducted. It appears that no test or criteria for the identification of the Depressed classes could clearly be laid down by the Census Superintendent as the problem of finding a criteria for the identification of the Depressed classes had again been raised in the subsequent Census operations. As a result of Census, 1911, the various British provinces had data regarding the castes considered as 'Depressed Classes' in particular areas and also their approximate population. Secondly, the Census operations had also enlivened a political controversy whether the Depressed classes were separate from Hindus or an integral part of the Hindu Society.

Political Demands for the Social
Elevation and Educational Advancement
of the Depressed Classes.

The Morley-Minto Reforms, the Census of 1911, the debates in the Provincial Assemblies, the speeches made on the public platforms, the activities of voluntary organisations that had taken up social reform work for the elevation of the Depressed classes, etc. had precipitated

issues regarding the political status of the Depressed classes. This as well led to a political thinking on the ways and means to enlist the support to these classes by both the groups, i.e. the British officials and the Nationalists. Both the groups considered that one of the ways to improve the condition of the Depressed classes would be through promotion of education among them. The Nationalist's opinion was to create educational opportunities for them at par with other sections of the society and as would be seen from the activities of the various organisations, the emphasis was on an extension of elementary education among these classes. Though the British Government did not make any policy statement regarding their motives for extension of education among these classes, Sir O. Sankaran Nair's confidential note on the subject hints towards some motives that might be prevailing underneath the policy making of the British Government. Sir O. Sankaran Nair pleaded for creating facilities for the higher education of the Depressed classes with the purpose of seeking political support from these classes. The following extracts taken from his note show his thinking on the advantages that would accrue to the British Government by extending higher education among these classes.¹⁰

¹⁰ Sir O. Sankaran Nair., Note on Education in India, Delhi, — reference 1916, Education Programmes, August, 1916, No. 51.

(a) Sir O. Sankaran Nair's Views on the Political Advantages of Educating the Depressed Classes

'When education is in the hands of Hindus and Mohammadans, it is only the superior classes who are its recipients. The caste Hindu dominates the aided Hindu Institutions, Sanskrit learning forms his mentality, English learning furnishes his armoury. He was the ruler in ancient days, his place is now taken by the Englishman, he belongs to a privileged class. No privileged class likes its supremacy overthrown. In his schools, therefore, even if there is no formal exclusion of the lower classes, their admission is certainly not encouraged. There are millions of low caste Hindus who have absolutely no chance of receiving any English Education and whole communities of others are outside the pale.....

.....It is not, therefore, in the interests of their civilization and national progress that education should be under the control of a privileged class who are interested in keeping large masses of the children of the country in ignorance.....

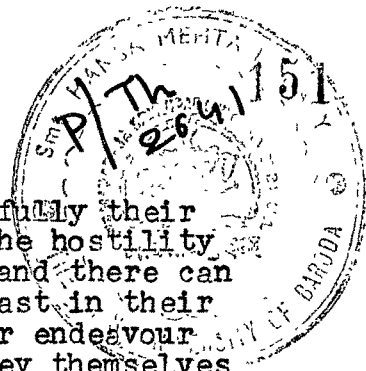
..... If English Education is imparted to the lower classes, they will be under the influence of not only men of the present type of leaders, which they already are but also of others as well. These members of the lower classes who have received English education will get into touch with the corresponding English educated members of the other classes who speak a different vernacular.....

The Hindu lower classes will grow a consciousness of their moral, religious and economic servitude, and will learn that without the permanence and assistance of British Government, they have little chance of justice at the hands of the superior classes or of their present leaders. Once, the low classes get into touch with one another, they will form a strong body of legal opinion dependent on and in hearty sympathy with the Government. This awakening to a sense of their present servitude and, necessity of cooperation will result from British education. Such education is also essential for the emancipation of the lower classes.....

It is also necessary that we must enable as many among these classes as possible to avail themselves

of higher education. They will realize fully their social and economic degradation due to the hostility of the other classes based on religion, and there can be little doubt that they will be steadfast in their loyalty to the British Govt. and in their endeavour to impress the lower classes to which they themselves belong with the possibility of any amelioration in their conditions only under the British Government. Those who receive higher education amongst them will also protect these classes from the influence of the revivalists and strengthen the hands of these amongst the high classes.'

The above note of Sir Nair affords an example to show how education can serve as a political dividend to the benefactor. There is no further evidence available whether the British Government towed its educational policy with such political motives or not because for a very long period it had not created any special facilities for the higher education of the Depressed classes. There appears to be some truth in Sir Sankaran Nair's argument that higher education would create a realization in the Depressed classes regarding their economic and social degradation since the country had already seen that the educated middle class that were supposed to act as intermediaries between the British Officials and the Indian subjects had turned against their rulers and started demanding their say in economic, social and political matters. But Sir Nair's prediction that higher education could modify the behaviour of a class of people so as to create particular political attitudes in them is a matter of personal judgement. It may, however, be recalled that Macaulay had also rested his assumptions upon a similar line while recommending the extension of European knowledge



and a policy of Downward Filtration Theory to India but by this time the myth of his assumptions had been exploded. Sir Nair's opinion that one of the advantages of higher education to the Depressed classes would be to unite them as a distinct minority is again attributing a political objective to higher education. In India, where the languages of the people differ from one part of the country to another, it was necessary to have a common language for an exchange of ideas on a common platform. This language could only be English, the medium of instruction at the higher stage of education. And it was absolutely necessary for the Depressed classes to create such national platforms from which they could claim inter-provincial unity and thus the right of being called a distinct minority in the country. Further, higher education which is more or less an extension of general education is never planned with any political motives, but it tends to create political consciousness in the people as an outcome. This is largely so because political consciousness is a form of one's consciousness about the conditions of the community or the society and one's knowledge of contemporary societies through education provides opportunities to compare and contrast the various situations. Higher education, therefore, tends to make individuals more sensitive to the environment.

(b) Representations of Depressed Class Organisations to Ediwin Montague

Sir Nair's predicted role of higher education for creating class consciousness was, perhaps, based on his observations of the general attitudes of the nationalists towards the British government. One event after the other had precipitated the dissatisfaction of the nationalists towards the British Government. To satisfy the wide spread demands of the Indians for constitutional reforms, Mr. Ediwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India, had made the famous announcement in the House of Commons on the 20th August, 1917, that 'the policy of His Majesty's Government , with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the Administration and the gradual development of self governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'¹¹

Mr. Montague came to India to ascertain the public opinion in November 1917. Organisations with various shades of public opinion and interests represented their cases and put forth their demands before him. It was perhaps for the first time in the political history of India that some institutions of the Depressed classes had represented their

¹¹ Majumdar and Others, op.cit., 8, p.915.

case for restoring to them equal political rights and privileges as enjoyed by other communities in India. The Panchma Kavli Abhivarthi Sangh, a Madras Presidency Untouchables Association, depreciated any political change and appealed to the Government to save them from the yoke of Brahmins.¹² The Madras Adi Dravida Jana Sangh, representing six million people, made a vigorous protest against the Caste Hindus who hated them as lepers and denied them any chance of betterment in their lives.¹³ There was also a strong representation from the organisations of the Untouchables from Bengal.¹⁴ The Depressed Classes Mission Society had convened a Conference in November, 1917 under the Chairmanship of Sir N.A.Chandravakar. The conference passed the following resolutions:¹⁵

1. The population of the Depressed classes in India is very degraded owing to the treatment and as they are behind the rest of the people in point of education, being unable to secure fair opportunities for their improvement, this public meeting of the Depressed classes strongly feels that in the scheme of reform and reconstitution of the legislative council which government may be pleased to adopt, due regard be paid to the interests of the said classes.
2. That the government be prayed for the adoption of a compulsory and free system of education..... for social elevation of any community depends upon the universal spread of education..... and that degradation of the Depressed classes is due to their illiteracy and ignorance.

¹²Keer,D., Dr.Ambedkar Life and Mission, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1962, p.33.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Dua,R.P., Social Factors in the Birth and Growth of the Indian National Congress Movement, Delhi, S.Chand & Co., 1967, Pp.98-99.

3. That the Indian National Congress be requested to pass at its forthcoming session a distinct and independent resolution for removing all the disabilities.....The disabilities social in origin amount in law and practice to political disabilities and as such fall legitimately within the political mission and propaganda of the Indian National Congress.
4. Prays all Hindus of the higher castes, who claim political rights to take steps for the purpose of removing the blot of degradation from the Depressed classes, which has subjugated these classes to the worst treatment in their own country.

Sir, N.A. Chandravarkar had also interviewed Sir Montague on behalf of the Depressed classes Mission Society of India.¹⁶

As would be seen from the above Resolutions of the Depressed Classes Mission Society, provision of Educational facilities was included in the political demands of the Depressed classes. It appears that by this time, the Depressed Classes were politically divided into two streams i.e. pro-British and pro-Nationalist and there were, of course, differences of opinion and approach between them from time to time. But both the sides regarded creation of educational facilities as of immense value to the Depressed classes.

(c) The First Resolution of the Indian National Congress for the Removal of Disabilities of the Depressed Classes.

The Indian National Congress which had now been insisting on having a definite social creed for it, took a

¹⁶Keer, op.cit., 12.

stock of the happenings in the country and considered that any programme for the political emancipation of Indians would be futile unless steps for the elevation of the Depressed classes were taken simultaneously. At its Calcutta Session in 1917, it passed the following resolution to this effect,¹⁷

This Congress urges upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the Depressed classes, the disabilities being of the most variations and oppressive character, subjecting these classes to considerable hardships and inconvenience.

(d) All India Conference of the Depressed Classes.

The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India held an All India Depressed Classes Conference on March 23rd and 24th, 1918 in Bombay. On this occasion, His Highness Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gackwad of Baroda, presided over the conference. It was attended by prominent Indian leaders such as Vithal Bhai Patel, M.R. Jaikar, Babu Bipin Chander Pal, and others. Messages from Rabindra Nath Tagore, His Holiness Sankaracharya of Dwarka were received. The Chairman of the reception committee Sir Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar described the objectives of the conference as 'appealing to the conscience of the country, awakening its reason, its heart and asking the whole of India to remove the blot of untouchability.'¹⁸

¹⁷ Report of the Thirty Second Session (Calcutta, 1917) of the Indian National Congress, para 15.

¹⁸ Keer, op.cit., 12. Pp.36-37.

The Maharaja of Baroda said that the ignorant prejudices and class fanaticism could not for ever withstand the pressure of scientific thought and forces of social regeneration which were remoulding the outlook of thousands of people of India. Lok Manaya Tilak and A.V.Thakkar had also attended the meeting the next day. Supporting the resolution, Tilak had said that untouchability was a disease and it must be removed.¹⁹ The All India Conference concluded its session by drawing an All India Anti-untouchability Manifesto signed by all the prominent leaders pledging that they would not observe untouchability in every day affairs.

e. Gandhiji's Concern for the Depressed Classes

Gandhiji had started his mission to eradicate Untouchability from Hindu society and elevate the Depressed classes as early as 1917. By 1919, he had brought the Congress Organisation (Indian National Congress) under his influence and this had enabled him to pursue his political struggle based on a social philosophy. Gandhiji announced that untouchability was a distortion of the caste system and launched an unflinching struggle against untouchability.²⁰ He gave a practical proof of what he preached by admitting an untouchable family to his Ashram and himself doing

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Dua, op.cit., 15, p.100.

scavanging. He was of the firm opinion that any reform for these classes would be successful if taken up from within the society. Replying to such supporters of the Depressed classes who considered that it was only the British Government that could restore legal rights to them, Mahatma Gandhi argued:

It is one thing for the law to lay down injunctions, it is another thing for these injunctions to make a people a little better which is either only a pious sentiment or a hook.....The Elevation of the Depressed classes depends much more on the actual betterment of their moral and material condition than a mere recognition of equal political status. What has the government done for the education of the Depressed classes who form one-fifth of the total population of the country? Facts and figures tell us that over two hundred and seventy millions of the total population of India are illiterate and hardly one percent of the literates belong to this unfortunate class. The few institutions that exist here and there for the children of the Panchmas and other untouchabilities are mostly the result of the efforts of a few patriotic Indians of such maligned castes and of some religious reform associations like the Theosophical Society, the Social Service League etc.²¹It is vain to imagine that there will be any satisfaction, if you obtain any respect by force. Unless the high caste man recognises the equality of Panchma, the latter will get no real satisfaction by merely forcing his touch or presence on the former.....force is no remedy.²²

Regarding the approach that could suit best in raising the status of the Depressed classes, Mahatma Gandhi held the views that²³

'There are three courses open to these Downtrodden members of the nation. For their impatience they may call in the assistance of the slave owning

²¹Gandhi, M.K., Depressed Classes and the Hallucination of Govt. Sympathy, Young India, Dec.8, 1920, Issue.

²²Ibid.

²³Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 27th Oct., 1920 issue.

government. They will get it but they will fall from the frying pan into the fire. By seeking government aid they will be used for suppressing their own kith and kin.....The second is rejection of Hinduism and wholesome conversion to Islam and Christianity. If the inhuman treatment of the panchmas were a part of Hinduism; its rejection would be a paramount duty both for them and others. Conversion, therefore, is not a remedy.....The third is self-help and self-dependence, with such aid as the non Panchama Hindus will render of their own, not as a matter of patronage but as a matter of duty. The better way, therefore, for the Panchamas is to join the great national movement that is now going on for throwing off the slavery of the present government. It is easy enough for the panchama friends to see that the non-cooperation against this evil government presupposes cooperation between the different sections forming the Indian Nation. The Hindus must realize that if they wish to offer successful non-cooperation against the government, they must make common cause with the panchamas, even as they have made common cause with the Musalmans.

Gandhiji did not consider it impossible to improve the existing attitudes in the society against these classes. He felt that a handful of zealous volunteers could do more than the government. In so far as the social reform within the Depressed classes was considered, Gandhiji held the opinion,²⁴

'give me a hundred determined and disciplined panchamas, who vowing to abstain from violence, are resolved to suffer and sacrifice themselves for the sake of their community in order that this untouchability may for ever be wiped out, the questions will be solved and the nation saved from dishonour and vilence'.

Gandhiji desired^{for} the creation of special amenities for the Depressed classes so as to counter the iⁿsolance of the

²⁴Ibid., June 30, 1920 Issue.

orthodox Hindus. Rather, he was of the belief that a national government would look after all such interests.²⁵

'If I had a truly national legislative, I would answer Hindu Insolence by erecting special and better wells for the exclusive use of the suppressed classes and by erecting better and more numerous schools for them, so that there would not be a single member of the suppressed classes left without a school to teach their children. But I must wait for that better day'.

f. The Non-cooperation Movement and the Educational Cause of the Depressed Classes.

The famous 'Non-Cooperation Movement' started by the Indian National Congress in 1920 had gained momentum under the leadership of Gandhiji. One of the steps to give a lead in the matter was to boycott the government controlled and aided educational institutions. One of the resolutions passed in the special Calcutta session had advised for 'the gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by the government and in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of National schools and colleges in the various provinces.'²⁶ In pursuance of this Resolution, the educational institutions patronized by the British Government were boycotted and the National Institutions were opened. The establishment of the National Educational Institutions was in a way the introduction of National system of education on the Indian soil. It may be recalled here that

²⁵Gandhi, op.cit.,23.

²⁶Dikshit, S.S., Nationalism and Indian Education, Delhi, Sterling Publishers Pvt.Ltd., 1966, p.152.

the original indigenous institutions prior to the establishment of the British System of Education were opposed to the admission of the Depressed classes in the schools. With the creation of the new institutions i.e. the National Educational Institutions, doubts were raised in the minds of many a people that these institutions might replicate the old tradition and disallow or discourage the Depressed Class pupil's admission in them. Deenbandhu C.F. Andrews addressed the following question to Gandhiji on this issue,²⁷

'Will our national schools and colleges be open to the Depressed classes? I have no personal doubt in this matter, but I feel that the time has come for a public declaration'.

The query was referred to the senate by Gandhiji which resolved to the effect that in accordance with the constitution of the senate, no institution that especially excluded the Depressed classes could be included as the national institutions.²⁸

g. Disbelief in Untouchability Declared
as a Condition to Congress Membership

To intensify the campaign against Untouchability, the 36th session of the Indian National Congress held at Ahmedabad under the acting Presidentship of Hakim Ajmal Khan had decided that no one would be accepted as a Congress volunteer who would not sign the following pledge:²⁹

²⁷Gandhi, M.K., Young India, Dec.8, 1920 Issue.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Dua, op.cit., 15, p.101.

'With God as witness I solemnly declare that as a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions seek personal contact and endeavour to render service to the submerged classes.

Later on, this Congress Resolution was improved and since February, 1922, removal of untouchability became an integral part of the programmes of the Indian National Congress. Indian National Congress played an important role in the functioning of the provincial governments and since the elevation of the Depressed classes was made an integral part of Congress manifestoes, launching of the schemes and programmes for the educational advancement of the Depressed classes also became a feature of its programmes.

Demands for Compulsory Primary Education
and their Implications for the Education
of the Depressed Classes.

Universalization of primary education takes into its scope the extension of education to the masses. The element of compulsion in the enforcement of universalization envisages a responsibility of the state for creating proper educational facilities on one hand and ^{also} a consciousness on the part of the parents, to spare the child from the domestic activity and send him to the school. Thus an application of universal and compulsory primary education takes into its scope the extension of education to all areas and to all the communities-civilized or backward. In the Indian context it also meant extending educational facilities even to the Depressed classes, hilly tribes, criminal tribes, nomadic races residing in remote

inhabitations. Thus the demands for compulsory primary education made by the Nationalists in the early part of the 20th century implied the provisions of education to the Depressed classes as well, even though they were not mentioned by specific categories in the debates in Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies. The Movement for demanding legislation of Compulsory Primary Education had been launched in the early years of Twentieth Century even though the first great occasion to demand compulsory primary education was the representation of Jotirao Phoolley to the Indian Education Commission. The Commission had not accepted the request and therefore did not recommend for Compulsory Primary Education. One of the reasons advanced by it for refusal for recommending a system of Compulsory Education was:³⁰

'Compulsory Education would involve the adoption of radical social measures (such as compelling girls to attend schools or requiring Depressed classes to attend the schools along with caste Hindus) which would be contrary to the policy of religious neutrality which the government had deliberately adopted'.

But the adoption of the principle of compulsory education in England in 1870, the socio-religious movements of the later half of the Nineteenth Century had intensified the public desire for the legislation of Compulsory Primary Education. Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaikwad of Baroda had introduced

³⁰ Saiyidian, K.G., and Others., Compulsory Education in India, UNESCO, 1952, p.20.

compulsory primary education in a part of his state as an experimental measure in 1893 and then extended it to the state as a whole in 1906. The Baroda experiment served as a source of argument regarding the feasibility of the legislation and the nationalists pressed upon the government for enforcing compulsory education. The agitation had reached its climax by 1912. A great exponent of this demand was Shri G.K. Gokhale, who, as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, made heroic attempts to persuade government to accept the ideal of Compulsory Education.³¹ In his speech on the last day of the discussion of the Bill in 1912, Gokhale explained the role that mass education could play in the life of the people as:³²

'No one is so simple as to imagine that a system of universal education will necessarily mean an end to all our ills or that it will open out to us a new heaven and a new earth. Men and women will still continue to struggle with their imperfections and life will still be a scene of injustice and suffering of selfishness and strip. Poverty will not be banished because illiteracy has been removed and the need for patriotic or philanthropic work will not grow any the less. But with the diffusion of universal education the mass of our countrymen will have better chance in life. With universal education there will be hope of better success for all efforts, official or non official, for the amelioration of the people - their social progress their moral improvement, their economic well being. I think, my Lord, with universal education, the mass of the people will be better able to take care of themselves against the exactions of unscrupulous money-

³¹Nurralah and Naik, op.cit., 5, p.534.

³²Ibid., p.538.

lenders or against the abuses of official authority by petty men in power. My Lord, with 94 percent of our countrymen sunk in ignorance, how can the advantages of sanitation or thrift be properly appreciated, and how can the industrial efficiency of the worker be improved? With ninety four percent of the people unable to read or write, how can the evil of superstition be effectively combated and how can the general level of life in the country be raised?

Sunk at the lowest ebb of the masses were the Depressed classes and a review of Gokhale's arguments in the context of poor living conditions of the Depressed classes would show that the legislation of compulsory primary education was a dire need for the elevation of these communities. Though Gokhale had not particularly mentioned the advantages of compulsory primary education to the Depressed classes but his plea for universalization of primary education well included the interests of these classes. Gokhale's Bill was lost but Gokhale's efforts were not entirely in vain. They considerably strengthened the movement in favour of mass education, and they awakened government to their duty regarding the education of the masses. The governmental participation in the expansion of primary education now onwards could indirectly be due to the pressures exerted by Gokhale and other nationalists. As would be seen the expansion of general education in the masses had its tremendous value for the expansion of education among the Depressed classes.

The Efforts of the Voluntary Agencies
for Promoting Education among the
Depressed Classes

During the period 1904-1922, the national leaders had tried their best to pressurize and persuade the orthodox

Hindus to change their attitudes and it was as a result of their initial efforts that the amelioration of the Depressed classes was being accepted as a social reform programme. Some voluntary social organisations had also been established to work actively for the educational and economic advancement of the Depressed classes. Two of these organisations i.e. the Depressed Class Mission Society of India, Bombay and the Arya Samaj in Northern India had spread their activities over large areas and had opened many educational institutions for the Depressed classes.

a) The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India

The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India was founded in Bombay in 1906, by Shri Karam Vir Shinde. This was, perhaps, the first organised attempt for the uplift of the Depressed classes. Dwelling upon the need to organise such a society, Mr. Shinde was of the view that it was needed to make a vigorous effort for the elevation of the Depressed classes. He called for a special solution beyond that of their education in the ordinary sense and said that a new and indigenous mission alone was likely to effect a nucleus for this special solution rather than any mechanical agency such as that of the Government or the foreign Christian Missions.³³

³³ Singh, S.R., op.cit., Pp.260-61(quoted from I.S.B., Vol.XVI, Pp.569-71.)

The objective of the Depressed classes Mission Society was announced as:³⁴

'The object of the Society shall be to maintain a Mission which shall seek to elevate the social as well as the spiritual condition of the Depressed classes viz. the Mahars, Chambhars, Pariahs, Nam sudras, Dheds, and all other classes treated as 'untouchable' in India, by

- (i) Promoting education,
- (ii) Providing work,
- (iii) Remedying their social disabilities,
- (iv) Preaching to them principles of liberal Religion, personal character and good citizenship'.

It was proposed that the following type of institutions should be opened for the upliftment of the Depressed classes.³⁵

- (i) Freeday schools for both boys and girls teaching upto the Marathi Vth and the English IIIrd;
- (ii) Night schools for the working people;
- (iii) Reading room and Library;
- (iv) Charitable Medical Dispensary;
- (v) Youngmen's Gymkhana;
- (vi) Mothers Cloth Sewing Centre;
- (vii) Prayer and Lecture Hall.

It was further proposed to house and conduct these institutions in suitable buildings carefully selected in colonies, inhabiting mostly the Depressed classes communities,

³⁴Farquhar, J.N., op.cit., 6, Pp.372-73 (quoted from I.S.R., Vol. XVII, Pp.166.)

³⁵Singh, S.R., op.cit., Pp.262-64.

in Bombay. The resident missionary teachers were to be provided quarters in that building. They were generally to spend three hours of teaching in the day school, an hour in the night school, two hours in visiting the houses of Depressed classes by day and one hour in visiting the houses of these classes by night. There were to be five hours of the tuition in the day school and two hours in the night school. The Society planned to open the following educational institutions for the Depressed classes³⁶

- (i) A model middle school for boys;
- (ii) A model middle school for girls;
- (iii) An industrial school and workshop;
- (iv) A boarding house with free board for only such of the Depressed class boys and girls from the Muffussil as were poor and promising;
- (v) A system of scholarship examinations for the encouragement of pupils of those communities, in the important Municipal Schools all over Maharashtra.

It appears from the various reports of the period that these proposals of the Society could not materialise immediately. The annual report of the National Social Conference mentioned that the Depressed Classes Mission Society had established one day school, two night schools with a small number of boys and girls, and a free dispensary.

³⁶Ibid.

The Depressed Classes Mission Society established another unit by the name of Nirashrit Sewa Sadan, on 22nd May, 1907.³⁷ Its object was to train such of the high caste people as would like to devote themselves to some useful and charitable work for the upliftment of the Depressed classes and to maintain and provide work for such devoted people after their being trained in the Sadan. Day and Night schools were to be maintained by the Seva Sadan Missionaries. It was also proposed to start a special night class for grown up girls who during the day time worked in mills. A Sunday class was taken every Sunday morning when moral and religious instruction was given in the form of stories. In the Sewing class, besides Sewing and Embroidary teaching, religious instruction was also imparted. A regular feature of the Nirashrit Sewa Sadan was that every day early in the morning bhajans were sung, and once a week, divine service was offered in the Sadan. Meetings were also held on Saturdays when lectures on moral and social subjects were delivered. Kirtans (recitals and community singing) were performed and reading was given from the works of the saints. On Sundays, special meetings of the women folk of the Depressed classes were arranged.³⁸

By October 1909, the Depressed classes Mission Society of India, Bombay, had expanded its activities and was doing

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

exemplary work. In October 1909, meetings were held in many places such as Dhulia, Ratnagiri, Bijapur, Poona, Godag, Thana. The Mission had branches at Poona, Manmad, Igatpuri, Indore, Akola, Dapoli, Amraoti, Mangalore, and Madras. Just then two new branches were established at Mahableshwar and Nasik.

Commenting on the work of the Depressed classes Mission Society of India, the Indian Social Reformer had observed: 'The wide spread activities on behalf of the Depressed classes were amongst the most cheering signs of the times'.³⁹ The Depressed classes Mission Society was also publishing a monthly organ 'The Purity Servant'.⁴⁰

In October, 1912, a Conference was convened by the Depressed Classes Mission Society in Fergusson College, Poona under the presidentship of Sir Rama Krishna Bhandarkar.⁴¹ Its objects were to provoke deliberate thought upon the practical topics regarding the elevation of the Depressed classes in Maharashtra; to secure cooperation of other educational and philanthropic bodies with the Depressed classes Mission; and to plan certain schemes which may help in creating sympathies among the masses with the work of the society. The subjects discussed at the Conference were the following.⁴²

³⁹Ibid., (quoted)

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid, Pp.267-68.

⁴²Ibid.

- (i) The necessity of a free boarding house in connection with the society's school in Poona Camp,
- (ii) The urgency of more missionaries and funds for the society,
- (iii) The outlines of the literary and industrial education of the Depressed Classes,
- (iv) The cooperation of the municipalities and other educational and philanthropic bodies.
- (v) The cooperation of the education department and other prominent governmental institutions,
- (vi) The cooperation of the liberal members of the principal religious dominations with the mission in its social and spiritual work,
- (vii) Special needs and grievances of the Depressed classes to be dwelt upon by the prominent members of those classes themselves.

A session of the Conference was exclusively devoted to women's meeting. It was attended by about two hundred ladies of the Depressed classes and about fifty ladies belonging to the higher classes. Mrs. Ramabhai Ranade presided over the meeting and she exhorted upon the women of the Depressed classes to avail themselves of the advantages offered to them by the lady workers of the Mission.

An estimate of the activities of the Depressed Classes Mission Society can be had from the following summarized version of its activities, submitted to the Governor of Bombay on the 30th July, 1913.⁴³

⁴³Farquar, J.N., op.cit., 6, p.371(quoted).

'The Society has under it fifteen centres of work in and outside the Bombay Presidency, viz. Bombay, Poona, Hubli, Nagpur, Yeotmal, Thana, Satara, Mahabaleshwar, Malvan, Dapoli, Akola, Amraoti, Bhavnagar, Mangalore, and Madras. Of these the first five being incorporated branches, are under the direct control of the Executive Committee of the Society and the rest, being only affiliated, are independent in the management of their own local affairs. The Headquarters are in Parel, Bombay and the Society is registered as a Charitable Body under Act XXI of 1860. It has at present in all thirty educational institutions of which five are Boarding Houses, four are technical institutions, one is a middle school and the remaining are Primary Schools. The number of pupils on the roll on the 31st December last year was 1,231 and the total expenditure of the Society on its educational work last year was Rs.20,304 Annas 11, pies 5, for which the total Grant-in-Aid received from the Government and the local municipalities for the year was Rs.1,956. Of the thirty institutions, sixteen are incorporated and fourteen are affiliated to the Society'.

It will be seen that the Depressed classes Mission Society had done quite a good work for the educational advancement of the Depressed classes in many areas of Western and Southern India. In other parts of the country organisations on the model of the Depressed classes Mission Society, Bombay were being established. For example, the Bengal Depressed Classes Mission was founded in 1908.⁴⁴ Its main activities were spreading education amongst the Depressed classes of the Bengal especially the Namasudra caste of Jessore and Khulana.

b) The Arya Samaj

At the time the Depressed Classes societies were engaged in educational and other ameliorative activities

⁴⁴Singh, S.R., op.cit., 3, p.267.

for the Depressed classes in the Western, Southern and Eastern parts of the country, the Arya Samaj had taken up this social activity in the Northern parts especially in the Province of Punjab. The philosophy of Arya Samaj has already been discussed earlier. One of the important activities of the Arya Samaj was its Shuddhi Movement, i.e. reclaiming back the Depressed classes to the privileges of the upper castes. The low castes were administered 'Gyatri', a sacred prayer which hitherto before, could only be recited by Brahmins and other upper castes. Secondly, the Arya Samaj allowed the Depressed classes to wear the sacred thread and entitled them to 'Upanayana Ceremony'. It also arranged functions where the people of the upper and lower classes interdined and in a few places even helped in solemnizing intercaste marriages. Lala Lajpat Rai, a prominent Arya Samaj Leader, did commendable work for the amelioration of the Depressed classes during this period. Lala Lajpat Rai was a nationalist and a follower of Gandhiji. He was, therefore, under the twin influence of two organisations that had simultaneously taken up the cause of these classes. Addressing a conference in Karachi (Sind) in 1912, Lala Lajpat Rai urged upon the Hindu Society to interest themselves in the upliftment of the Depressed classes.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Lala Lajpat Rai, The Arya Samaj, Lahore, Uttar Chand Kapoor & Sons, 1932, Pp.259-61.

'No slavery is more harmful than that of mind and no sin is greater than to keep human beings in perpetual bondage. It is bad enough to enslave people, but to create and perpetuate circumstances, which prevent them from breaking their chains and becoming free is infamous. No man or number of men have a right to do this and they deserve the severest condemnation of all who have a conscience.The highest interest of the nation, therefore, requires that the best in us should be devoted to the undoing of the mischief wrought by us or our ancestors. We owe a heavy debt to these Depressed classes, that debt must be paid as soon as it is possible. It is not a question of charity or good-will but one of national self-preservation'.

The Arya Samaj had also undertaken to do practical work for the elevation of the Depressed classes in Punjab. To cite some instances, a society for the uplift of the Meghas called 'the Meghudhar Sabha' was formed to look after the education of Meghs in the district of Sialkote.⁴⁶ This society maintained a central school and several primary schools. The central school had a splendid building on the construction of which a sum of Rupees forty thousand had been spent. In the districts of Gurdaspur and Hussainpur, thousands of the Depressed classes were reclaimed by the Arya Samaj and several organisations were established to look after their educational and other needs. In Lahore, similar work was undertaken for the Hindu sweepers and chamars.⁴⁷ Around 1912, Lala Lajpat Rai had purchased a

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

large plot of land in Lahore at a cost of Rupees twenty one thousand to build a central home and a central school.

Giving an account of the work taken up for the amelioration of the Depressed classes, Lala Lajpat Rai had said:⁴⁸

'We have used a portion of the balance of femine fund raised by me in 1908 towards the uplift of the Depressed classes and are maintaining some primary schools scattered over the province for the benefit of these classes. Some of these are receiving government grants and others will soon earn them. The funds thus realised will then be available for other schools. There is hardly any district in the province where some work in connection with the uplift of the Depressed classes is not being done, though in most of the cases it only forms a part of the Arya Samaj. But the best and the most cheering part of this work is that in some places the orthodox party have become quite sympathetic towards the Depressed classes and are quite in sympathy with the Arya Samaj.

At the Punjab Hindu Conference, a resolution was unanimously passed to invite the Depressed classes to send their representatives in future. In Lahore and in some other places, the high caste Hindus had started sending their children to the schools maintained mainly for the Depressed classes.

In the United provinces, the Arya Samaj also worked actively for the elevation of the Depressed classes. A large number of Domes (one of the most despised castes of the Depressed classes) were reclaimed by the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samajists had also been maintaining schools for Chamar boys.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.267.

The degree of untouchability had considerably been reduced due to the efforts of Arya Samaj and such other philanthropic organisations in Punjab and several other parts of the Northern regions. It was reported that untouchability had almost disappeared in Northern India. In public meetings, processions, conferences, congresses, fairs, no distinction was observed between caste Hindus and the untouchables.⁴⁹

Educational Progress of the Depressed
Classes in the Provinces of British India

The Period 1904-1922 is broadly classifiable into two parts i.e. 1904-1912, and 1913-1922. The period 1904-1912 was more characterized by controversies and agitations but during the period 1913-1922, attempts to expand education were made though the zeal with which these attempts were planned, was partly foiled by the World War I and the Non Cooperation Movement of the Indian National Congress.

During the period 1902-1912, some controversies such as the qualitative versus quantitative development of education, the enforcement of compulsory education, etc, were raised and no radical measures for the development of education among the Depressed classes were especially planned by the Government of India. The policies with regard to the expansion of education among these classes more or less continued to be similar to those of the previous period.

⁴⁹Ibid.

But some of the provinces had worked quite actively for promoting education among these classes. The educational progress made by the Depressed classes in the various provinces during the period under review was as the following:

a) Madras

The report for the period 1902-07 contains a remark that Panchmas are said to be by no means wanting in intelligence or aptitude for learning, given favourable conditions.⁵⁰

A traditional myth had prevailed in the Hindu Society for a very long period that the Depressed classes lacked in intelligence and aptitude for learning and it was no use educating them. But now these traditional beliefs were losing ground as the Depressed Classes evinced their interest in studies. To promote further expansion of education amongst these classes, the government of Madras had taken the following special measures:

- (i) Reducation of Fees,
- (ii) Enhancement of Grants,
- (iii) Relaxation in certain cases of the departmental rules,
- (iv) Opening of half day schools.

The significance of the above measures was that they encouraged the Depressed classes to educate their children

⁵⁰Orange, H.W., Progress of Education in India, 1902-07, Office of the Director General of Education in India, 1909, Pp.297-310.

on one hand where as they equally motivated the philanthropic organisations to open more institutions for the Depressed classes because of the availability of grants at an enhanced rate. Because of these measures, the number of the unaided schools was considerably reduced. An important step for the promotion of education among these classes was the introduction of half day schools in 1906. It was observed by the educational authorities that children of these classes generally failed to attend schools for full time and therefore, were withdrawn. The half day schools provided two or three hours of work in compulsory subjects and optional instruction in the other hours was provided to such boys who were able to attend the school on full time basis.⁵¹ The enrolment of the Depressed classes was said to have increased by the opening of these schools. Further, much work was also being done by the missionaries for spreading education among the Depressed classes. 'It is still the case', mentions the report for the period 1907-12, 'that Hindus in general take little interest in these people and practically all that has been or is being done to elevate them is the work of missionary bodies among whom, in this connection, the Theosophical Society may not improperly be included, and directly through local boards and indirectly by means of grants-in-aid by the Government.'⁵²

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Sharp, H., Progress of Education in India, 1907-12, Vol.I, Calcutta, Suptd. Govt. Printing India, 1914, Pp.209-262.

Most of the institutions opened for the Depressed classes were primary schools. But the children of the Depressed classes were being also educated in the ordinary schools. At the end of 1912, the special institutions for these classes included 2 training schools, 439 board schools, and a number of mission schools. The annual expenditure on the education of the Depressed classes rose from Rs.4,31,217 in 1907 to Rs.6,07,775 in 1912. To the latter sum, public funds contributed Rs.2,63,072 and private sources Rs.3,27,311, the balance being paid as fees.⁵³

The enrolment of Depressed classes in Madras had increased by about 27 percent between 1902 and 1907 and about 30 per cent between 1907 and 1912. The number of pupils in special schools had reached around 1,00,000 by 1912. The figures of enrolment could as well be an underestimation because it was reported that 'the increase is obscured by the return of pupils under other denominations'.⁵⁴

During 1912-1917, the various provincial governments were asked to collect statistics on the Depressed classes by way of identifying them, enumerating their approximate population and their enrolment in the schools. The report for the period ending 1917 mentions that the castes included as the Depressed classes were Prayar, Pallu, Mala, Madiga and

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Holiya. The population of these classes was 5,6,86,342 and their number in the educational institutions was reported to be as 1,20,607. This gave the percentage of school going population to the general population as 2.13. The average enrolment percentage of the Depressed classes for the British India was 1.04.⁵⁵ The total expenditure on the education of the Depressed classes had risen from Rs.6.08 lakhs in 1912 to Rs.8.74 lakhs in 1917 to which the government contribution was about 4.8 lakhs. The number of departmental schools had increased during the period 1912-17. A new trend that had emerged by 1917 has been reported to be that the Hindu community which had so far been passive to the elevation of the Depressed classes was now evincing greater interest in these classes especially through the offices of the Depressed classes Mission Society.⁵⁶ Of the Christian Missionaries both Roman Catholic and Protestants had been actively working in the Depressed classes and had gained many converts.⁵⁷

The Madras Government had issued three successive orders in 1919, 1920, and 1922 emphasising the necessity for the free admission of boys of the Depressed classes to schools

⁵⁵ Sharp, H., Progress of Education in India, 1912-17, Vol. I, Calcutta, Supdt. Govt. Printing India, 1918, Pp.204-209.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

under public management.⁵⁸ By 1922, the caste prejudices for the education of these classes had started diminishing in most of the places and it was only where the public schools or mission schools had no accommodation for more schools and where there was a large population of the Depressed class communities that special schools for the Depressed classes were established.⁵⁹ In 1922, the Government of Madras took a policy decision to remove the schools from the religious venues. Nearly one hundred and fifty schools situated in temples and rented buildings, the owners of which objected to the admission of Adi-Dravidas were removed to premises accessible to all castes. Such a step removed a very pertinent obstacle to the admission of low castes to schools under public management.⁶⁰

b) Bombay

Bombay was the first province in British India to raise the banner of fraternity and equality in the Hindu social order. In a way, it had spearheaded the movement of spreading education among the Depressed classes. During 1902-1907, the government of Bombay had taken the following special steps to accelerate the expansion of education

⁵⁸Richy, J.A., Progress of Education in India, 1917-22, Vol.I, Calcutta, Suptd. Govt. Printing Press India, 1923, Pp.205-208.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

among these classes:

- (i) Free admission of the Depressed class pupils in the schools,
- (ii) Grants of free gifts in the form of books, slates, etc., and
- (iii) Opening of special schools.

The first two facilities were by way of providing help to the Depressed class parents and children to join the schools and continue education. As already mentioned, one of the pertinent reasons for the non-enrolment as well as for the early withdrawal of children was the poverty of the Depressed classes. The provision of any economic incentives was by way of compensating the cost of education to some degree and these provisions had encouraged these classes to send their children even in the face of caste prejudices. The special schools for these classes were opened largely in areas where their admission to ordinary schools was resisted. The report for the period 1902-07 mentions 'special schools have been opened by boards and it is noticed that the children prefer them to the schools maintained by missionaries for their special benefit'.⁶¹ But one of the drawbacks of the special schools was reported to be that they were manned by untrained and unqualified teachers. Properly qualified and competent teachers generally belonged to the higher castes

⁶¹Orange, op.cit., 50.

and most of them would not like to join on the staff of the special schools for these classes. This want of sympathy of the teachers towards backward races resulted into the failure of some schools as well.⁶² The report contains the remarks of the Inspector of the Central Division of Bombay, that 'The advance in education made by the Depressed classes during the last five years in the face of difficulties like poverty, caste prejudices etc. clearly show that they are gradually beginning to appreciate the efforts of the department and the various christian missions in the direction of educating them and thus lifting them up socially and morally. The facilities afforded by the department in the shape of scholarships, prizes etc. have been chiefly instrumental in increasing a taste for education amongst the Depressed classes.'⁶³

The report for the period 1907-12 contains the remarks that 'the Scholars of the Depressed classes succeeded in passing the vernacular final examination and subsequently gaining admission to the training college. Four members of Depressed communities have received university education and in the Northern division fifteen are in the secondary schools'.⁶⁴

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Sharp, op.cit., 52.

⁶⁴Ibid.

The report also contains an observation of the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay that 'Industrial education was in some cases of greater importance to these castes than literary'.⁶⁵ As already discussed, the occupational structure of the Indian society was caste oriented and that the lower classes generally pursued unskilled industrial activities. A plan to equip these classes with some industrial competence through means of education was in a way to encourage them to take up skilled jobs which were more remunerative than their ancestral jobs. Industrial education could, therefore, be regarded as an important means to improve the economic position of the Depressed classes. But from the subsequent reports it appears that efforts for extending industrial education to these classes were generally not made during the period.

The castes included as Depressed classes in the province of Bombay were: Mahar; Hollya or Dhed; Mung or Madig; Chambhar; chamar or Mochi; Banghi; Dher; Khalpa; Shindava; Turi and Kalga. The population of these Depressed classes at the end of 1917 was 16,35,896 and only 30,568 of them were at school. Accordingly, only 1.87 percent of the total population was at the schools. The percentage was, of course, too low but compared to the All India Average of 1.04

⁶⁵Ibid.

for these classes, it could be regarded as slightly better than the average. Bombay was second to Madras in its educational expansion among the Depressed classes.⁶⁶ At the end of 1917, there were 576 special schools or schools with special classes of which 211 were being maintained by the local boards, 35 by municipalities, and 230 by private agencies. The private agencies constituted mostly the Christian missions but also the Depressed Classes Mission Society of Poona and Bombay.⁶⁷

c) Bengal

In Bengal the lowest classes among Hindus, Muslims and Christians were commonly termed as indignant classes. According to the report for the period ending 1907, the number of these classes under instruction was 41,450 from Hindus, 22,886 from Mohammadans and 2,799 from non-aboriginal native Christians.⁶⁸ Thus, the enrolment of Depressed pupils was 41,450. The report contains Mr. Mornell's remarks on the above statistics of enrolment as: 'Owing to the difficulty of classification, it is impossible to draw any accurate conclusion as to the progress which is being made or even to estimate with any degree of precision how

⁶⁶ Sharp, op.cit., 55.

⁶⁷ Sharp, op.cit., 52.

⁶⁸ Orange, op.cit., 50.

the Depressed classes of the community stand in the matter of education'.⁶⁹ In view of Mr. Mornell's comment, the figures of enrolment quoted above might not be authentic, but they can be regarded as fair approximates. By the end of 1912, the enrolment figures for the depressed classes had gone up to 73,751 but the difficulties of proper classification were again reported. It could be possible that these figures of enrolment also included pupils from some other castes and races not included as Depressed classes.⁷⁰ The report mentions that during the period 1907-1912, the most notable work was being done among the Pans in Angul and the Orissa tributary states. Special schools were erected for the Depressed classes and there were signs of progress of education among these classes in these areas.⁷¹

The various castes and subcastes which were considered as the Depressed classes in Bengal were: Bagdi; Bauri; Bhuinmali; Bhuiya; Bhumij; Chamar; Dhoba; Dom; Dosadh; Hari; Kaora; Kora; Mal; Muchi; Munda; Namsudra; Orian; Pod; Santal; Sunri and Teigar. The population of these castes as returned at the end of 1917 was 67,42,913 and of these 80,952 were at school.⁷² This makes for a percentage of 1.20 of their

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Sharp, op.cit., 52.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Sharp, op.cit., 55.

population at the school.⁷³ As would appear, the report included some of the castes such as Munda, Santal, Orian (which form the scheduled tribes) in the list of the Depressed classes which they were not. This might be a reason for the difficulty of classification as mentioned by Mr. Mornell. Perhaps the criterion adopted for the identification of the Depressed classes by the government of Bengal might have a bias towards the economic backwardness and isolation of these castes rather than their social stigma which could be a better test for the identification of the Depressed classes, or it is just possible that the social scene during that period combined scheduled tribes and scheduled castes together since both of them were considered outside the cultural pale of the four varnas.

By the end of 1917, there was reported to be no great difficulty about the admission of low castes to Primary schools in Bengal. Nevertheless, where they were settled in large numbers, Government opened special schools for them. Among voluntary organisations, the 'Bengal Social Service League' and the 'Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes, Bengal and Assam' had opened 19 and 62 schools respectively for the Depressed classes of Bengal.⁷⁴

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

The report for the period 1917-1922 mentions that the Namsudra community in Bengal was raising its status rapidly, and arguing mainly from its consistent educational advance, was constantly making out a case for being regarded as other than backward.⁷⁵ The case of the Namsudras in Bengal can be regarded as an example of the role of education for the amelioration of the Depressed classes and it was, perhaps, for these reasons that whether it were the missionaries, the Indian philanthropic organisations, the national leaders, the British Government, or the Depressed classes organisations themselves, all of them were of the opinion that proper provision of educational facilities was a necessary step for the social elevation of the Depressed classes.

d) Central Provinces

The reports for the period ending 1907 do not contain any account of the progress of education of the Depressed classes in the Central Provinces, but the reports for the period ending 1912 mention that some progress was being made for the expansion of education among the Depressed classes in the Province. The enrolment of the Depressed class pupils reported to have risen from 15,331 to 16,231 in the primary schools and that the number of Depressed class pupils at the secondary stage had doubled.⁷⁶ But no figures of enrolment

⁷⁵Richey, op.cit., 53.

⁷⁶Sharp, op.cit., 52.

at the secondary stage have been supplied.

The castes considered as Depressed classes in the Central Provinces were Balahi; Basen; Chamar; Dhobi; Ganda; Ghasia; Katia; Kori; Kumhar; Mang; Mehta; Panka; Mehars; their total population^{was} returned as 30,12,389. A number of 26,608 Depressed class pupils were reported to be in the schools at the end of 1917. This constituted only a percentage of 0.89 of the population at the school and was reported to be dismally low.⁷⁷ The same report contains that at the end of 1917, there were 42 special schools in the Central Provinces of which more than half were maintained by missionaries. But the policy of opening special schools received little encouragement from the Government which consistently maintained the principle that the Depressed class boys cannot be excluded from the common schools on grounds of caste prejudice.⁷⁸ The Government of Central Provinces had held the view that the institution of separate schools weakened the principle of caste equality and fostered caste prejudices. It was further reported that the effects of caste prejudices were gradually disappearing and the low caste boys were less often than previously deterred from joining schools for fear of degraded treatment.

⁷⁷Sharp, op.cit., 55.

⁷⁸Ibid.

It appears that the Government had stuck to their policy of caste equality over a long stretch of period. It was reported again in 1922 that the 'Government follows consistently with the policy of the equal rights of all castes to education and lest the opening of special schools should be held to justify the exclusion of Depressed class pupils from the ordinary schools in the same locality, Government has never encouraged the opening of specially designated schools for Depressed classes in the localities in which facilities exist for education in ordinary schools. On the other hand, in localities where the majority of the pupils are drawn from the Depressed classes, forty two vernacular schools ostensibly intended for these classes exist'.⁷⁹

e) Punjab

As already discussed, the Arya Samaj was quite actively working for the elevation of the Depressed classes in Punjab and the caste prejudices had considerably been weakened. There is no mention of the educational progress of the Depressed classes in Punjab during the period 1902-1907 and the reports for the period 1907-1912 only mention the presence of a few schools especially erected for the Depressed classes in the various divisions of Punjab

⁷⁹Richey, op.cit. 58.

Province. In the Delhi Division, there were 27 low caste schools maintained for the chamar communities. Of these 23 were being maintained by the Christian missionaries.⁸⁰

The castes included as Depressed classes in Punjab, their number and the number of their children at school were as the following at the end of 1917.⁸¹

<u>Caste</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Enrolment in the school.</u>
Megh	40,313	2,776
Od	28,611	62
Chamar	8,54,530	63
Ramdaria	1,67,623	13
Mezhbi	19,878	114
Dhobi	1,38,885	2
Mehtarn	68,396	58
Marchee	1,273	2
Ghori	2,800	9
Sweeper	<u>7,85,284</u>	<u>224</u>
Total:	<u>21,07,593</u>	<u>3,453</u>

As would be seen from the above, the spread of education among the Depressed classes was too low. Except for the Meghs

⁸⁰Sharp, op.cit. 52.

⁸¹Sharp, op.cit. 55.

of Punjab among whom considerable work was being done by the Arya Samaj, under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai, the incidence of education in the rest of the castes was negligible. There were in all 44 special schools for the Depressed classes but the movement for the education of the Depressed classes was gaining strength, chiefly through the exertions of christian missions and Arya Samaj. The reports are silent on the causes of low enrolment even when caste prejudices were reported to have lessened. One of the reasons could be the illusion of the Depressed classes to disclose their identity. The Shuddhi movement of Arya Samaj claimed to reclaim them to the 'Varnic' society by entitling them to wear the 'Sacred thread' and recite the 'Gyatri Mantra' and hence they ceased to be Depressed Classes according to the princits of Arya Samaj. Therefore it could be just possible that such of the Depressed classes that had come under the influence of Arya Samaj would not have liked to return themselves as Depressed classes.

The position of the educational expansion among the Depressed classes at the end of 1922 could be made out from the following division wise statistics. It is reported that in the Ambala Division, there were only 15 low caste schools against 30 in 1917, their attendance had further fallen from 703 in 1917 to 410 in 1922. But the number of the Depressed class pupils in the ordinary schools in the same division had risen from 482 to 772. In the Lahore division, the number

of special schools for the Depressed classes was reported as 47 but since these schools had on their rolls 431 Depressed classes and 1,733 high castes children,⁸² they were more or less equivalent to the common schools. Such an admixture of the pupils belonging to the various castes in the common as well as the special schools could be taken as another indication of the fact that the caste apathies were definitely lessening and the purpose for opening separate or special schools for Depressed classes was losing ground.

f) United Provinces

The United Provinces formed a large territory and from the reports of the different periods it appears that, there was not much of educational activity in the Depressed classes in this province. The reports for the period 1902-1907 and 1907-1912 are silent over the progress of education during this period.⁸³ The reports also did not mention the names of the various castes included as Depressed classes but their total population was returned as 83,74,542. At the end of 1917, only a number of 10,924 pupils were reported to be in the schools.⁸⁴ This formed a percentage of 0.13 to the total population of the Depressed Classes.⁸⁵ This

⁸²Richey, op.cit., 53.

⁸³Orange, op.cit., 50; Sharp, op.cit., 52

⁸⁴Sharp, op.cit., 55

⁸⁵Ibid.

percentage was the lowest of all the provinces in the British India, the highest being in Madras i.e. 2.13 and the average of India being 1.04.

The United Provinces Government had taken certain special steps towards the end of 1916 for the educational development among the Depressed classes. The report for the period ending 1916 mentions that, 'In the United Province, boards have recently been required to open special schools without fees for Backward or Depressed classes where there is a demand..... But the results are as yet deplorably small'.⁸⁶ In the next five years the position was reported to have improved. The report for the period 1917-22 shows that public prejudices against the education of the Depressed classes had started lessening, 'the marked increase of attendance of low caste boys in the mixed schools is significant of a lessening prejudice among their school fellows'.⁸⁷ Not only that the Depressed class children were admitted free of resistance to the common schools but public conscious to the cause of the Depressed classes had been aroused and there was a 'growing objection to the present nomenclature of the special schools'.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Richey, op.cit., 53.

⁸⁸Ibid.

Discussing the various causes of irregularity of attendance, it was reported that the public prejudice was not the sole cause for thin attendance rather factors such as the rise in wages also reduced the attendance of the Depressed classes.⁸⁹ Secondly, the Zamindars(land owners) were also averse to elevating these classes and at places the Depressed classes themselves were unambitious.⁹⁰ The lack of ambition on the part of the Depressed classes could also be due to several reasons including their fears of the displeasure of their bread providers. The land owners disfavoured the education of these classes as the same report mentions the remarks of the Chairman of the Etawah Board that 'once the leading members of these communities were sympathetically approached, I found there was a tremendous craving for education.'⁹¹

g) Bihar and Orissa

Bihar and Orissa were, perhaps, the last provinces to come under the influence of social and religious reform movements pertaining to the welfare of the Depressed classes. The report for the period 1902-1912 does not contain any account of the expansion of education among the Depressed classes in this province. The report for the quin-quennium 1912 to 1917 mentions that there were 41 special schools for the

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

Depressed Classes and a sum of Rs.7,590/- was being spent on their education.⁹² By the end of 1917, a total number of 19,841 Depressed class pupils were at school in the province.⁹³

To encourage the cause of the education of the Depressed classes, the Government of Bihar and Orissa had launched a scheme under which small capitation allowance were given to teachers of primary schools for teaching children of the Depressed Classes.

Of the different castes included as Depressed classes were Bhangi; Dom; Halakhar; Hari; Mehtar; and Turi; Ahir Gaura; Bauri; Ghosuria; Ghokha; Kela; Mahuria; Siyal; Kaibarta; Kewat (in Cuttack, Puri and Balasore); Chamar; Dhoba and Muchi (in Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Sambhalpur); Ghasi; Kandra and Pan; Ganda.⁹⁴

h) Assam

The reports for the period 1902-1922 do not contain any accounts of the progress of education of the Depressed classes except the information that towards the end of 1917, the population of the Depressed classes in the province was 27,01,144.⁹⁵ It included a certain number of aboriginal tribe residents in the plain areas. The number of school going

⁹²Sharp, op.cit. 55.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

population of these classes was 32,088 forming 1.18 percent of the total population.⁹⁶

General Picture of the Educational Development
among the Depressed Classes upto 1921.

The above discussion on the educational progress of the Depressed classes in the various provinces of India shows that generally the Depressed classes progressed in matters of education in the country but compared to the general population in the country, they were educationally backward. According to the Census of 1911, the total population of all the backward communities in India was estimated to be around 42.75 millions. The Depressed classes constituted about 31.50 millions of people. The literacy percentage of the Depressed classes is not available but the literary percentage of all the Backward communities was 2.8 as against 6 percent for the general population of the country.

a) General Enrolments

An estimate of the position of the enrolments of the Depressed class pupils in proportion to the population of these classes in the various provinces of India could be obtained from the following table.⁹⁷

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Nurrulah & Naik: op.cit. p.532.

TABLE - II

The Position of Enrolment of the Depressed class pupils at the end of 1917 in the provinces of British India.

Province	Population	No. at School	Percentage
Madras	5686342	120607	2.13
Bombay	1635896	30568	1.87
Bengal	6742913	80952	1.20
United Provinces	8374542	10924	0.13
Punjab	2107293	6906	0.33
Bihar & Orissa	1236300	19841	1.60
Central Provinces and Berar.	3012389	26668	0.89
Assam	2701144	32088	1.18
India	31502819	328554	1.04

Source: From Report 'Progress of Education in India during 1912-17; op.cit., 55.

As would be seen from table II, the development of education among the Depressed classes was maximum in Madras, followed by Bombay, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam respectively. The provinces lagging behind the all India average were Central Provinces and Berar; Punjab, and United Provinces. As already explained earlier, these educational statistics of enrolment could, perhaps, be an

underestimation of their real number because the tendency in many a case and especially in the common schools was to edge away the label of the Depressed classes and not to be identified as untouchables.

b) Stage-wise Enrolments

In so far as the stage-wise progress of education of these classes was concerned, the general education tables did not generally contain any separate performance for the same. It was only during 1917 to 1922, that these tables contained separate columns for the stage-wise and sex-wise distribution of the Depressed class pupils as well. A picture of the stage-wise position of the Depressed classes would be obtainable from the following table.

TABLE - III

Depressed class enrolments vis-a-vis total enrolments of the general population at the various stages of education in 1917-18 and 1921-22 in British India.

Stages of Education 1	Category 2	Enrolments in 1917-18			Enrolments in 1921-22		
		General 3	Depressed classes. 4	Propor- tion 5	General 6	Depressed classes 7	Propor- tion. 8
College stage.	Male	61,427	172	.003	57610	322	.005
	Female	825	-	-	1227	2	.001
	Total	62,252	172	.003	58837	324	.005
High school stage.	Male	224889	2779	.012	212788	2892	.013
	Female	4367	5	.001	5818	40	.007
	Total	229256	2784	.012	218606	2932	.013

(Continued)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Middle school stage	Male	382307	6787	.017	410255	7082	.017
	Female	20092	243	.012	24555	454	.014
	Total	402399	7030	.017	434810	7536	.017

Upper primary stage	Male	554509	16074	.029	495784	16479	.033
	Female	48436	962	.019	50682	1206	.024
	Total	602945	17036	.028	546466	17685	.030

Lower primary stage	Male	4788702	351896	.073	5103720	429981	.085
	Female	1108541	51261	.046	1246961	64587	.052
	Total	5897243	403157	.059	6350681	494568	.076

Special schools	Male	107421	1621	.015	121140	2105	.017
	Female	10058	541	.053	11599	566	.048
	Total	117479	2162	.018	132739	2671	.020

Private schools	Male	564456	9807	.017	561545	11017	.019
	Female	71870	1472	.024	77580	1521	.019
	Total	636326	11279	.017	639125	12538	.019

Source: Compiled from the various General Educational Tables for the period 1917-1922.

A study of the position of educational advancement among the Depressed classes as also the relationship between the educational expansion of the General Population and these classes would bring the following facts to light:-

- (i) The Depressed classes were educationally backward a section in the country. Whereas the proportions

of their enrolment at the various stages of education should have been equivalent to the proportion of their population to the general population in the country, the proportions of their enrolment were too low.

The educational backwardness of these classes increased with the developing stages of education as much as that the incidence of high and college education in these classes was very poor.

- (ii) The general enrolment of the males for the period 1921-22 have been returned as diminished by their number in 1917-18 at the college stage, high school stage and lower primary stage. This might be due to the diversion of students to the National Institutions of Education opened during the period. But the number of female students and Depressed classes students comparatively increased. This increase in number shows that the Non-cooperation Movement did not have any adverse effect on the progress of education of the Depressed classes during the period.
- (iii) The educational progress among the females was lesser than the progress among the males. In other words female education in the country was comparatively backward. The incidence of education among the Depressed class females was even poorer and most of them did not study beyond the lower primary stage of education.

- (iv) Most of the Depressed class pupils, both male and female, did not continue their education beyond lower primary stage. Of the total enrolments of the Depressed classes in 1922, about 91 percent were studying at the Lower Primary stage. About 3 percent were enrolled in private institutions and special schools. Most of these schools were elementary schools. Therefore, the incidence of middle, high and college education in these classes was too low.
- (v) The proportions of Depressed class pupils at the Lower Primary Stage and Upper Primary Stage have been returned higher than their proportions in the special and private schools. In other words, a larger number of Depressed class pupils sought admission in common schools than in the special schools. This shows that the caste apathies for the education of Depressed classes had comparatively been decreasing.
- (vi) A comparison of the proportions of the Depressed class pupils to the general enrolment at all stages of education for the periods 1917-18 and 1921-22 show that there was an increase in the proportions at all stages. This shows that the educational progress of the Depressed classes was keeping in pace with the expansion of education in the country.

c) The Impediments to the Educational Progress of the Depressed Classes

Some of the obstacles that were of universal nature and effected the progress of education of the Depressed classes in the different provinces could broadly be identified as,

- (i) economic poverty of these classes,
- (ii) ^{Lack} of hostel facilities,
- (iii) lack of industrial schools,
- (iv) problems of identification of these classes.

The Depressed classes lived in extreme poverty and as a consequence they were unable to defray the expenses on the education of their children. Rather, a fact of the situation was that as soon as a child attained the age that he could contribute to the economy of the family even by collecting dry twigs or cow dung for the fuel consumption, he was withdrawn from the school. Moreover, there were no hard and fast rules for not employing child labour and many of these children were put as wage earners at an early age.⁹⁸ The system of free education in common schools had not so far been introduced. Under the circumstances, it was, of course, difficult for the Depressed class parent to spare the child from domestic activity and send him to the school by spending extra money on his education. Some of the provincial governments, prominently the governments of Madras

⁹⁸ Richey, op.cit., 53.

and Bombay, had taken steps to exempt the fees of the children of the Depressed classes. It was considered that payment of some inducements to these children could sustain them for long in the schools. Therefore, some scholarships were also awarded and some facilities by way of free supply of books, slates, etc. to the poor and needy children were created. The grant of scholarships was more on the basis of attendance than attainment. To quote an interesting incident, the government of Madras had sanctioned 25 special scholarships as well as supplied books and slates for the Koyas in a certain Taluka. Not understanding the principles of selection for scholarships, the Koyas viewed any such distinction with jealousy. In that event it was just possible that they might have withdrawn such children as were not given scholarships. Since all the Koyas were alike poor, scholarships were sanctioned to all the Koyas in the Agency and while the number of scholarships was thus raised to 227, the amount was halved.⁹⁹ The economic inducements attracted these classes to send their children to the school and in places, where enough incentives had not been provided, the enrolments of the Depressed classes were poor.

The establishment of hostels for the Depressed class pupils was an important step for expanding education among them especially at the secondary and the University stage.

⁹⁹ Sharp, op.cit., 52.

Hostels were needed from two points of view, i.e. sociological and financial. Since the Depressed classes were outcastes, it was difficult for them to find accommodation in private apartments or to get food and other amenities in public places. It was, perhaps, for this reason that many of the Depressed class pupils had to withdraw after completion of the primary school stage. In those days, secondary schools were generally located in the towns. Even if some parents desired to educate their children, the problem of finding an accommodation for housing them hindered the further studies of these pupils. The Depressed classes Mission Society was, perhaps, the pioneering organisation to take up work in this direction. But it could open only a few hostels. The lack of hostel facilities created problems for the educational development of these classes.

It may be recalled that as back as 1890, an Inspector of Schools had drawn the attention of the education departments on the futility of literary education for the Depressed class children but his arguments ^{had} passed unheeded. But during the period 1904-1922, it was increasingly realized that the Depressed classes could profit more by industrial education than by literary education. Most of the Depressed classes were engaged in such industrial pursuits as were indigenous and unskilled. The remunerations accurable to them from their indigenous occupations were too low.

Industrial education could increase the competence and skills of these classes and thereby they could improve their income in their own occupations.

It was for the first time in 1917 that a consolidated picture of the population of the Depressed classes in India and also their enrolment was attempted by the educational authorities. As already discussed, the decennial census of India conducted in 1911 aimed at collecting population statistics for the Depressed classes in the various provinces of British India. By 1911, no criterion for the identification of these castes was available and even during the census operations, the situation differed from province to province. The educational authorities of the various provinces were also faced with the difficulties of identification of the Depressed classes. Explaining the complex caste behaviour of such castes, the report for the period mentions,

'Sometimes a caste or sub caste hitherto regarded by all as Depressed totally repudiated the description and declared itself as good as its neighbours. Sometimes, a whole community would declare itself to be Depressed with a view to reaping special concessions of education or appointments. But on the whole a tendency appeared that the Depressed classes edged themselves here and there into a higher scale by the assumption of new names and privileges'.¹⁰⁰

Such a situation was bound to create variations in the

¹⁰⁰Richey, op.cit., 58.

population and educational statistics of the Depressed classes and it was perhaps for this reason that sometimes the statistical figures presented at different places for the same period differed.
