

CHAPTER - IV

POLITICS OF RADICALISM AND EDUCATION

Rise of Radicalism in Indian Politics

Radicalism in common political parlance connotes a major shift or departure from the commonly accepted political norms. In particular stages of the development of political systems, the term acquired different shades of meaning. For example, the American and French revolutions in the closing decades of the eighteenth century were both expressions of radicalism. The French revolution was in fact the revolt of the rising bourgeoisie against the monarchy. At the close of the eighteenth century revisionist right-wing tendencies appeared following the consolidation of the European states. The affiliation of the right-wing radicalism with the established political order was responsible for associating 'radicalism' with left-wing political ideology. After 1848, it began to be associated more and more with socialist ideology, labour movements and the anarchist movements. It was later identified with the October Revolution of 1917, which drew its ideology from Marxian socialism. In India under the British rule, the rise of radicalism in politics was a phenomena of the late nineteenth century when the Indian national movement had already developed the ideology and the method of liberal politics. The growth of political movement in India was due to the rise of middle classes

mainly represented in various professions. It was not a direct outcome of the growth of industries and consequent urbanization. It was the result of combination of many factors, the growth of the educated classes was one of the important ones. The growth of the educated classes was also not a typical economic phenomena. It was due to the political necessity of administration of the colony that gave rise to the educated classes. The emergence of western educated classes in the colonial setting bore the imprint of liberal politics. In the initial phases of the rapid growth of western education, the classes getting the maximum benefit out of it were drawn towards the liberal ideology of the west and developed an implicit faith in the methods of political and social advancement associated with the liberal ideology. However, the rapid growth of the middle classes accelerated the development of higher education on western lines. It could not be confined to the privileged sections of society and spread to lower middle classes also. When the political system could not satisfy the rising aspirations of the middle classes, political associations grew among them to extract concessions from the rulers for the benefit of their own class. Two different approaches to gain political benefits developed at this stage. One was steeped in liberal principles and methods of organisation with a respect for the rule of law, constitutional approach

and a dispensation towards western influences, in political dealings. The other approach was to recognise the influence of western institutions and the ideology associated with them but at the same time it was taken as a challenge to India's cultural heritage. This second approach was taken up by the radicals.

The growth of radicalism in Indian politics could be traced to the contradictions that developed in the middle class political leadership in the late nineteenth century.¹ It had two distinct phases of development. The first phase beginning from the closing decade of the nineteenth century may be said to have come to a close in 1920, with the launching of mass movement by Mahatma Gandhi. The second phase started with it. It is of interest to note that the two phases of radicalism in Indian politics, one prior to 1920 and the other after it, had two distinct sources of inspiration. In the first phase it drew strength from the revivalist

¹See, B.B.Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.368.

movements² and in the second phase when the nationalist movement assumed a mass character, radicalism identified itself with socialist movements and thinking. Liberalism and radicalism mingled in the nationalist movement in the phase of the mass movement.³ This intermingling caused many contradiction in the nationalist movement and reflected several inconsistencies and also a lack of policies to develop in the educational and political thinking.

²See, Percival Griffiths, The British Impact on India, (London: Frank Cass & Company Ltd., 1965), p.253.

"The impact of Western thought on Hinduism...produced two main current of thoughts which were afterwards to be united in the stream of Indian nationalism. The Brahmo Samaj attuned the minds of many Indian leaders to the new ideas of democracy and freedom, while the Arya Samaj and the revival amongst orthodox Hindus led militant Hinduism, which for the first time gave real unity to Hindu India and built up a combative nationalism."

³See, Bisheshwar Prasad, Changing Modes of Indian National Movement, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1966), p.95.

"Before Gandhi stepped on the stage of Indian politics, national movement had flowed into two different streams apart, namely of constitutionalism and mass agitation creating psychology of revolt. What he did was to join the two streams and launch a peaceful revolution. The Congress imbibed the revolutionary creed, and revolution became non-violent."

Effect of Radicalism on the Educated Classes

The consolidation of middle classes in the later decades of the nineteenth century and the political demands formulated by them created a divergence of opinion among the educated classes regarding political and social issues confronting the country. It was not a mere coincidence that the British had started suspecting the educated classes during this period. Linking up the political agitation with the growth of education among a broader section of population, the official despatch from the Secretary of State to the Governor in Council, Bombay stated.

...unhealthy tendencies are being engendered along with the advantages to be expected from the extension of education in certain classes; and if it appears that the educational facilities provided by the Government are being used to propagate hostility to the established order, it is time to review, in this particular, the system of State education which admits of such a perversion of its beneficent purposes.... I think you will agree with me that your rules for grant-in-aid should provide that a grant may be withdrawn or refused after sufficient warning, when a private institution mixes up political agitation with its legitimate purposes.⁴

Gurzon's political and educational policies grew out of the suspicion towards the educated classes. But in spite of the mutual suspicion among the rulers and the

⁴ Secretary of State to the Governor in Council, Bombay, Judicial and Public Papers, 1897, No.456, India Office Library, Official Despatch.

Quoted in C.H.Philips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858 to 1947, Select Documents, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.129.

educated classes, the main trend of the nationalist movement as represented by the policies of the Indian National Congress was liberal. The liberals had an abiding faith in the ultimate destiny of the country moving towards self-rule under the patronage of the rulers. They also had an implicit faith in the institutional framework created to safeguard and further the ideological orientation of the people, towards liberalism. Education was considered by them as an instrument to help in the growth of self-governing institutions. This approach was appealing to the highly westernized intellectuals but could not evoke a sympathetic response from the lower middle classes and the masses. In the period of political confrontation of the nationalist movement with the rulers, the support of a wider section of population had become necessary. It was to this wider section that the radicals now directed their appeal. They made efforts to draw in intellectual support from the cultural heritage of the country and tried to reconstruct Indian nationalism by combining politics with religion.⁵ It may be of interest

⁵ See, Percival Griffiths, Modern India, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1957), p.59.

"From the end of the century onwards, militant Hinduism and the demand for self-government were closely intertwined, and they were indeed two distinct elements in the party which struggled for independence - one consisting of orthodox and militant Hindus and the other of Westernised intellectuals who cared little about any form of religion, but were determined to govern themselves."

to note that while radicalism was drawing strength from a resurrection of India's traditions based upon Hinduism, a parallel development was taking place among the Muslims. It was in antagonism with the radical movement and wanted to introduce an element of religion in education to evoke sentiments of loyalty for the rulers. The following extracts from the Draft Memorial of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College Aligarh indicates how politics, religion and education were being combined.

The evils which recently have been perceived to result from a system of education dissociated from religious teaching, the unrest in the country and a consideration of its causes and obvious consequences, make us feel more strongly than ever, our duty both to our community and to the Government. That duty requires that we should send forth to every Province of India a number of young men trained at Aligarh (on the lines that form the special feature of its education), imbued by sentiments of deep loyalty to the Government and of soberly patriotic devotion to the progress of their country.⁶

The most profound effect of radicalism on the educated classes was the undermining of their faith in the institutional framework built in India by the British and valued in its essentials by the liberals. Their political thinking was not in tune with the strictly constitutional path adopted by the liberals. The growth of radicalism was

⁶Government of India, Department of Home (Education),
November 1908, Proceedings No.61.

thus a challenge to the ideology of the liberals and also to the institutional framework assiduously built up and valued by them. As the educational system was also a part of the establishment it could not escape the influence of radical politics. We will discuss the impact of radicalism on the growth and development of education in four aspects, viz., effect on the students, national education movement, mass education and higher education. The attitude of the rulers and of the political leadership will be analysed in relation to the above mentioned educational issues.

Growth of Radicalism among Students

The effect of radicalism on students first appeared during the period when revivalist movements were encouraged by the radical leaders to gain wider support among their co-religionists for the political cause. Indications of a revolutionary movement involving students first appeared in western India under the inspiration of B.G.Tilak.⁷ Active assistance of students was taken for the celebration of Ganpati festival in September 1894 and the first coronation festival of Shivaji in June 1895.⁸ It may be noted that the first stirrings among the students for active

⁷ Sedition Committee Report 1918, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1918), p.1.

⁸ Ibid., Pp.1-2.

participation in the national struggle were through imbibing in them a spirit for the regeneration of religion and creating a militancy through participation in physical and military exercises. The formation of a 'Society for the removal of obstacles to the Hindu Religion' in Poona in 1895 may be cited as an example.⁹ Similar movements were organised in Bengal. The movement in Bengal in the initial stages was confined to 'bhadralok' who mainly came from Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas and had taken to western education early. It was among these classes that the revolutionary ideas had their first impact. Through English education, they had monopolised the leading professions like law, medicine and teaching and were entrenched in subordinate administrative services of the Government. Their earnest desire to provide English education for their sons is borne out by the fact that a net work of Anglo-vernacular schools were established even in remote rural areas in Bengal.¹⁰ As in western

⁹ Ibid., p.2.

This society was formed by Damodar and Balkrishna Chapekar, Chitpavan Brahmins in Poona with the aim of providing physical and military training to young men and imbibing a spirit of Hindu religion among them.

¹⁰ Sedition Committee Report, 1918, op.cit., p.16.

"...a number of Anglo-vernacular schools, largely maintained by private enterprize have sprung up throughout the towns and villages of Bengal. No other province of India possesses a network of rural schools in which English is taught. These schools are due to the enterprise of the 'bhadralok' and to the fact that, as British rule gradually spread from Bengal over Northern India, the scope of employment for English - educated Bengalees spread with it."

India the main inspiration in the early stages of revolutionary upsurge in Bengal was religious. In place of Ganapati and Shivaji, the inspiration was through invoking the spirit of Mother Kali, the goddess of strength.

The impact of radicalization of politics on education was more widely felt only after the events in the beginning of this century leading to the educational policies of Curzon and the political decision to partition Bengal. It was only after these two events that issues such as students' participation in politics, national education, education of the masses vs. classes, importance of rural education, technical education, quantity vs. quality, education for character building and many such issues were discussed and decisions were taken in the light of their political implications. The active involvement of students and teachers in the political movement for anti-partition was a crucial development that was taking place at this time. This brought the whole question of education in prominence. The role of education in the national development, the question of government control on education, the problem of mass education and the future policies on education came up for active consideration. The political and educational developments in the latter years of the national struggle were also influenced by the participation of students and teachers in the political life of the country. In fact,

the issue is still debatable and a lot of thinking in modern times has been going on to resolve the problem.

Official Reaction to Students' Participation in Politics:

A section of students and teachers was actively participating in the movement for 'swadeshi' and 'boycott'. Their active involvement caused an alarm among the rulers for the drift of the national movement towards radicalism. We quote below the extract from the private telegram sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, dated 9-12-1905.

Indeed the worst feature of the whole movement is the spirit of discontent, lawlessness and sedition which has been shown to exist among Bengalee schoolmasters and the rising generation of students, and which the agitators are sedulously promoting. This will call for very serious consideration after the present agitation has subsided.¹¹

H.H. Risley Secretary to the Government of India,
Home Department put up the following note regarding the effect of political participation on students and teachers.

The absolute demoralisation of the students and school masters throughout the country...is being produced by their employment as the chief promoters of a political agitation. It is openly claimed on behalf of school boys as such that they have a right to take part in political movements and that this is a legitimate and necessary part of their education.¹²

¹¹Government of India, Home Department, June 1906,
Proceedings Nos. 169-36.

¹²Ibid.

The main anxiety of the government was the role that a section of the educated classes was playing in promoting a spirit of defiance among the students. This also brought in the question that to what extent the educated elites could play an effective role in checking the drift towards radicalism growing among a larger section of the educated classes. In an effort to minimise the growing influence of radicalism the blame was squarely laid on a small section of western educated persons.¹³ But on the government's own admittance the movement was now assuming a wider dimension and the educated classes who still adhered strictly to constitutionalism could not exert their weight against the spread of radicalism. The report sent by the Government of Bengal to the Government of India lamented about the inability of the educated classes in extending a positive support to the government.

...and though their action has met with the disapproval of some, there have been very few men of position and education ready to give openly an effective expression to it and to face the popular disfavour which must necessarily follow on such a course.¹⁴

The above note admitted the fact that the political movement was no longer confined to a small minority of disgruntled individuals. Otherwise there was no need of the fear of popular disfavour. The quinquennial review of 1902-07 also dealt with the importance of students' participation in politics and its bearing in education.

¹³
Ibid.

¹⁴
Ibid.

...the colleges together with the schools have in some parts of India been brought under the disturbing influences of political excitement ...In general terms it may be said that where there has been political excitement, college students have partaken of it,...in some places both college teachers and college students have taken part in political meetings, demonstrations and agitations, which has caused Government to consider what should be the limits placed to the freedom of college teachers and pupils to engage in such movements.¹⁵

The same review referred to the undermining of general discipline in schools and justified the orders issued by the government to place curbs on the students from participating in the political movement. The report, however, admitted that in spite of these orders, at many places the students defied them with the connivance of their parents and when expelled joined the newly opened national schools. The more active constituents of the political movement were now the students and teachers who not only influenced its class character but also impelled the government to have a second look at the educational policies hitherto followed by it. The strategy now followed was to have a stricter governmental control on educational institutions. Students were not to be permitted to participate in political movements. In spite of the Morley-Minto Reforms, which were meant to win over a section of the educated classes, the laissez faire policy

¹⁵Progress of Education in India, 1902-07, Vol.I,
(Calcutta: Supt.Government Printing, 1909), p.56.

on higher education was abandoned. To check the influence of the radical section of the educated classes from spreading to wider sections of the population, the question of providing a minimum education to the masses came into prominence. It was argued that an illiterate mass was more prone to fall a prey to the influence of the politicians than the one who had had at least a smattering of education. It was thought that such education may even evoke an appreciative response from the people towards the rulers. This thinking, however, proved erroneous. A larger dose of education had created a class of people among whom a section was getting disillusioned with the limited political opportunities open for them and because of the erosion of their faith in the establishment, was posing a challenge to the rulers. To expect that a smaller dose of education to the masses would elicit an appreciative response from them was ignoring the reality of the political situation. The reality was that with each successive stage of political movement and the extension of education among a larger section, the masses were drawn more and more towards radical ideology and methods of working. It was no doubt true that the political movement was yet largely confined to middle and lower middle classes. The students who participated actively in the movement also came from these classes. But the call which evoked a sympathetic response among the general population was that of the radicals rather than the attempts

by the government to arouse loyalist feelings. The attempt on the part of the rulers to create an impression that educated classes were not interested in ameliorating the lot of the masses also proved futile. Rather they became the model to be emulated. This was so because for the lower classes there was no other model to follow. They could perceive that in spite of the conflicts of the educated classes with the government, they were able to strengthen their bargaining position vis-a-vis the rulers.

The Reaction of Political Leadership and Indian Opinion:

The question of students' participation in active politics became a live issue during the national struggle. There was a divergence of opinion among the political leadership on this issue. Though the political events had forced all to take cognisance of the issue, opinions differed to the extent and manner of their involvement in active political struggle. The radicals believed in imparting political education to the students to equip them for the future task of national reconstruction. They condemned the existing system of education as detrimental to the growth of national spirit. Students by actively participating in the national movement would be the most useful instrument for undermining the faith in the existing educational system. The attitude of liberal political leadership towards students' participation in

politics was opposed to those of the radicals. In the words of Gokhale, "The active participation of students in political agitation really tends to lower the dignity and the responsible character of public life and impair its true effectiveness."¹⁶ But Gokhale recognised the growing influence of radicals among the younger generation and expressed his concern over this development.

Everyone knows that, during the last few years, a new school of political thought has arisen in the country and that it has exercised a powerful fascination over the minds of young men more or less in all parts of India.... The new teaching condemned all faith in the British Government as childish and all hope of any real progress under it as vain.... Some of the leaders of the new thought have gone so far as to talk of independence as an object of practical pursuit....it means the sure destruction or, at any rate the indefinite postponement of all these opportunities for slow but peaceful progress which are at present within our reach.¹⁷

To get a composite picture of the different points of view towards students' participation in politics we will cite from some contemporary newspapers which present a cross-sectional opinion of the educated middle classes towards this problem. The 'Jhang Sial' of the 5th October 1907 remarked that those who exhort Indian students to avoid politics are absolutely wrong, and

¹⁶D.G.Karve & D.V.Ambekar, (eds.), Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1967), p.193.

¹⁷Ibid., Pp.194-95.

asserted that the government was anxious to prevent students from taking part in politics merely because it knew that by interesting themselves in political matters students will succeed in radically changing the present political situation in the country. The 'Tripura Hitaishi' of 31st March, 1908 remarked that the new system will fulfil one of the objects of government, viz., no students and no teachers will have an opportunity to take part in political movements.¹⁸ Quoting from the first issue of the journal 'Sons of India', the Tribune dated, Lahore 6.11.1909 reported, "The present unrest among the students of India is causing much anxiety to all - from the highest Government official to the humblest schoolmaster - who are responsible for the training and the safeguarding of youth."¹⁹ Exhorting the government to choose the path of winning sympathy of the student community by leading them towards good citizenship, it further stated.

Two paths open before us and we stand at the parting of the ways. The choice between them, the choice on which depends India's destiny, lies before our rulers and ourselves. May the Supreme Rulers fill their hearts with wisdom and sympathy, and ours with loyal cooperation in all that serves the interests of the Motherland and therefore the interest of the Empire.²⁰

¹⁸ Government of India, Home Department, Selections from Native Newspapers 1908.

¹⁹ Government of India, Home Department(Political), February 1909, Proceedings No.25.

²⁰ Ibid.

The extension of political awakening among the students had thus three distinct reactions. The first was from the rulers. They viewed it with alarm and had apprehensions that any further escalation of political activity among the students would undermine the entire educational structure. Serious misgivings were also aroused among them regarding the role of the educated classes in drawing the support of the students for the political movement. The second was from the liberal leadership of the political movement. Due to the compulsion of the movement they had also to enlist the support of the students. But it was circumvented by the limitation of their own political ideology and methods of working. They still had faith in the institutional framework of the empire and they only wanted such modification in it as it suited their own interests. They disapproved of the radical tendencies that were growing among the students. The wider spread of education advocated by them was to enlist a larger support for the reforms they were demanding in the administrative and political structure of the country. But any reform or modification was to be within the colonial set-up. The third reaction was from the radicals. Their principal aim in enlisting the support of the students was to undermine the foundation on which the educational structure was erected. A wider extension of education for them was to be a means to spread their ideology among a larger section of population

of which the students were a most important constituent. It was to this section that they directed their appeal and it was from this section that they got their active supporters.²¹

The causes of radicalism in politics lay, however, deeper than the spread of English education. English education created a class of people which imbibed certain liberal or radical ideas. The liberal or radical response to the situation depended on a number of factors. The response was conditioned by the stage of the political development, the composition of the educated classes, the reaction of the rulers, influence of international events and many such factors. Western system of education could not alone be blamed for the growth of a revolutionary outlook and activities among the students. The products of the same system were also the supporters of the liberal ideology and were deeply committed to strictly constitutional methods of working. The changes that were taking place in the outlook of the people were the

²¹ See, Valentine Chirol, India, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1930), Pp.123-24.

Chirol laments the absolute incapacity of the educational system to prevent the growth of radical ideology among the students. The most disquieting feature for him was the western education background of most of the radicals. "...the strongest and most ominous feature of all was that most of them had been brought up at schools and colleges at which the educational system was western, and many of them were excellent English scholars. Out of 186 persons convicted of political crimes, 68 were actually students and 50 were under 20 years of age."

resultant of a number of factors, education being one of them. The reaction of western education among different classes of people was also not uniformly alike. The lower middle classes for instance did not react to higher education in the same manner as the upper and middle classes had done earlier. The socio-economic background of the student and his projected future image of himself was responsible to a great extent for the type of reaction that was evoked by the stimuli of western education. Once affected by the revolutionary ideology and methods of work, western education lost much of its relevance among them. The aims of western education did not fit in, in the new mental setting that was created among the students by the growth of a revolutionary outlook. The impact of radicalism on the educational system should not be judged by taking into consideration the effect on only that section of educated classes which actively participated in the movement. The students who left their studies and became activists, were no doubt directly affected by the movement. But those who remained in their institutions and did not participate directly in the movement could also not remain unaffected. Here, the reaction was of two kinds, a spirit of defiance among some and an apathy among the others. Both these reactions undermined the faith in the educational system. The manifestation of the undermining of faith in the existing educational

system was the general tone of discipline. The first generation of English educated classes looked to western models of thought and institutions for inspiration. Their mental revolt was directed against the oriental system of thought and institutions. Through a process of education they imbibed a faith in the political institutions patterned on liberal traditions. Their implicit faith was that India would gradually move towards that system through instalments of political reforms. The rulers also wanted the educational system patterned in a way which would discipline the minds of the students and create a respect for law, constitutionalism and an orientation to accept responsibility within the limited opportunities open for them. It was this orientation of the educated classes that was threatened by the radical turn that politics was taking. The first signs of this appeared in the undermining of discipline among the teachers and students in colleges and schools. This was precisely the reason that the issue of students' and teachers' participation in politics came in for active consideration and was a controversial topic then and in subsequent years. In fact, this is still a controversial topic in education and has assumed wider dimensions involving political, sociological and other related disciplines.

National Education Movement: Attitude of Radicals

The political compulsions that arose in the first decade of this century gave rise to the emergence of national

schools and the movement for national education. The attitude of liberals that finally crystallized about national education was a system of education supplementary to the existing one.²² The position taken by the radicals was, however, different. For them the model to be emulated was not that of England whether for political or educational purposes. Unlike the liberals, they were not overwhelmed by the parliamentary traditions of England. They held the view that education evolved and developed under the colonial system of government was hampering the growth of a national spirit in India. 'Bande Mataram', the spokesman of the radicals in its issue of 23rd March, 1907 expressed distrust in the government's generosity towards education and ascribed it to the policy of moulding the Indians so as to demoralise them into believing that the country cannot do without the help of the English.²³ Discussing about the role that 'national education' should play in advancing the cause of political freedom, the 'Yugantar' also expressing the radical viewpoint wrote in its issue of March 31, 1907.

²²The growth of national education and the attitude of liberals has been discussed in Chapter III.

²³Government of India, Home Department, Selections from Newspapers 1907.

The Swadeshi agitation or the National University will fail to achieve their purpose if they fail to create a hankering for freedom....the only aim of national education should now be to teach as much as possible of national history and thereby create a strong desire and bring forth a persistent effort to maintain a separate national existence. It is not necessary that in every place this should be done by establishing schools and pathshalas on the English pattern. If we seek to do it by means of such institutions that will only cause unnecessary delay in the achievement of our freedom.²⁴

The thinking of the radicals was averse to the perpetuation of education on existing lines. National institutions, if they were to be just a prototype of the existing educational institutions would not further the national cause. They would rather obstruct the growth of a national spirit and fritter away the energy of the movement. The radicals also wanted the appeal of national education to be broader. They wanted to draw in the masses in the political movement. They had not reconciled to the Morley-Minto Reforms. 'Bande Mataram' in its issue of April 12, 1908 remarked.

It is also necessary to bring the existing primary schools under the council; for this is a work of great importance, and until it is done, the foundations of the educational edifice will not be secure, since it is the primary schools in which the bulk of the people are educated.²⁵

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Quoted in Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism, (1906-1908), (Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1967), Pp.69-70.

The radicals also hoped that the spread of national education among the masses would break the barrier between the educated classes and the masses which the existing system of education was perpetuating and widening further.

There was a genuine fear among both the rulers and the liberals regarding the growing influence of radical ideology in education. The participation of students in politics and the dissatisfaction with the educational system initiated the demand for a National University of India put forward by Mrs. Annie Besant. The following extracts from the letter written by Mrs. Besant to the Viceroy dated 31st St. James Place, London, S.W., the 26th July 1907 is revealing of the political motivation behind the scheme of National University.

It is my earnest wish that this movement, while not seeking Government help in money, should move on lines side by side with Government Institutions, and be a support of the Empire, while faithful to Indian traditions. There is a danger lest the movement for national education should be hostile to British rule in India, our University, if approved by your Excellency, will support that rule, and will set an example of training Indian youths in the duties of citizenship.²⁶

The official reaction to the scheme of National University revealed how decisions on educational matters were being affected by political considerations. The

²⁶ Government of India, Home Department (Education),
February 1908, Proceedings No. 23.

official policy was to win over the liberals and check the influence of radicals. The note by G.Fell, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, (Home Department), dated 30.9.1907 gives the official assessment of Mrs.Besant and also the danger of national education movement drifting to the influence of radicals.

I believe Mrs.Besant though an enthusiast on the need for awakening a 'national spirit' in India, is wholly in favour of British rule and places loyalty to the King Emperor in the forefront of her political creed.... It is to the interest of the extremists to pretend that there cannot be a national revival without the expulsion of the British rulers. Mrs.Besant, on the other hand, aims at promoting the spread of Indian education on Indian lines, controlled by representatives of the people.²⁷

The movement for national education, participation of students in political activities, the conflict between liberalism and radicalism in politics brought a few educational issues into prominence. The following issues were of particular significance regarding the growth of educational policies in that period.

- i) Extent of State control on higher education. The issue had assumed special significance after the reforms introduced by Curzon.
- ii) The extent to which education could help in the promotion of a spirit of nationalism. A sense

²⁷ Government of India, Home Department (Education),
February, 1908, Proceedings Nos.163-64.

of urgency was being felt by the political leadership to evolve an alternative system of education which could create a sense of patriotism and enthuse a spirit of nationalism among the youth.

iii) The extent to which education could be value-oriented. There was a growing feeling that religious education in some form should be provided in educational institutions.

iv) The extent to which educational system could help in the growth of material resources of the country. It was thought that education should be oriented towards the industrial regeneration of the country.

All the leading representatives of radicalism in that period like Tilak, Pal and Aurobindo condemned the existing system of education as detrimental to the growth of a national spirit. But there was no unanimity of approach among them regarding the weaknesses of the existing system or that of an alternative system of national education. While Pal condemned the existing system as 'outlandish' and 'rootless'; Tilak accepted the value of English education in the generation of sentiments of political radicalism and progressivism. Aurobindo introduced an element of spiritualism in the

concept of a national system of education.²⁸ Tilak's ideas on national education may be briefly stated from the speech he delivered on the topic at Sholapur on February, 27, 1908. He emphasized the following aspects.

- i) A national system of education must incorporate religious education for building up character. It is also necessary for reviving the old idealism of India.
- ii) It should stress the necessity of imparting industrial education for economic resurgence in the country.
- iii) Political education should be a part of the national education for enlightening the citizens about their rights and duties.
- iv) National education should give due place to the native languages. Load of the foreign language must be reduced.²⁹

The main effect of radicalism was not in the uprooting of the existing system of education but in undermining its foundation. The main challenge was to the value-system on which it was based. Radicalism

²⁸ See, 'Bande Mataram', Weekly edition, May 3, 1908, quoted in Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism, 1906-1908, op.cit., p.86.

Condemning the existing system of education and extolling India's spiritual past, Aurobindo wrote: "His institutions are without warmth, sympathy, human feeling, rigid and accurate like his machinery, meant for immediate and practical gains.... If she is to model herself on the Anglo-Saxon type, she must first kill everything in her which is her own.... The return of India on her eternal self, the restoration of her splendour, greatness, triumphant Asiatic supremacy is the ideal of Nationalism."

²⁹ V.P. Verma, Modern Indian Political Thought (Agra: Durga Printing Works, 1964), Pp.229-33.

projected the image of a resurrected Hindu ideal as a basis for the restructuring of the national education. The ideal, however, could not take roots in the country and remained confined to a few isolated institutions. The first wave of radicalism and its direct impact on the educational institutions subsided with the arrests and deportations that took place in 1908. The national schools also showed signs of petering off and the national volunteers raised for the purpose of political enlightenment also disappeared. But in spite of the arrests and deportations, the influence of radicalism among the younger generation continued to grow. In spite of the Morley-Minto Reforms and the reconciliation between the government and the liberals, the younger generation continued to show signs of discontent and an occasional outburst of violence through acts of terrorism.³⁰

Mass Education and Higher Education: Elites to Masses

The beginning of radicalism in politics was also

³⁰ Government of India, Department of Education,
December 1913, Proceedings No.89.

"It is worth recording that agitation in the schools was carried on openly until December 1908 when a number of deportations took place. Previously to that, agitators like Surendranath Banerji, Bepin Chandra Pal and others used to go round and stump the schools, and the pupils were incited to open rebellion, strikes, picketing and boycott. They were also induced to join the national volunteers. After December 1908 all these symptoms suddenly vanished. The national volunteers disappeared like a dream. But though things were comparatively quiet, disquieting symptoms every now and then showed that the policy of corrupting schools had not been abandoned, but had simply been changed to one of a much more dangerous form. There seems to be every probability that this change was dictated from the centre of a wide-spread agency."

the beginning of a shift in educational policies pursued by the government. Till the emergence of radical politics, the political factors influencing the policy formulation in education were largely favourable to securing the support of the educated elites for the stability of the colonial rule in India. Education of the masses and the government's responsibility in furthering it was first emphasized in the Wood's Despatch of 1854. It was again stressed in the Education Commission of 1882. But it was only in the period of radicalisation of politics in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century that the political significance of mass education was emphasized. The Resolution of the Government of India on Educational Policy, dated March 11, 1904 stated.

The Government of India fully accept the proposition that the active extension of primary education is one of the most important duties of the State. They undertake this responsibility, not merely on general grounds, but because, as Lord Lawrence observed in 1868, 'among all the sources of difficulty in our administration and of possible danger to the stability of our Government, there are few so serious as the ignorance of the people'.³¹

The influence of radicalism on the educated elites and the possibility of their influence extending to the illiterate masses was now an important factor in the

³¹Quoted in, C.H.Philips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858 to 1947, Select Documents, op.cit., Pp.753-54.

shaping of educational policies. The educational policies of Curzon were an attempt to shift the emphasis from the education of the elites to that of the masses. But the major limitation in that period which prevented the growth of mass education in the desired direction was the non-existence of masses as a political factor. Both the ruling power and the political leadership were aware of this fact. It was because of this that the rulers contemplated an educational policy which would ensure a minimum education for the masses so as to make them politically docile. The liberals advocated a policy of political enlightenment through education but only to the extent of making the masses aware of the dangers of deflecting from the path of constitutionalism. They wanted to extract concessions from the rulers and used the advocacy of mass education as a convenient instrument to act as a pressure tactic. Therefore the political justification given by them for broadening education of the masses was strengthening the ties of the empire and ensuring the stability of the rule on a more sound basis.³² The policy of radicals on mass education was, however, based on a different political motive. Disillusioned by the path of constitutionalism, they wanted to use education for political awakening of the masses. The political awakening they had in mind was not to

³² See, Chapter III, p. 133.

create an attachment with the empire. On the other hand it was to undermine the faith in the inevitability of British rule. It was also to explode the myth of the desirability of British rule for the advancement of India on progressive lines. But radicalism in this phase suffered from the limitation of its own class character. The revolutionary groups that were operating in different parts of the country drew their cadres mainly from the high castes and depended for support on the educated middle classes.³³ It was this limitation, which in spite of the broadening of the political movement could not transform the basic character of the Indian education. But though no major transformation could take place in the educational system the education of the masses assumed political importance only when the national movement emerged out of the narrow confines of elites and started making appeals to broader sections of the population. It is interesting to make a comparison of the political importance given to the education of the masses in the imperial and colonial setting. In England also, it was only during the closing decades of the nineteenth century that mass education for the first time gained political importance.

During the nineteenth century, educational developments reflected two fairly distinct sets of considerations, one relating to the mass of the population and the other to the

³³ See, Sedition Committee Report 1918, op.cit., p.26.
"The persons committing these outrages were usually young men of the 'bhadralok' class. They are often reported as speaking in English or in the vernacular as spoken by persons of 'Bhadralok' position in life."

middle classes. Public concern with elementary education was in a large measure concern to meet certain minimum requirements in a changing society - the need to ensure discipline, and to obtain respect for private property and the social order, as well as to provide that kind of instruction which was indispensable in an expanding industrial and commercial nation.³⁴

H.G.Wells referred to the 1870 Act on Elementary Education, "...an Act to educate the lower classes for employment on lower class lines, and with specially trained inferior teachers."³⁵ In England, the emphasis on the education of the masses was to create a public concern for maintaining discipline, respect for social order and to meet the changing industrial needs of the society. Another major political advantage of imparting education to the masses was considered to be the prevention of bolshevism, communism and a revolutionary ideology from catching up the mass imagination.³⁶

The main distinguishing feature in the Indian situation was that India was a colony and any major decision on educational policy was linked up with the colonial relationship that India had with England.

³⁴David V.Glass, 'Education and Social Change in Modern England', A.H.Halsey, Jean Floud and C.Arnold Anderson, (eds.), Education, Economy and Society, (New York: The Free Press of Glenco, 1961), p.394.

³⁵Quoted in Ibid., p.394.

³⁶Ibid., p.395.

'Discipline', 'social order' and 'training for employment', had different connotations in the context of colonial India and imperial England. Education for preservation of discipline, social order and employment in England was to meet the demands of the capitalist economy and the challenge of the organised labour movements. Education of the masses was thus designed to produce a worker fit to perform jobs at lower levels and create a political climate to prevent the growth of revolutionary ideas among the masses. In colonial India, mass education or higher education were both designed to provide superstructure for the stability of the empire. Till the closing years of the nineteenth century, however, the political developments did not alarm the rulers to give political importance to the education of the masses. The rise of nationalism in India was marked by an alliance of the educated classes forming the elites with the rising industrial class. Unlike in England this alliance was forged to present a united front to wrest maximum political concessions from the rulers. The political support that the rulers were getting from the educated classes was weakened on the wake of rising nationalism in the country. Instead a situation of political confrontation arose between the rulers and the educated classes in alliance with the rising bourgeoisie. The issue of mass education assumed political importance in this situation of confrontation. Policies that were

evolved for mass or higher education reflected this confrontation. Attempts were now made by the rulers to resolve these conflicts by counterbalancing the claims of mass education and higher education. On the one hand the spread of education among the masses was considered of great political importance to prevent the growth of radicalism among them. On the other hand, there was a lurking fear that the spread of education may be used for seditious purposes and aggravate the political troubles.³⁷ This dilemma was not only confined to the education of the masses but was also reflected in policies adopted in the sphere of higher education. The policy of restricting higher education had been initiated by Curzon and in subsequent years also the emphasis was on having an effective control over it on political grounds. But when the government was put to an embarrassing situation by the

³⁷ Government of India, Home Department, Selections from Newspapers, 1910.

Referring to the article of the special correspondent to the 'Times' in which he dealt with 'unrest and mass education' the 'Madras Standard' of the 30th September, 1910, made the following observations.

"The Government of India devote greater energy and more money to the spread of higher and secondary education than to mass education. It is deplored that as a result of this unequal development of society the gulf which divides the different classes becomes wider....It is not entirely on grounds of financial difficulties that mass education could not be furthered in India, but as the 'Times' correspondent has said "...it is feared that the very weapon which is intended to eradicate ignorance might be used by disseminators of sedition for purposes that might lead to serious political trouble."

political leadership by demanding free primary education, the claims of making improvements in secondary education were put as a counter argument. On a note dated June, 1, 1906, put by H.W.Orange, Director General of Education on the 'Improvement of Secondary Education', H.H.Risley, Secretary to the Government of India made the following observations.

The improvement of secondary education is the necessary corollary of our attempt to reform University education.... Regarding the question from the political point of view I can imagine nothing more expedient, nothing more likely to dispel the suspicion with which our educational efforts are now regarded than an attempt accompanied by a liberal subvention to raise the standard of secondary education by improving the quality of teaching. At present things are as bad as they can well be. We have Bismarck's 'proletariat of passmen' and in addition to that, what he had not, an army of discontented schoolmasters. Free primary education will not mend these evils, but rather aggravate them relegating the reform of secondary education to a very remote future.³⁸

A lot has been said and written about the issue of compulsory and free primary education. But the emergence of this issue during the growth of radicalism in politics has rather been overlooked by the authors of Indian education. The education of the masses assumed special significance in the period when there was a political division among the elites; one section adhering to the liberal politics and another treading the radical

³⁸ Government of India, Home Department, October 1906,
Proceedings No.31.

path. But the political compulsions of the situation made it necessary for both these sections to take up issues affecting the general mass of the population. The issue that was taken up in education was that of the compulsory and free primary education. This cause was supported by the liberals and the radicals alike. The media used to popularise this demand was through the Legislative Councils, public meetings, press and other media of mass contact. The result of all this was a widespread demand for the education of the masses. In all schemes of educational reforms discussed and formulated during this period, compulsory and free primary education was one of the priority items. It also became a part of the annual party programme of the Indian National Congress. The contribution of Gokhale in popularising this demand in the assembly has been discussed by Dr.B.S.Goel in his Ph.D. Thesis.³⁹ Apart from the facts given by Dr.Goel that Gokhale was not the first person to air this demand, there are some additional facts which substantiate the contention that before Gokhale piloted the bill for compulsory and free primary education, efforts had already been made to put this demand through various public bodies. In the Education Department's proceedings of 1912, mention is made of one Ibrahim Rahimtolla who in 1905 put the scheme of free and compulsory primary education for

³⁹ See, Dr.B.S.Goel, Development of Education in British India, (1905-1929), Unpublished Thesis, University of Delhi, 1968, Pp.202-04.

the city of Bombay. He was not taken seriously. The scheme was again placed before the Bombay Corporation in 1908 but was rejected. It was again in 1905 that a number of persons in the Poona District petitioned the Viceroy for the establishment of free and compulsory education. Thus, there was nothing novel when Gokhale, on the 28th March, 1906, advocated the idea of free primary education and the gradual introduction of compulsion.⁴⁰ All these attempts to popularise the idea of free and compulsory primary education were limited to the corporations and councils which had a limited appeal confined to the educated classes concentrated mainly in urban areas. What Dr. Goel has not taken into account is the influence of radicals in popularising the idea among a wider population who were yet outside the influence of representative institution. The demand was used by them as a means to reach out to the classes who were yet largely unaffected by the political movements. The fear that the influence of the radicals would spread to the hitherto politically unaffected classes motivated the government to pay serious attention to the scheme of free primary education on a selective basis. The emphasis was on giving free education in areas and to classes which so far were politically unaffected but were the potential field of the agitators, thereby meaning the radicals.

⁴⁰ Government of India, Department of Education, May 1912, Proceedings Nos. 79-94.

...if elementary education is to have any wide expansion in the near future, it must be largely given free in the areas and among the classes now to be tapped. The better castes avail themselves freely of education. It is to the depressed classes - the Pariahs, Mahars, Namasudras, Mazhabis and Ramdasias - that we ought to attend. And the last three named require attention not only educationally but politically, for the agitators are trying to enlist their sympathies by relaxation of caste rules,... They have not had much success as yet. But we ought to be prepared.⁴¹

The issue of providing free primary education and the emphasis on popularising the measure among the backward communities was politically very important as the radicals were now trying to enlist the support of these classes through the demand of free and compulsory primary education. In a note dated November 1, 1911, put by H. Sharp, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Education, the following three reasons were given for making primary education wholly or partially free.⁴²

- i) It will bring India in line with other civilized countries and will remove the cause which gives a political handle to the middle classes to attack the administration for failure on this front.
- ii) It will distract attention from the premature scheme of compulsory education put forward by Gokhale.

⁴¹Government of India, Department of Education, May 1912, Proceedings Nos. 79-94.

⁴²Ibid.

- iii) It will discourage the opening of politically dangerous schools outside the existing system.

The note by C. Sankaran Nair on 'Education in India' is of special significance in making out a spacious plea for the education of the lower classes as a counterpoise to the educated higher classes.⁴³ The political purpose behind making this plea was to create a pro-British lobby among the elites of lower classes and thus to defeat the attempts by the radicals to enlist a wider support for their policies. He made a distinction between two major trends in education prevalent in the country, one represented by what he called 'reformers' and the other by 'revivalists.' According to Nair, persons inspired by English political philosophy and history and imbued with western system of education came under the category of 'reformers.' Their political creed was based on a larger and increasing measure of autonomy based on educational and social advancement. Their claim for home-rule or self-government was on colonial lines. They wanted to convey the western knowledge and ideas gradually to the masses through a system of education essentially on western lines. Regarding the political and educational policy of the 'revivalists' the note observes.

It is this 'Revivalist' class that is now carrying on an active propagandism in the vernacular languages for the purpose of bringing masses under its control. It is for this reason also that its members are

⁴³ Government of India, Department of Education, August 1916, Proceedings No. 51.

anxious that the masses should be educated only in the Vernacular and not in English. Such education will serve to exclude them from the operation of any English influence. It will render them amenable only to their own control....It is on their educational policy that they rely to carry out their object.⁴⁴

Nair recognised that it was not possible to check the rising tide of nationalism and realised that it would be impolitic to interfere with the study of vernaculars and classics. But a loyal body of public opinion could still be created by the spread of English education among the lower classes.⁴⁵

The espousal of the cause of spreading western education among the lower classes was motivated by a desire of creating an elite group among them. The leadership of the liberals and radicals alike were mainly drawn from the upper and middle classes and had the background of western education. They had wrested all the privileges that western

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Extract from the note by G. Sankaran Nair on 'Education in India', Government of India, Department of Education, August 1916, Proceedings No.51.

"The Hindu lower classes will grow to a consciousness of their moral, religious and economic servitude, and will learn that without the permanence and the assistance of the 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 loyal opinion dependent on and in hearty sympathy with the Government. It is also necessary that we must enable as many among those classes as possible to avail themselves of higher education. They will realise 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 Government."

education could provide to them by taking prominent positions in the professions or in public bodies through nominations or elections. But when the radicals broke away from the Indian National Congress in 1907, they realised that the spread of their ideology could not be confined to the educated classes only. They had to go in to a wider segment of the population. However, in the absence of any concrete programme in which the masses could be enlisted for political action, radicalism remained confined to western educated youths who manifested it in sporadic acts of violence. Till the Home Rule League movement of Mrs. Besant and Tilak in 1916, the active involvement of masses could not be secured. Thus, the education of the masses did not have any sanction of the mass movement and acted only as a political counter weight. Higher education for the lower classes was also proposed as a measure to counteract the effect of political radicalism from spreading to these classes. The contention that the 'revivalists' wanted vernacular education for the masses and English education for the classes did not hold much ground as the contradictions between the classes and the masses was inherent in the socio-economic system of the country. The educational system from the very beginning was organised for the benefit of the classes and due to its own internal mechanism strengthened the dichotomy between rural-urban, English education - Vernacular education

and so on. All these were symptoms of the wider disease prevalent in the socio-economic structure of the society. In the early phase of the spread of English education, the maximum benefit was concentrated in urban centres. But when English education spread among a wider population, the advantages were taken by sub-elite groups among both the urban as well as rural areas. The emergence of these sub-elite groups, who were now the strong supporters of English education, was among the lower-middle classes in urban areas and also among the landowning classes in rural areas. The political alliance between the sub-elite groups in urban and rural areas and the spread of higher education among them widened further the cleavage between the western educated classes and the masses. The efforts of these sub-elite groups were mainly directed towards reaching the positions occupied by the elite groups among the higher classes. Education of the masses, whether English or Vernacular was conceived of as an inferior education, at best to provide them with a literacy and as a means to adjust them to their environment. Thus the masses in rural areas were to have some awareness about the local body institutions. So was the case in urban areas. The provincial and central legislatures and the administrative services were yet outside the pressure of mass movement. It was only after the radicals started to enlist the support of the masses for political programmes that the political education of the masses assumed special significance. This

was especially so after the first world war when Tilak and Mrs. Besant approached the masses with their programmes of Home Rule League. The growth of the political movement now depended on identifying the problems and interests of the masses with the political programmes. The upliftment of the masses in social and educational fields was now seen as a necessary adjunct to the regeneration of the country. The enrichment of the political movement by enlisting the support of the masses and the political consciousness associated with it acted as an instrument to narrow the intellectual and social barriers among the elites and the masses. The narrowing down of the cleavage was not due to the wider spread of higher education among the lower classes as is sometimes made out. The spread of higher education among the lower classes mainly helped in creating an elite group among them who were intellectually as apart from the masses as the elites among the higher classes. Their affinity with the common man among their own class was based on factors eliciting caste, communal or religious loyalties.

The controversy regarding mass education and higher education lost its earlier validity when the political movement entered the phase of mass movement in the twenties. There were two important developments which affected the course of radical movement and the policies towards the education of the masses and the elites. The

first was the constitutional reforms introduced in the post-war period and the other was the launching of non-co-operation movement by Mahatma Gandhi.⁴⁶

The issue of mass education came up again in the context of the quantum of reforms that were introduced on the recommendations of Montagu-Chelmsford Report. The argument given for not granting full measure of responsible government was the educational backwardness of the general masses and the unrepresentative character of the politically advanced classes.⁴⁷ The counter claim of representing the masses was put forward by the educated classes. The memorandum submitted by the Bombay branch of the Home Rule for India League on the Constitutional Reforms spoke thus.

The Council emphatically repudiates the suggestion that the educated classes stand apart from and do not represent the masses or that they have safeguarded their own position and neglected that of their ignorant and inarticulate countrymen. This suggestion ignores the notable fact that in this country any cleavage between the educated classes and the masses is rendered impossible by social divisions based neither on the distinction of education nor of wealth. It also ignores another equally important fact, that a large number of educated men are drawn from villages and their social and domestic life is

⁴⁶ See Chapter III, Pp.165-68.

This has been discussed in the context of liberal politics in Chapter III.

⁴⁷ Government of India, Home Department (Public), September 1919, Proceedings No.42.

"The politically minded classes cannot be entrusted with the government of the remaining portion of the people which is indifferent to politics and unfit to have any voice in the Government either by reason of ignorance, poverty or religious and social differences."

inextricably interwoven with life in their native villages. It also does not take into account the testimony borne out by the recent political activity in the country, viz., that these classes are looked upon by their fellow countrymen as their natural leaders and trusted representatives.⁴⁸

Both these claims, however, did not reflect the political reality as it existed then. The withholding of political concessions on the plea that the masses were educationally backward was hardly justifiable. If any body had the claim to represent the will of the Indian masses, it were the politically conscious section of the country. In any case the colonial rulers could not, by any stretch of imagination, claim to be a better representative of the masses than the educated classes, howsoever tiny they might have been. The political game of the colonial rulers was to exploit the existing barriers between the classes and the masses. The rulers wanted to avoid the situation of masses swinging in favour of the educated classes. The underlying fear was that any such development would tend to radicalise the political movement. At the same time the claim of the educated classes that they were the only true representatives of the masses was also incorrect. The denial by them of any cleavage between the classes and masses was also untrue. The cleavage based on castes was an old one. The social divisions as they existed before the

⁴⁸Ibid.

advent of the British rule had been disturbed to some extent by the economic and political changes introduced by the British. But new cleavages based on economic position and education had also appeared. It was true that the social divisions based upon caste sometimes cut across divisions based on economic position and education. But this was not enough to bridge the gulf that existed between the educated and the illiterate, the urban dweller and the rural dweller. The only justification of the educated classes to claim themselves as the true representatives of the Indian public opinion was the absence of leadership among the masses. This was bound to affect adversely the interests of the masses. In spite of the claim by the educated classes that they did not neglect the issues affecting the masses, the interests of the upper and middle classes got always an edge over that of the masses. This was one of the reasons for the continued expansion of higher education and the comparative neglect of the mass education.

Many of these controversies, however, receded in the background when the political movement assumed a truly mass character in the twenties. The political emphasis on educating the masses to prevent them from sliding into radical paths also lost relevance when the political movement was taken out of constitutionalism and a direct call for the participation of the masses in the movement was given by the political leadership. The political changes

after the first world war, especially the constitutional changes introduced by Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms made free and compulsory primary education a non-debatable issue. The political emphasis shifted again to reforms in higher education to prepare an elite among the educated classes, politically oriented to lend support to the constitutional reforms and wean away the educated classes from the political turbulence of the nationalist movement after the twenties. The policy of keeping the educated classes on the constitutional track was, however, largely a failure. They were drawn more and more to the nationalist movement. The attempt to wean away the masses from the influence of political movement was also a failure.

The growth and development of radical politics during the first two decades of the century had a few distinct effects on the educated classes and the general course of educational development. These may be described as:

- i) A section of the educated classes was drawn away from the politics of liberalism. The sanctity of constitutionalism could no longer remain a political creed with them.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See, Arthur Mayhew, The Education of India, (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), p.187.

"Culturally as well as politically the extremists, following the lines laid down by Tilak, have triumphed over the moderate followers of Gokhale...."

- ii) The effect of radical politics was more on the lower middle classes than middle or higher classes. The reasons for this were obvious. The lower middle classes after they had also acquired higher education aspired for positions which were mainly the preserve of higher and middle classes. But under the existing conditions, they could not compete with them on equal terms.
- iii) Students and teachers were drawn towards radicalism in larger numbers. The participation of students and teachers in active politics became an enduring feature of the nationalist movement. The policy changes in education were also affected to a considerable extent by this event.
- iv) There was a general discontent with the existing system of education. The overall political motive of education to create a feeling of loyalty towards the empire was challenged. There was a growing realisation that education should serve as an instrument for resurrecting Indian Nationalism.
- v) It was realised that in any scheme of educational development, the education of the masses could not be neglected.
- vi) The education of the lower classes also assumed special significance due to the extension of political activity among them.

A major trend in the educational thinking during this period was a growing recognition of the fact that education could no more be considered a privilege of the few. The trend was towards aspiring for an educational system which could provide an equality in educational opportunity to the general masses. This trend was visible in many countries of the world which had been shaken due to the political events in the aftermath of the war. The major political shake-up had affected the social foundations also. A readjustment of the educational system to meet the changing political situation was taking place in many of the countries. Speaking about this general trend, the Calcutta University Commission wrote.

...modern educational thought in the West is affected by three fundamental assumptions, viz., (1) that the whole nation, without exception, should have access to educational opportunity; (2) that education should be equally accessible to both sexes; and (3) that attendance at school should be compulsory for every one up to an appointed age-limit. The growing influence of these ideas upon Indian opinion is manifest, though the difficulty of their practical application in India is obvious.⁵⁰

However, in the conditions prevailing in India at that period, the accessibility of equal educational opportunity

⁵⁰ Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917-19,
Vol.IV, Part II, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing,
1919), p.21.

to all was illusory. The country was yet far away from the bare minimum of literacy. The privileged sections had the monopoly of access to higher education. The classes which were getting politically conscious were also striving hard to reach up to the privileged section and were providing higher education to their children even at great personal sacrifices.⁵¹ The transformation of education needed a vigorous effort on the part of the whole community and a concerted action by the government.⁵²

But how this new wave of public opinion was to be created and who was to create it? The reforms introduced after the war were far below the expectations of the politically minded classes. The 'public opinion' that was being created was hostile to the reforms. Amongst the educated classes, that section which supported the reforms and on whom the government had now to depend for creating the public opinion was the breakaway section of the liberals who had left the Indian National Congress. They were now a spent force in the Indian political life. The politically motivated educated classes who were still capable of moulding the public opinion were not satisfied with the political concessions. It was at this juncture

⁵¹Ibid., p.4.

⁵²Ibid., p.7.

"A wave of public opinion, supporting the action of a new representative central authority, can alone raise the present system to a new level of usefulness and open out new educational opportunities."

that political movement took a new turn.⁵³

Radical Turn to Politics

An analysis of events during this period would reveal that objective conditions for the growth of left radicalism in Indian politics were accumulating. The main events could be listed as the first world war, bolshevik revolution in Russia and the launching of the non-co-operation movement. The events during the war had raised the political expectancy of the educated classes who were at the forefront of the political movement. They were awaiting for some major changes in the constitutional set-up of the country which would give them a substantial role to play. 'Self-government' had become a major slogan of the day. But what they got in reality was a miniature model. This was hardly enough to satisfy them except a small proportion of old-style politicians who felt that it was the consummation of their life long ambition. This alienated a large section of the educated classes who now felt uneasy over the sanctity of the beaten path of constitutionalism. This class, however, could still be cajoled by providing allurements of office in the councils or administrative jobs. The

⁵³The political developments leading to non-co-operation movement and the policy changes in education during that period have been discussed in chapter III.

factor which was not easy to control was the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions of the general population. The great strike wave of industrial workers swept the country beginning in 1918 and continuing till 1922.⁵⁴ However, these industrial strikes were not the manifestation of a politically organised labour movement. They were only an outburst of the unbearable economic hardships. As with the industrial workers, a restiveness was growing among the peasants. This prepared grounds for organised political movements in the countryside. The greatest single factor which, however, stirred the countryside was the launching of non-co-operation movement by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. Gandhi spoke in a language which was most intelligible to the masses. His great contribution lay in the fact that it broke the 'pathetic contentment' of the masses and aroused them from the slumber of the ages. From now on it became clear that any future political movement will have to draw in the support of the masses. Similarly the content of economic and social programmes would have to include the interest of the masses. Thus radicalism in politics after the twenties arose out of and against the background of the nationalist movement as represented by non-co-operation and

⁵⁴L.P.Sinha, The Left-Wing in India, (1919-47), (Muzaffarpur: New Publishers, 1965), Pp.31-32.

the international happenings, mainly the first world war and the bolshevik revolution. The important manifestations of the radical movement during this period was the formation of the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1920 and the emergence of the first communist groups in 1921-22. Simultaneously a number of peasant, youth and students' organisations were also born during this period. This period also saw the beginning of the left-wing inside the Congress mainly under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Yet another important event which was of consequence during this period was the withdrawal of non-co-operation movement in 1922. This bewildered and confused a large section of the nationalists and at the same time started a process of disenchantment and disillusionment with the path of non-violent non-co-operation. That section of youth which had been inspired by the mass movement and was expecting bigger events to take place was largely dissatisfied by the course of events and started looking for alternatives. Many of these youths had responded to the call of Gandhi and abandoned their schools and colleges. Some had even left their homes. They were not satisfied by either the substitute of parliamentary politics of the Swarajists or the constructive programme offered by Gandhi. They either drifted towards revolutionary terrorism or were attracted to the communist groups. A common feature of these emerging radical groups, viz.,

left-wing inside the Congress, communist groups and the revolutionary terrorists, was the influence of socialist ideology among them. This influence was, however, limited to the realm of ideas. There was yet little attempt to give it an organised shape. The major attempt was to influence the course of the nationalist movement. On the eve of the Gaya Congress in 1922, M.N.Roy came out with a programme of revolutionary nationalism. It spelled out three main tasks of the nationalist movement. These were: complete independence, a National Assembly elected on universal adult suffrage, and a federal republican form of government.⁵⁵ It is of interest to note that though education was a low priority item in the revolutionary programme, Roy did not forget to include the demand for free and compulsory education as one of the detailed items. This was a recognition of the fact that any new scheme of political advancement would now have to include items concerning the general welfare of the masses. In 1925, the Foundation Conference of the Worker's and Peasants' Party was held. It also put forward the demand of free and compulsory education for the workers.⁵⁶ Its first convention as an all-India party was held in 1923 and a plan of revolutionary nationalism was formulated by the party. Its aim was to

⁵⁵Ibid., p.146.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.180.

prepare the workers and peasants for political action. It refuted the contention that the illiteracy and general backwardness of the masses were the real obstacles for any revolutionary action.

The growth of radical politics was more pronounced after the thirties. The nationalist movement itself adopted a more militant posture and within it the left-wing was getting more vocal. It finally culminated in the birth of Congress Socialist Party in 1934. There was also a spurt in the youth and peasant movements. The All-India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936. It may be noted that the spurt in the radical movement was again in the aftermath of the withdrawal of civil disobedience movement in 1934. Thus it could be said that each successive wave of mass movement created conditions for the growth of radical movement. The Congress Socialist Party proclaimed two broad aims, viz., to check the drift to neo-constitutionalism and to put the nationalist movement on a new foundation. It also adopted a socialist-oriented programme of economic and political development. The programme not only talked of independence from the foreign rulers but emphasized that the transfer of power should be to the producing masses. It talked of socialization of key industries, redistribution of land, co-operative and collective farming. The formulation of immediate political programme also included free and compulsory primary education and the liquidation

of adult literacy. A number of small left groups and parties emerged during this period; notable among these was the founding of the Forward Block by Subhash Chandra Bose after his rift with Gandhi in 1938. During 1935-39, there was also an attempt to forge a united front of all radical parties. It was the influence of radical ideology among the youth, which put them in the vanguard of the national movement in 1942 when almost the entire leadership of the Indian National Congress was imprisoned. It was again the Congress Socialists and the Forward Blockists which were in the forefront of the movement. There were many points of difference among the radical groups and parties that emerged after the twenties. But there were some common elements which need mention at this stage which will help us understand their basic approach to education and the influence they exerted on the educational system in general and among the youth in particular. We will enumerate these common elements.

- i) The various left groups and parties that emerged after the twenties urged the adoption of a comprehensive programme of economic and political development embracing the immediate basic demands of workers and peasants.
- ii) National freedom to them was not confined to liberation from the foreign rule, but meant social, economic and political emancipation of the people of India.

- iii) They all declared Marxian socialism in general to be their basic philosophy.
- iv) There was a growing sense of socialistic internationalism among them.
- v) They laid emphasis on a secular, rational and scientific outlook.
- vi) They believed that unless basic institutional changes were not effected, the social evils could not be rooted out.

Education in the New Political Context

The reorganisation of the educational system after the twenties was motivated mainly by two considerations, viz., political changes introduced through the constitutional reforms of 1919 and 1935; and the course of the national movement which oscillated between direct mass action and a policy of compromise. The recommendations of the Hartog Committee in 1929 and the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1935 on the reorganisation of education in India were in the context of the political situation arising out of the reformed councils and the challenges thrown by the national movement.⁵⁷ The influence of radical politics on education could be analysed from two viewpoints. One, to what extent the radical groups and parties propounded any educational policy, if at all they did.

⁵⁷ See, Chapter III, Pp. 196 and 229.

Two, to what extent the spread of radical ideology affected the official policies on education. For the radical parties, their overall policy was a renunciation of the whole system built by British imperialism. The educational structure was also a part of the total system and when opportunity came during the non-co-operation movement in 1920-21, they came forward enthusiastically to support the call for the boycott of educational institutions. In fact a large number of individuals imbued with radical ideology joined the national institutions. Narandrajev, Sampurnanand, Sri prakasa and a number of others were all the products of the national institutions. Many active political workers of the radical groups and parties served as teachers in the national institutions. Notable among them was S.A.Dange, the founder member of Communist Party of India. All the radical parties directed their efforts to organising the students and it was through the student organisations that they put forward their educational demands. There was an attempt also to enlist the services of the youth in organising the workers and peasants. In areas where the mass movements were strong, as in parts of Andhra, Bengal and Kerala, there was a systematic effort to control the management of private institutions. Thus all the radical political parties realised the importance of building up political consciousness through controlling the educational institutions. But the extent of this control was limited

and was confined to only a few pockets where they could build an active cadre of party workers. The policy was directed towards political education of the party activists and to actively associate the students and the educational institutions in spreading the radical political ideology. But there was no effort^{to}/spell out any educational policy as such. What form and shape the educational system of the country would take in a socialist system remained an unanswered question. It was left to the future when the colonial system would end and the country could be organised on socialist principles.⁵⁸

The major efforts of all the radical groups and parties, whether the left-wing within the Indian National Congress, the Communist Party of India, the Congress Socialist Party and similar other parties was to organise the youth. It was through these youth organisations that they spread the ideology of left and gripped the imagination of the younger generation. The existing system of education could not inspire the youth to play an effective role in the transformation of society. The educational system was elitist in orientation and was directed towards providing a leadership for running the administration

⁵⁸The exposition given above is based on an interview held on 6.4.1972 with Gangadhar Adhikari, the veteran leader of the Communist Party of India.

under the limited provincial autonomy. The Civil Disobedience Movement in the thirties gave an outlet to the youth and it also undermined their faith in the existing system of education. The youth organisations tried to exert pressure on the nationalist movement for adopting a revolutionary programme.

The vista of a new world which was opened by successful revolutionary movement abroad and by science and technology profoundly moved the youth of the country. The rising temper of nationalism no doubt largely conditioned the character of the movement. The student movement of 1928 was equally alive to the very important task of self-development and self-expression in every aspect of life. From the very beginning the importance of supplementing the limited scope of education in the institutions of a country under foreign bondage was realised.⁵⁹

It was during the growth of left forces within the Congress especially after the Karachi session that the politically organised students' organisations started showing a lively interest in the future political and economic set-up of the country. The following resolution was passed in the All-India Student's Convention held in Karachi in 1931.

No form of government would be acceptable to the youth unless it marked the end of all exploitation of masses and advocated the reconstruction of society on the basis of equality of all men and women and the nationalisation of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Amarendra Nath Roy, Students Fight For Freedom, (Calcutta: Anand Bazar Patrika Office, 1967), Pp.16-17.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.76.

Opposition was also expressed against any policy of compromise. The resolution further stated.

While expressing its confidence in Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Committee for their inspiring conduct of Satyagraha campaign, this conference expresses its disappointment at the Gandhi-Irwin settlement and urges upon the Indian National Congress not to lower the flag of complete independence.⁶¹

The All-India Student's Federation, the youth wing of the Communist Party of India, also emphasized the need for a radical reorientation of the educational system. It talked of the existing educational curriculum as serving the imperialist rulers and made a case to revise it drastically. But it did not specify the new direction or the new content that the curriculum would have. The reference to curriculum was on very general terms. It pointed an accusing finger that the government bias had always been towards serving the vested interests as against the common people. The only positive demands put forward by the Student's Federation were the active cooperation of the students in any scheme of educational development. For inculcating a democratic spirit inside educational institutions, the demand was voiced that students' bodies be represented in the College councils. Democratic functioning of the college unions was also demanded.⁶²

⁶¹Loc.cit.

⁶²Towards a Complete Reorganisation of Medical Education and Public Health, (Bombay: People's House Ltd., 1948) Pp.2-7.

The influence of radical ideology among the youth and their organization on political lines was felt during the Quit-India Movement of 1942. Bereft of political leadership and a concrete programme of action, they plunged themselves headlong into the movement of national liberation. The large scale participation of students in the Quit-India movement of 1942 was a testimony to the rapid spread of radical ideology among them. The ethics of violence or non-violence did not worry them much. In fact, the call given by Subhash Chandra Bose that students should organize secret guerilla bands for carrying on sabotage and girl students should do underground work of all kinds especially of secret messengers inspired them to a greater extent than the message of non-violence. For the youth socialism, radicalism and revolution became a fashion and a matter of pride. The growth of this attitude was itself a remarkable achievement of radical politics. Where the radical movement failed was its inability to give an institutional form to the socialist ideology and ensure the identification of the masses with it. The new vision remained mainly confined to the educated elite and the educational system which was elitist in its nature encouraged this tendency.

To what extent the growth of radical ideology in politics affected the official thinking in education is hard to determine. The reason being that the reorientation of educational policies was thought of in the context

of a number of factors operating simultaneously. For example, the economic depression of the thirties which rocked the entire capitalist structure affected India also. It brought in its train the problem of unemployment among the educated youth. The Sapru Committee appointed in 1934 by the Government of United Provinces pinpointed the widely prevalent unemployment among the educated youth as the main cause of unrest among them.⁶³ Similarly the Central Advisory Board of Education in its first meeting in 1935 discussed the question of educational reconstruction and recommended a radical readjustment of the system of education so that the youth could be led to occupations or vocational institutions after the completion of appropriate stages of education.⁶⁴ A little earlier, the Hartog Committee showed concern for the failure of secondary education to move in purposive directions of providing an intermediary leadership. Hence it talked of preparing a 'directing class'. The education of the masses was again with a view to giving political stability in the midst of a turbulent political climate. Thus, the growth of radicalism among the students, workers and peasants had an indirect influence of pushing through educational reforms to wean away the swelling ranks of youth

⁶³ S.N. Mukherji, History of Education in India, Modern Period, (Baroda: Acharya Book Depot, 1966), p.214.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.215.

from its influence. But this attempt was largely a failure. The growth of radical ideology emphasized the need for introducing basic changes in the economic and political structure without which any major transformation in the educational system could not be made effective. It stressed the necessity of removing the political, economic and social constraints before a comprehensive national plan on educational development could be evolved and worked out. If there was any real challenge to the existing educational system, it was from the concept of basic education as propounded by Gandhi. Gandhi wanted to obliterate the distinction between work and education and his educational philosophy was a radical departure from the elitist nature of the existing educational system. But basic education was incorporated as a part of the existing institutional structure itself. In this process of institutionalization it lost its spirit and the educated elites made it a convenient tool in furthering their own interests. The failure of the radical groups and parties to evolve an alternative framework of the educational system arose out of their failure on the political front to work out institutional forms for the spread of socialist ideology. The programme of basic education provided an opportunity to work out and think on an entirely new foundation of education but all this was deferred till India gained political independence. When independence came, the whole

institutional framework was intact. The tendency was to adjust the radical thinking and ideology to the framework rather than build a new structure to suit the post-independence challenges in education.

This chapter discusses the growth of radicalism in Indian politics and the influences it exercised in the educational development of India during 1904-47. Radicalism in politics arose out of the contradictions that developed in the middle class political leadership in the late nineteenth century. Till 1920, it inspired a spirit of revivalism and was mainly confined to the educated classes. Its effects were visible in the increasing participation of students in active politics and national education movement. Its influence on official educational policies was reflected in the concern shown regarding mass education and higher education by the rulers. To prevent the growth of radicalism among the educated classes became a common educational theme during that period. It could be said that it was only in the period of radicalization of politics that the political significance of mass education was realised. The influence of radicalism on the educated classes and the possibility of their influence extending to the unlettered masses became an important factor in the reshaping of educational policies. After 1920, due to the course taken by the national movement and also on account of international events like war and revolution

in Russia, radicalism in politics took a new turn. It was now left-oriented and came under the influence of socialist ideology. A number of left groups and parties emerged. Within the Congress, a left-wing started exerting influence. All these groups and parties wanted to give a positive content to the economic and social programmes in favour of the exploited classes. The major emphasis was in organising the workers, peasants and the students. The influence of socialist thinking and ideology was especially noteworthy among the youths. But there was no attempt to provide any alternative policy on education. The emphasis was on exposing the weaknesses of the existing system of education. The thinking was that a comprehensive national plan on education could be taken up only after the economic, political and social constraints were removed. Radicalism in politics inspired the youth with the ideology of socialism but failed to evolve an alternative institutional framework. This failure could be seen in the education front also.
