

CHAPTER - VI

Education of the Depressed Classes from 1922 to 1932

The Political Scene at the Beginning of the Period

The Montague Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 had provided for a greater participation of the Indians in administration. Under the Government of India Act, 1919, the representation of the Indian members on the provincial assemblies, executive bodies and other committees had been increased. There was a mixed public reaction to these reforms. Whereas the Reforms were appreciated by some sections of the society, a large majority of the people especially those under the influence of Gandhiji and Indian National Congress had resented against the Act. The Depressed classes were also divided on this issue. One group of Depressed class leaders supported Gandhiji and the Congress while the other was opposed to the Congress policies. The emergence of two factions in the Depressed classes increased their participation in the politics as each of the two wings had started mobilising opinion in its favour so as to gain political support of the majority of the Depressed classes.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, the Indian National Congress had started evincing interest in the elevation of the Depressed classes since 1917. Uptill 1917, the Congress had followed a policy of absentation with regard to socio-religious matters and all questions of a religious or quasi-religious character were kept outside its

deliberations. But Gandhiji had changed the very character of the Congress by integrating socio-religious reform with political activity. It was mainly at his insistence that the Congress had adopted a definite resolution in 1917, for removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the Depressed classes. In February, 1922, the Congress working committee in Bardoli had passed a resolution setting out the details of a constructive programme, one of whose items was 'to organise the Depressed classes for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the other citizens enjoy'.¹ The Congress, under the leadership of Gandhiji, considered untouchability as a social vice. Though some other leaders had also taken up the issues relating to the welfare of the Depressed classes. ~~but~~ Gandhiji's approach was different to theirs. For example, he never thought of regenerating the Hindu society as did Veer Savarkar, nor did he desire to refashion the social order by accepting the separation of the Depressed classes from the Hindu society as considered by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar but as a social reformer, Gandhiji wanted to renovate the old Hindu structure by eliminating the undesirable social practices of untouchability. His difference

¹Nurullah and Naik, A History of Education in India, London, MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1951, p.590(quoted).

of opinion with such leaders of the Depressed classes which believed in the separate identity of these classes was naturally an ideological difference and therefore, his approach to solving the problems of these classes also differed. The second group of Depressed class leaders generally looked to the British Government for their elevation. They dissociated themselves with the Indian National Congress and believed in demanding rights and privileges direct from the Government. These people did not have much faith in the benevolence of high caste Hindus and their attempts were more directed to gaining a political status for the Depressed classes as a distinct Minority.

The period 1922-1932 opens with an atmosphere surcharged with political activities. The Montague Chelmsford Reforms were being implemented despite opposition. Among the fourteen non-official members nominated by the Governor-General to the Central Legislative Assembly one was the representative of the Depressed classes. In the Provincial Assemblies, the Depressed classes were represented by four nominations in the Central Provinces, two in Bombay, two in Bihar and one each in Bengal and United Provinces. In Madras, ten members were nominated to represent nine specified Depressed classes.² The nomination of the Depressed classes to the legislative bodies provided them with opportunities to

²Keer, D., Dr. Ambedkar, Life and Mission, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1962, p.60.

voice demands for their welfare and also to criticise the discriminatory practices against them. As a Corollary, the Depressed classes were becoming politically conscious. Political consciousness generated a sort of dynamism in these classes and made them bold to fight for their rights. Provisions for educational facilities were also included in the political demands of these members.

Depressed Classes' Fight for Social Equality

The spread of some education among the Depressed classes during the last three or four decades had created in them a desire for more. A new leadership of educated persons from among these classes now came forward to espouse their cause. Some of the prominent activities, undertaken by these people, for the welfare of the Depressed classes were as the following:

(a) Mr. Gholap's Demand for Expansion of Primary Education

In 1923, Mr. Gholap, the first nominated representative of the Depressed classes in the Bombay Legislative Council moved a resolution recommending Government to make primary education compulsory in order to bring it within the reach of the Depressed classes. He and his colleagues also urged upon the Government to look into the various basic amenities such as supply of drinking water, admission into public conveyances, erection of hostels for the Depressed class girls etc. and do the needful.³

³Ibid. P.52.

(b) The Bole Resolutions

An important action of the Bombay Legislative Council was the adoption of a resolution on August 4, 1923 on the opening of public services to the Depressed classes. The Resolution was moved by Honourable Member S.K.Bole, who himself belonged to Bhandari caste, a caste superior to the Depressed classes. The Resolution read as:⁴

'The Council recommends that the untouchable class be allowed to use all public watering places, wells and dharamshalas which are built and maintained out of public funds or administered by bodies appointed by Government or created by Statute as well as public schools, courts, offices and dispensaries'.

In pursuance of the Council's Resolution, the Government of Bombay had issued the following directives to the Heads of the various offices on September 11, 1923:⁵

'In pursuance of the foregoing Council Resolution, the Government of Bombay are pleased to direct that all Heads of offices should give effect to the Resolution so far as it relates to the public places and institutions belonging to and maintained by the Government. The collectors should be requested to advise the local public bodies in their jurisdiction to consider the desirability of accepting the recommendation made in the Resolution as far as it relates to them'.

The Resolution was not virtually worked upon for a very long period. On August 5, 1926, Honourable Member, S.K.Bole, moved another resolution in pursuance of the earlier one in the Bombay Legislative Council recommending the Government

⁴Ibid., p.53

⁵Ibid.

not to give any grant to those municipalities and local boards which refused to give effect to the resolution on the subject passed by the Council three years ago'.⁶ This Resolution was also adopted. These two Resolutions adopted by the Bombay Legislative Assembly provided the Depressed classes with the legal sanctions to use places of public interests. It was now upto them to make use of the law or to ignore it.

(c) The Mahad Case

In pursuance of the above two Resolutions, the Mahad Municipality had thrown open its tank called the 'Chowdar Tank' to the Depressed classes. But the Depressed classes had no courage to take drinking water from the Chowdar Tank for quite a long period. To instil in them a sense of security, the Kolaba District Depressed Classes decided to hold a Conference at Mahad on March 19 and 20, 1927. It is reported that about ten thousand delegates attended the Conference.⁷ The Conference passed resolutions for the upliftment of the Depressed classes. By one resolution, the Conference appealed to the caste Hindus to help the Untouchables secure their civil rights; employ them in services; offer food to their students and bury their dead animals themselves. By another resolution, the Conference appealed

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

to the Government to prohibit the Untouchables by special laws from eating carrion; enforce prohibition; provide them with free and compulsory primary education; give aid to the Depressed class hostels and make the Bole Resolutions a living reality. The vast multitude of the Depressed classes then proceeded to the chowdar tank and took water from it to celebrate the opening of tank water to all human beings without distinctions of caste and religion. The incident had its own significance in the way that it was a step to awake the Depressed classes to their political rights on the one hand. It had also stirred orthodox among the Hindus as an insult. The orthodox believed that the Chowdar tank which was being used by them and also by the Muslims and Christians, had been polluted by the touch of the Untouchables. Tension spread in the town and finally riots began. Many of the Depressed class members were injured. The Mahad incident had far reaching consequences. It introduced a change in the current social and political life. Public meetings, held at various places, condemned the incident, congratulated the Depressed classes for their bold step, and appealed to the Bombay Government to give an effect to the 'Bole Resolution'. Instead of redressing the grievances of the Depressed classes and ensuring them their rights, the Mahad Municipality revoked its earlier resolution. The Depressed classes decided to retaliate the decision of the Mahad Municipality and announced December 25, 26, and 27, 1927 as the dates for offering Satyagraha to press

for the righteousness of their cause.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar had acted as the leader of this Conference. His straight forwardness and boldness made him still more popular. He was a believer in the principle that self help is the best help and considered that as long as the conscience of a slave does not burn with hatred for his slavery, there is no hope for his salvation. Dr.Ambedkar was agitated at the behaviour of the orthodox Hindus. He wanted the Depressed classes to rise to the occasion and put forth their demands. Addressing the gathering, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar had said:⁸

"This Conference has been called to inaugurate an era of equality in this land.....Removal of Untouchability and intercaste dinners will not put an end to our ills.....All departments of services such as courts, military, commerce and police should be open to us..... The Hindu society should be organised on the main principles of 'Equality' and 'Absence of Casteism'".

It is reported that the proposed Satyagrah had to be postponed for some reasons but this incident had an impact on the Depressed classes. They felt that it was time to unite together and raise demands from political platforms. Some other incidents of the period ^{had} also awakened the Depressed classes to fight for equality with caste Hindus, for example, in the year 1925, Mr.Ramaswami Naicker,

⁸Ibid., Pp.99-100.

a non-brahmin leader at Vaikam in the Travancore state organised a passive resistance for vindicating the rights of untouchables to use a certain road to which they were forbidden entry. As a consequence, the road was thrown open to the untouchables.⁹ In 1926, an untouchable by the name Murgesan entered a Hindu temple in Madras despite the customary ban on the untouchables. He was discovered, arrested and convicted on a charge of defiling the Hindu temple.¹⁰

Social and political strifes on the lines as mentioned above, played a considerable role in uniting the Depressed classes. These incidents also brought to the forefront the leadership among the Depressed classes. These leaders made organised attempts to draw the attention of the Government and the public for the elevation of these classes. Some voluntary organisations were also established to work for the amelioration of the Depressed classes. These organisations served as a political platform for the Depressed classes to discuss their problems jointly and arrive at decisions. They also organised certain programmes for the amelioration of the Depressed classes. One of the popular organisation of the period to take up such a work was the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha.

⁹Ibid., p.63.

¹⁰Ibid.

(d) The Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha

The Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha was founded on July 20, 1924 and got registered under the Societies Act of 1860. The following were the aims and objectives of the Sabha:¹¹

- (i) To promote the spread of education among the Depressed classes by opening hostels or by employing such other means as may seem necessary or desirable;
- (ii) To promote the spread of culture among the Depressed classes by opening libraries, social centres and classes or study circles;
- (iii) To advance and improve the economic conditions of the Depressed classes by starting industrial and agricultural schools;
- (iv) To represent the grievances of the Depressed classes.

Sir Chiman Lal Setalvad was elected as the President of the Sabha and its Vice-Presidents were Mr. Meyer Nissim Rustomji Jinwala; Nariman G.K., Dr. R.P. Pranjpye, Dr. V.P. Chavan and Mr. B.G. Kher, On the managing committee Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was elected as the Chairman, Mr. Shivtarkar as the Secretary and Mr. N.T. Jadav as the Treasurer. Bombay was to be the Headquarters of the Sabha and the province of

¹¹Ibid.

Bombay as the jurisdiction of its activities.¹²

The Bhashkrit Hitkarni Sabha devoted itself to raising the Depressed classes from their downtrodden conditions to a status of social and political equality with other caste Hindus and also to promote the economic interests of the Depressed classes. The Sabha considered that educational development among these classes could be an important means for enhancing the social, political and economic status of these classes, but it could not be an end in itself. Dr. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Executive, was of the opinion that the jobs in the lower categories of services and military that were being demanded by the Depressed classes were not enough to raise them in the scale of life. He knew that the more the education, the more the chances for progress and the easier the opportunities for his people. But he did not consider educational progress as the lone factor that could ameliorate the Depressed classes. Rather Dr. Ambedkar held the views that by investing the Depressed classes with political equality and political power, the problem of their education would be automatically solved through governmental agencies.¹³ The Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha, therefore, devoted itself more to the political problems than to other activities. But it had also taken up some educational programmes. Regarding the educational

¹²Ibid., Pp.60-64.

¹³Ibid.

activities of the Bhahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha, the Sabha established a hostel for high school students of the Depressed classes on January 4, 1925 and bore the expenses incurred by the students on clothes, stationery and boarding. The Sholapur Municipality sanctioned a grant of rupees forty per month (Rs.40/-) towards the maintenance of the hostel. The Sabha also started an institution for the Depressed class students with a view to inculcating a liking for knowledge and learning and a love for social service. Another educational activity of the Sabha was that under its directions, the students conducted a monthly magazine called 'Sarswati Vilas'. In addition, the Sabha managed a free reading room in Bombay and a Mahar Hockey Club was also started by it with the hope of persuading the untouchables to set their faces against gambling, drinking and other vices, and unhealthy ways of recreation.¹⁴ The Chairman of the Managing Committee of the Sabha emphasized upon the development of Higher education in the Depressed classes. Speaking in the newly constituted legislative Council in 1927, on the Budget proposals, Dr.Ambedkar had pleaded; "Education is something which ought to be to make higher education as cheap to the lower classes as it can possible be made.....if all these communities are to be brought to the level of equality, then the only remedy is to

¹⁴Ibid, p.62.

adopt the principle of inequality and to give favoured treatment to those who are below the level'.¹⁵

(e) The Depressed Classes Education Society

As already discussed, the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha devoted its activities on the social and political fronts and around 1928, it had reached a stage that it was very much preoccupied with political activities. The Executive of the organisation, therefore, considered to establish another organisation that may look after the educational programmes of the Sabha. A minitiature organisation by the name of Depressed classes Education society was founded in 1928 with the objective to organise school education for the Depressed Classes on a sound basis.¹⁶ Dr. Ambedkar had already established two hostels for Depressed class pupils in June, 1927. He transferred their management to this society. On an appeal by the Depressed classes Education Society, the Governor of Bombay approved of a plan (in October, 1928) sanctioning hostels for the special benefit of secondary school pupils of these classes. It appears that the Government's grant to the Society was insufficient to meet the expenses of these hostels. Dr. Ambedkar also collected donations by appealing to the various organisations and philanthropic individuals in the country to extend monetary

¹⁵Ibid., p.83.

¹⁶Ibid., p.128.

help to the Society.¹⁷

(f) The Representation of the Depressed Class Associations to the Simon Commission.

The Simon Commission was appointed in 1927 to re-examine and revise the Act of 1919. The Indian National Congress was opposed to its constituent membership and had decided to boycott it. But the Central Government had appointed a Committee for the whole of British India to help the Commission. In addition every legislative council had also to elect its provincial committee to work with the Simon Commission. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was selected on the Bombay Provincial Committee on August 3, 1928.¹⁸ His membership on the Committee was a source of encouragement for the various Depressed class organisations to represent their case.

Eighteen Depressed class Associations had represented to the Simon Commission. Sixteen of them had pleaded for separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. On behalf of the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha, Dr.Ambedkar,himself, appeared before the Simon Commission. He submitted a memorandum demanding joint electorate with reservation of seats for the Depressed classes. The Act of 1919 had provided for the nomination of the members representing the various communities. Dr.Ambedkar submitted that the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha was opposed to the principle of nomination and insisted upon the extension of the principle of election to the Depressed

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p.114.

classes. It also demanded 22 out of 140 seats in the Bombay Legislative Council.¹⁹ In addition to the demands for adequate representation of the Depressed classes, the memorandum also contained demands for putting the provisions of education of the Depressed classes to be the first charge on the revenues of the province.²⁰ It also pleaded for according the right for recruitment in the Army, Navy and Police to the Depressed classes.²¹

In his interview before the Simon Commission on October 23, 1928 on the memorandum referred to above, Dr. Ambedkar clarified to the Commission that the 'Untouchables' and the 'Depressed classes' were synonymous terms but they did not include the scheduled Tribes or Hill Tribes etc.²² Advancing his arguments for the recognition of the Depressed classes as a distinct minority, he submitted that of the different minorities, the Depressed classes needed greater political protection since they were educationally backward, socially deprived, economically poor, and suffered from certain grave political disabilities from which no other community suffered.²³

The report of the Simon Commission was released in May, 1930. The Commission had recommended for continuation

¹⁹Ibid., p.115.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., Pp.116-117 (quoted from Indian Statutory Commission, Vol.XVI, Pp.52-53.

²³Ibid., Pp.119-120.

of separate electorates in Indian elections for want of any agreed pact among the Indian political parties. It had allocated 150 seats to the Hindus including the Depressed classes out of a total number of 250 seats in the Central Legislature. It had also proposed joint electorates with reservation of seats for the Depressed classes but with the condition that no candidate of these classes was allowed to contest the election unless his fitness was certified by the Governor of the Province. The Governor was as well empowered to authorise a non-Depressed class member to contest on their behalf.

An All India Conference of the Depressed classes had been convened at Nagpur on August 8, 1930 to discuss the Recommendations of the Simon Commission.²⁴ Communicating his dissatisfaction over the arrangements recommended by the Commission, Dr. Ambedkar explained to the Conference that the provisions that authorised the Governor to certify the fitness of a candidate and to select even a non-Depressed class member to represent the Depressed classes were nothing else than mere nominations. If the Governor opted to choose only one candidate in one constituency, there could be no elections. He, therefore, gave a call to the Depressed classes to demand the right to elect representatives of their own choice, untrammelled by any condition or limitation whatsoever.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., Pp.140-41.

²⁵Ibid.

Other Significant Political Events Having
a Bearing on the Welfare of the Depressed
Classes.

The dissatisfaction of the Depressed class leaders over the recommendations of the Simon Commission was at a juncture when Congress had started its campaign for 'Swaraj'. The Congress, at its Lahore session in 1929, passed the famous Independence Resolution. The Resolution also called upon Congressmen and others to refrain from direct or indirect participation in future elections. It also authorised the All India Congress Committee to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. The threatened Civil Disobedience Movement began with Gandhiji's 'Dandi March' on 12th March, 1930. The political events in the country brought the various political organisations nearer to each other. In order to handle the deteriorating situation, the British convened a Round Table Conference in London wherein the representatives of the British Government, Indian states and the various political organisations were invited to frame a Constitution for India.

(a) Round Table Conferences and the Controversy over the
Status of the Depressed Classes.

Of the various political organisations of India, the Indian National Congress did not join the first session of the Round Table Conference. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan represented the organisations of the Depressed

classes.²⁶ Dr. Ambedkar had strongly supported the nationalistic demand for 'Swaraj' i.e. replacing the existing Government by the Government of the people, for the people and by the people. Justifying his arguments he had said, "When we compare our present position with that one which it was our lot to bear the Indian society of Pre-British days, we find that instead of marching on, we are marking time."²⁷ Dr. Ambedkar also pleaded on the need to provide safeguards for the Depressed classes in the Constitution of India and to recognise them as a minority. Organisations representing other minority communities had also put forth their cases. The Minority Committee of the Conference concluded its deliberations by the remarks that 'The Minorities and the Depressed classes were definite in their assertion that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution of India unless their demands were met in a reasonable manner'.²⁸ After recording the reports of the different sub-committees, the First Round Table Conference adjourned on January 19, 1931.

The First Round Table Conference had been held with the Congress keeping severely aloof, but later on, through the intervention of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 1931, was signed. The Civil Disobedience Movement was

²⁶Ibid., p.144.

²⁷Ibid., p.150.

²⁸Ibid., p.154.

suspended. The Indian National Congress had authorised Gandhiji to act as its sole representative. In the third week of July, 1931, the names of the delegates to the second Round Table Conference were announced. Dr. Ambedkar, Shastri, Sapru, Jayakar, Selatvad, Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Mahatma Gandhi, Mriza Ismail, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Ramaswami Mudiliyar were some of the prominent leaders to participate on the Indian side. The session commenced on September 7, 1931.²⁹ An outstanding feature of this session was the presence of Gandhiji. Gandhiji made his first speech in the Conference on September 15, 1931 and claimed that the Congress represented 'All India Interests and Classes' and also that the Congress represented the Depressed classes because removal of untouchability was a plank on the political platform of All India Congress.³⁰ The Minorities Committee met for the first time on September 28, 1931. Dr. Ambedkar demanded separate electorates for the Depressed classes. In his demands he was supported by other Minorities except the Sikhs. The Round Table Conference continued its deliberations in the midst of an atmosphere full of controversies, disagreements, adjournments, postponements. Finally MacDonalld in his speech on November 13, 1931 officially announced the

²⁹Ibid., p.163.

³⁰Ibid., Pp.171-72.

Minorities Pact and the Depressed classes' demand for separate electorates as embodied in it.³¹ It recognised Depressed classes as a distinct minority and contained safeguards for them. Gandhiji was shocked to know it.

Resenting the Award, he had said:

'I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities but the claim advanced on behalf of the Untouchables is to me the unkindest cut of all. It means the perpetual bar sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the Untouchables for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of Untouchables..... and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the untouchables.....I would top the pool.....We do not want on our register and on our Census Untouchables, classified as a separate class. The Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may the Muslims, so may the Europeans. Will Untouchables remain Untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than that Untouchability lived. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. Those who speak of political rights of Untouchables do not know India, do not know how the Indian society is today constructed, and therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command, that if I was the only person to resist this thing, I would resist it with my life'.³²

On December 1, 1931, Mr. Ramasay MacDonald concluded the Round Table Conference with the remarks that the decisions announced in the first session of the Round Table Conference represented the policy of the British Empire.³³ Gandhiji could not reconcile himself with such a decision. He left the Conference in disgust.

³¹Tendulkar, D.G., 'Mahatma - Life of Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi, Vol.III, Delhi, Publication Division, Govt. of India, 1961, p.128.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p.130.

(b) Gandhiji's Stake for the Cause of the Depressed Classes

After attending the second Round Table Conference, Gandhiji landed in Bombay on December 23, 1931. He was arrested in the early hours of January 4, 1932 and imprisoned in the Yervada Jail at Poona. Gandhiji's arrest was followed by mass scale arrests of Congress leaders and volunteers. On March 11, 1932, Gandhiji wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare about the impending Communal Award. Gandhiji had thought at first that he would await the announcement and then take appropriate action. But in fairness to the British Government, he decided to give a previous notice warning them respectfully that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed classes, "I must fast unto death".³⁴ Addressing Sir Hoare, he had written:³⁵

'You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference when the minorities claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorate to the Depressed classes. This was not said in the heat of the moment nor by way of rhetoric. It was meant to be a serious statement. In pursuance of that statement, I had hoped on my return to India to mobilise the public opinion against separate electorate at any rate for the Depressed classes but it was not to be.....
.....'I need hardly reiterate all the objections of the separate electorates for the Depressed classes. I feel as if I was one of them. Their case stands on a wholly different footing from that of others. I am not against the representation in the legislatures. I should favour every one of their adults registered as voters, irrespective of education or property qualification even though the franchise test may be stricter for others. But I hold that separate electorate is harmful

³⁴Ibid., Pp. 159-60.

³⁵Ibid.

for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from the purely political standpoint. To appreciate the harm that the separate electorates would do them, one has to know how they are distributed among the so called caste Hindus and how dependent they are on the latter. So far Hinduism is concerned, separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it.....'

'For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though as it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue'.....

.....
'But I know that the separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have grooved under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed classes, I must fast unto death'.

On August. 17th, 1932, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald announced the provisional scheme of minority representation popularly known as the Communal Award. The scheme fixed the number of seats in the provincial Legislatures at approximately double the number in the existing councils. The separate electorates were retained for the minority communities. The Depressed classes were entitled to separate electorate. While creating specially reserved constitutencies for Depressed classes, it gave them the additional right to contest seats in the general constituencies, with the provision that special electorates and reservation of seats would lapse after 20 years.³⁶

³⁶Ibid., p.161.

The Premier's scheme confirmed the worst fears of Gandhiji. He wrote on August 13 to Ramsay MacDonald about his resolve to resist the scheme by resorting to 'a perpetual fast unto Death from September 20, 1932'³⁷ In his reply, the Premier regretted that the Government's decision could not be changed except on the conditions laid down in that decision. Rather the Premier had charged Mr. Gandhi as having inimical intentions towards the Depressed classes. Refuting Gandhiji's decision for 'fast unto death', MacDonald criticised Gandhiji's move as:³⁸

"I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed classes should have joint electorates with other Hindus, because that is already provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures, which will have a dominating influence on their future.....
..... In response to a very general request from Indians, after they had failed to produce a settlement themselves, the Government much against their will, undertook to give a decision on the minorities question. They have now given it and they cannot be expected to alter it except on the condition they have stated. I am afraid, therefore, that my answer to you must be that the Government's decision stands, and that only an agreement of communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that the Government have devised'.

The announcement of Gandhiji's decision to fast unto death on the Communal Award bestirred the people to action, and served as a signal for a countrywide demand for revision

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., p.162.

of the Premier's decision. There were mixed reactions, of course, but the Indian opinion generally sympathised with Mahatma Gandhi. As a result thereof, the attitudes of some of the Depressed class leaders softened, and the conscience of some of the orthodox Hindu leaders pricked. The very feeling of Gandhiji's fast unto death created that social awakening for ameliorating the condition of the Depressed classes which could not have been possible even with a mass campaign. The Depressed classes leader, M.C.Rajah, in a statement, dated September 13, 1932 condemned the Communal Award and made an appeal for concerted action on the part of all sections to save Gandhiji's life. In the earlier stages Dr. Ambedkar termed Gandhiji's announcement as a political stunt.³⁹

On September 14, 1932, all the temples in Allahabad were thrown open to the members of the Depressed classes, and this example was followed in several other cities. On September 19, 1932, meetings were held all over the country, demanding withdrawal of the Premier's decision in respect of the separate electorate for the Depressed classes. A Hindu Leaders Conference consisting of more than hundred delegates met in Bombay on this day under the Chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. Prominent among those who participated in the Conference were Sapru, Jayakar, Rajgopalachari, Rajinder Pershad, M.C.Rajah, B.R. Ambedkar, Chiman Lal Setalvad,

³⁹Ibid., p.164.

M.C.Aney, Dr.Moonji, P.Baloo, Kunzuru, and A.V.Thakkar.

It was decided that the blot of untouchability must be eradicated at the earliest moment. A manifesto was drafted and it was to be signed by all present, pledging themselves to fight untouchability till it was completely eradicated. But no decision on constitutional issues could finally be arrived at.⁴⁰

Gandhiji started his fast unto death on September, 20, 1932. There was gloom in the country. Gandhiji had staked his life over the acceptance or rejection by the Hindu society of the principle whether Depressed classes were part of the Hindus or separate from them. There were hectic activities to save Gandhiji's life and finally on the fifth day of the fast i.e. September 24, 1932, a complete agreement was reached. Both the streams of the Depressed classes, one owing allegiance to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and the other to M.C.Rajah, were willing parties to it. The caste Hindus were party to it through the assent and signatures of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. Prominent liberal leaders also signed it and gave the Yervada Pact their full support. A Conference was convened on September 25, 1932 under the Chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. The Conference adopted the following resolution drafted by Gandhiji:⁴¹

⁴⁰Ibid., p.167.

⁴¹Ibid., p.174.

'This Conference resolves that henceforth, among Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth, and those who have been so regarded hitherto, will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and other public institutions. This right will have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received much recognition before, to secure by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.'

(c) The Yervada Pact

The Constitutional issues on the safeguards to be provided to the Depressed classes were, ^{resolved} in the Yervada Jail between Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and other leaders and their resolution was embodied in a pact popularly known as the Yervada Pact or the Poona Pact. Accordingly, it was decided that the number of the reserved seats for the Depressed classes should be based on the proportion of the Depressed class population to be total population. Representation in the Central legislation was also taken up and it was agreed that 18 per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India be reserved for the Depressed classes.⁴²

The Yervada Pact was in a way a political agreement between two segments of Hindu population binding each other to joint electorates but it envisaged socio-religious reforms as well. An organisation by the name of 'All India Anti-untouchability League', was established to take up social reform and

⁴²Ibid., p.175.

educational development among the Depressed classes. This organisation was later on renamed as 'The Harijan ~~Week~~ Sangh'.

Clause 9 of the Yervada Pact pertained to the educational grants for the Depressed classes. It read as:⁴³

'In every province out of the educational grants, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to the members of the Depressed classes'.

The above educational clause of the Yervada Pact helped in the development of education of the Depressed classes to a great extent. Since education had already been transferred as a provincial subject and was to be under the charge of an Indian minister, the Indian National Congress strove for its implementation. With the intensification of the National movement for freedom, Congress gained popularity and gained power in several provincial assemblies as well. Thus it was obligatory for these provincial governments to pay heed to the educational development of the Depressed classes.

Educational Policies which helped the Development of Education among the Depressed Classes.

a. The Transference of Education as a Provincial Subject

In the year 1922, education was transferred as a Provincial subject under the control of an Indian Minister. Such a step was in fulfilment of a long drawn demand of the

⁴³Harijan Weekly, November 20, 1937 issue(quoted).

Indians and was helpful in the creation of a cooperative attitude in the public for the general cause of education. Secondly, demands of the national leaders for universalising primary education had stirred the masses and created a consciousness for educating their children. The author of the Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in India for the period 1927-1932 has described the public enthusiasm for education in the following words,⁴⁴

'A burst of enthusiasm swept children into school with unparalleled rapidity; an almost childlike faith in the value of education was implanted in the minds of people; parents were prepared to make almost every sacrifice for the education of their children; the seed of tolerance towards the less fortunate in life was begotten; ambitious and comprehensive programmes of development were formulated; which were calculated to fulfil the dreams of literate India; the Muslim community long backward in education pressed forward with eagerness to obliterate past deficiencies; enlightened women began to storm the citadel of old time prejudice against the education of the Indian girls'.

The upsurge for education emanating in 1922 had germinated 'the seeds of tolerance towards the less fortunate in life'. These were, of course, happy signs. Moreover, the order transferring education to the Provincial governments had advised the Governments 'to attach more importance, however, to the educational advancement of the Depressed and backward classes', and that 'the subject will receive special attention from Ministers'.⁴⁵ The official policy regarding the

⁴⁴Nurullah and Naik, op.cit., 1, p.620, (quoted)

⁴⁵Education in India under the new Reforms, Proceedings of Edu.B., Fe. 1920, No.201, dated 23rd Feb., 1920, Delhi.

education of the Depressed classes was further strengthened by such an advice. It may be recalled that the Education Commission, 1882 had recommended special measures for the education of these classes. Since then continuous efforts were made to spread education among these classes and official policies on education in India continued to stress on the need for paying special attention to these classes. But upto 1922, the policy making was in the hands of British officials. With the provincilization of education, the powers for policy making were transferred to the Indian Ministers. A special note to pay attention to the education of the Depressed classes would have meant continuance of special attention to these classes in the official policies.

b. The Legislations of Compulsory Primary Education

After World War I, the attitude of the British Government had softened towards the legislation of compulsory education. Vithalbhai Patel had taken up the unfinished task of Gokhale and as a result of his efforts, the Patel Act (1918) was passed by the Bombay Legislative Council. This was, of course, a landmark in the history of Primary education. Other provinces followed suit and by 1930, 12 Bills, eight of them official, were passed into law. Bombay, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Punjab, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Madras and Assam had legislated compulsory education Acts in their state jurisdictions.⁴⁶ But these laws did not take

⁴⁶ Desai, D.M., Compulsory Education in India, Bombay, Indian Institute of Education, 1953, p.144.

the total territories or jurisdictions of a province under compulsion. In many a place, only municipalities were covered; in some others, it was extended to rural areas; at some places the rules were so liberalised that anybody could escape the legislation and still in some places the legislation could not be made effective as no penalties were ever imposed. At the same time, in some quarters there was a greater demand for education and there were earnest appeals for the extension of the areas under compulsion. There was thus a mixed response to the movement for compulsory primary education. As to the response of the Depressed classes towards the legislation of the compulsory education, the information contained in the Chandarvarkar Committee's report shows these classes had not yet realized the advantages of compulsory education.

In 1921, the Government of Bombay had appointed 'Compulsory Education Committee' under the Chairmanship of Sir Narayan G. Chandarvarkar, to review the scope of extending compulsory education both in municipal and rural areas.⁴⁷ This committee drew up a questionnaire and circulated it widely. The following three questions of the questionnaire were to be answered by selected members of the

⁴⁷Ibid.

cultivators' class and Backward communities,⁴⁸

- (i) Are you in favour of the introduction of a system of compulsory Primary Education i.e. will you send your children, girls as well as boys, between ages of 6 and 11, to a school if there is one in your village or within a mile or two of your village?
- (ii) Do you think that the people of the class to which you belong would support a compulsory system of primary education and send their children to school if they have one there?
- (iii) If a compulsory system of primary education is introduced, do you understand that if any child absents himself from school without reason, his parent or guardian will be liable to be fined? And do you accept the system and do you think that people of your class will approve of it?

It has been reported that communities like Chambhar, Mahar and Mang were divided among themselves and the majority of them were against compulsion. In Konkan, communities like Vakkal, Kharvi, Mochi supported compulsion for boys only. One witness from the Mahar community said that books and slates should be supplied free. There was appreciable opposition to the system of compulsory education for either or both the sexes from such communities as Chamar, Metri, Sunnagar and others. In Gujarat and Sind, however, a very large majority of the Backward classes who were consulted opposed compulsion in the uncertain manner for boys as well as girls.⁴⁹ At a time when the public opinion favoured compulsory education for what reasons did the Depressed class respondents show reluctance to accept the idea? Though

⁴⁸Ibid. Pp.145-46.

⁴⁹Ibid.

the report does not deal with the reasons, a possible explanation could be sought by looking into the experiences of these communities in the neighbouring state of Baroda. The reasons for educational backwardness of these classes generally lay in the economic, social and political domains. There could not be much of difference between the Depressed class communities of these two neighbourly areas, i.e. the British India and the princely states, since the social placement of the Depressed classes at both the places was akin. The reports of the Education officers of the various districts of the state contain references to the causes of educational backwardness of these classes. From these reports some approximations into the causes could be arrived at.

As already discussed in the last chapter, the Maharaja of Baroda had introduced compulsory attendance as an experimental measure, in Amreli Taluka in March, 1893. For about twelve years, compulsory education was in force there. Finally it was generalised and made applicable to the whole of the state in 1906. Messers Saiyidain and Naik in their monograph on Compulsory Education in India have discussed the progress of Baroda Experiment. The authors have quoted extracts from the reports to point out the difficulties encountered in the case of Depressed classes and other backward classes for implementation of the scheme of compulsory primary education. Some of these extracts are as the following,⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Saiyidain, K.G., and others, Compulsory Education in India, UNESCO, 1952, Pp.77-78.

- (i) Children of the backward classes do not reach the fifth class but remain absent for a very long time paying fines, evading the law under one pretext or the other, leaving the school after the completion of the compulsory age'.
(from Education Officer, Baroda)
- (ii) The low percentage of Backward class children can be explained by the fact that these poor people being hard pressed by economic depression, prefer to avail themselves of the services of their children even at the risk of being fined. In the case of Antyaj (Depressed classes) children, there is opposition of forward classes to allow Antyaj students in schools which are housed in private buildings and temples.
(from Education Officer, Patna)
- (iii) 'The very fact that it is very difficult to make a correct census list of the children (of compulsory age) of the Backward classes affects the enrolment prejudicially'.
(from Education Inspector, Kadi)
- (iv) 'There is a peculiarity in this division that the population is divided into a large number of forward class and pretty large number of backward class people. The Backward classes never acquire literacy inspite of compulsion. Lapse into illiteracy has no meaning in their case. The forward classes are very careful to see that the backward classes should not learn anything and thereby remain under subjugation as of yore. Poor Backward classes are the only people to be fined and often their forward overlords do not hesitate to pay up their fines too'.
(from Education Inspector, Navsari)

The above extracts from the reports of the education officers do not show that the Depressed classes were disallowed education or were to be penalised for educating their children, they rather explain the causes of the slow expansion of education in these classes. The practical benefits of the enforcement of compulsory education laws to these classes were far below expectations. As could be seen the reasons for the slow expansion of education were almost apparently

the same as elsewhere in other British Provinces. The first negative factor in the expansion of education of these classes was their poverty. The majority of their people could hardly afford to spare children from the family economy and as a matter of economic need, even the little child^{ren} aged 6 to 10 years had to be made to work. The second reason appears to be that these classes were not very eager to send their children because education had not so far become a tradition in their families and so without understanding the implications of the legislation for their betterment, they would evade law on pretexts. The third negative factor especially in the case of Depressed classes was the dissuading attitude of the upper classes. The upper classes, economically being well off, would not mind even contributing to the payment of fines imposed upon the Depressed classes for not sending their children to the schools. This could be for two reasons i.e. to obtain a regular supply of cheap labour and also, perhaps, to save their children from being polluted by the touch of Depressed class children.

The reasons as explained above for the poor enrolment of the Depressed class pupils obviously point to some of the negative factors. Nevertheless, they should not be taken to mean that the legislation of compulsory education had no impact on accelerating the progress of education in these classes. The table IV below shows a comparative picture of the enrolments in 1917 and 1927 and it would be seen

from the additional enrolments shown in the columns 'Increase' that legislation for compulsory education had a positive effect on the enrolment position of the Depressed classes.

TABLE - IV

Depressed Class Pupils under Instruction
in 1917 and 1927 in the Major Provinces
of British India.

Province	Enrolment in 1917	Enrolment in 1927	Increase
Madras	120607	273926	153319
Bombay	30568	60260	29692
Bengal	80952	344179	263227
United Provinces	10924	94669	83745
Punjab	6906	19502	12596
Bihar and Orissa	19841	25006	5165
Central Provinces and Berar	26668	34531	7863

Source: Figures in the table drawn from the Seventh Quinquennial Review (1912-1917), Pp.204-209, and from the Report, Education in India in 1927-28, Calcutta, Govt. of India, Pp.42-45.

Separate figures of enrolment of the Depressed classes at the Primary stage are not available but the very fact that the majority of the Depressed class pupils did not go beyond primary classes shows that the bulk of the increase of enrolment must have been at the Primary stage itself. It is

seen from table IV that there was a general increase in the enrolment of the Depressed classes in all the provinces. To have comparative estimates, it would be seen that in the province of Madras, there were 273 Depressed class pupils in 1927 as against 120 in 1917; the number of pupils in Bombay had almost doubled; in Bengal, there was a tremendous progress in the sense that for every 81 pupils in 1917 there were 344 pupils studying in 1927; in the United Provinces 946 Depressed class pupils studied in 1927 against a number of 109 in 1917; in Punjab the number had almost trebled. The progress in the Provinces of Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar was rather slow. In Bihar and Orissa, the enrolments had increased only by 26% while in Central Province and Berar, the increase was by 25%.

c. The Hartog Committee on the Education of the Depressed Classes

As already discussed, the Simon Commission was appointed with the purpose to suggest amendments to the Government of India Act of 1919. Under section 84-A(3) of the Government of India Act of 1919, this Commission was required to report on the growth of education in British India and was also authorised to appoint, if necessary, an auxiliary committee for the purpose. Accordingly the Commission appointed an auxiliary committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Philip Hartog.⁵² The report of this

⁵²Nurullah and Naik, op.cit.1, p.622.

Committee is popularly known as the Hartog Committee Report, 1929. Commenting on the education of the Depressed classes, the Committee had observed:⁵³

'The largely increased enrolment in Primary schools indicates that the old time apathy of the masses is breaking down..... Efforts have been made to improve the condition of the Depressed classes and those classes are beginning to respond to that effort and to assert their right to education.....
.....
.....
'the policy of separate schools was wrong because (i) it tends necessarily to emphasize the difference between Depressed classes and the caste Hindus, (ii) and because it largely and unnecessarily increases the cost of compulsory education'.

The Committee had as well insisted that the Harijan pupils should not only be admitted to common schools but also given equality of treatment. It had observed:⁵⁴

'We desire to point out in conclusion that it will not be sufficient for Government merely to insist on the admission of the children of the Depressed classes to the ordinary schools. It will be necessary to see that the regulations are carried out in the spirit as well as in the letter, and that the children are treated on equal terms in all respects with the children of other communities.'

The Hartog Committee had gone a step further in recommending the appointment of teachers belonging to the Depressed classes in the common schools on a fairly large scale. It said,⁵⁵

⁵³Report, 'Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol.II, Delhi, Govt. of India, Pp.244-46(quoted).

⁵⁴Nurullah & Naik, op.cit, 1, Pp.725-26.

⁵⁵Ibid.

'steps should be taken to ensure that a certain number of suitably qualified and trained teachers chosen from those classes should be recruited to the staff of ordinary schools.'

In addition, the Committee had also recommended some other steps, ^{such} as the representation of the Depressed classes on the local boards etc. as the measures for encouraging education in these classes. ⁵⁶

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

The period 1922-32 was more characterized by political developments, with implications for educational development than educational progress for the Depressed classes. It was during this period that the Depressed classes had raised their demands for recognition as a minority and they had then acceded to Gandhi's philosophy of co-existence with Hindu Society. The fruits of their political labour for the period could be seen from a contrast of their status before the period and after the period. Whereas formerly they had to depend upon the sympathy of caste Hindus for their elevation, now they were in a position that the caste Hindus themselves felt the need to do something for them and to retain them within the Hindu fold. The Yervada Pact could be called as a bond of co-existence wherein the superior party promised to safeguard the interests of its backward counterpart and assured to take such steps as would uplift these downtrodden classes. Clause 9 of the Yervada Pact pertained to

educational provisions. Therefore, it could be said that the political events of the period had paved the way for a rapid expansion of education in these classes. In so far as the impact of educational policies is concerned, it may be said that the provincialization of education, the legislations for compulsory primary education had led to an expansion of education in the country and their impact on the expansion of education among the Depressed classes was generally good. As already mentioned earlier, the provincial governments were advised to take special care for the education of the Depressed classes and other backward communities. Therefore, some of the provincial governments had sought immediate steps to promote education among the Depressed classes. The position of the educational progress of these classes in the different provinces was as the following.

a. Madras

In Madras Province, the Government took the following steps for developing education among the Depressed classes:⁵⁷

- (i) The appointment of a Commissioner of Labour (with seventeen District Labour Officers to assist him) and entrusting him with the task of encouraging the education of the Depressed classes;
- (ii) the insistence on the right of Depressed class pupils for admission into all public schools;

⁵⁷Ibid., p.726.

- (iii) refusal of grants-in-aid to private schools which did not admit Depressed class pupils;
- (iv) the removal of all public schools to places which would be accessible to the Depressed classes;
- (v) Institution of large number of stipends and scholarships to Depressed class pupils;
- (vi) remission of fees;
- (vii) special provision for the training of Depressed class teachers.

The Madras Labour Department provided special facilities by opening elementary schools, night schools, maintaining hostels and boarding houses, awarding grants to pupils and stipends to teachers under training. In the year 1927-28 alone, the Labour Department awarded 610 educational, 110 industrial and 10 commercial scholarships for the pupils of the Depressed classes.⁵⁸ In the same year, 111 schools held in religious places, from which the Depressed class children were excluded, were removed to places accessible to them. In addition 128 schools located in private buildings were also shifted to places accessible to the Depressed classes. Thus, it has been reported that out of 16,419 schools, under public management, 14,287 were accessible to the children of Depressed classes.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Report, Education in India in 1927-28, Calcutta, Govt. of India, Pp.42-45.

By 1932, the Government of Madras had framed the policy to get the pupils of the Depressed classes admitted in existing schools. Only in such places where Depressed class pupils were denied admission or had no excess to the existing schools and in those places where there were no educational facilities, separate schools were established.⁶⁰ Moreover, the deserving students of these classes were being helped by the grant of scholarships, boarding grants and stipends.

b) Bombay

The Director of Public Instruction, Bombay in his report for the year 1927 supported the view that the maintenance of special schools was not in the interest of the Depressed classes as they might perpetuate the conditions of untouchability from which the Depressed classes were seeking to escape but simultaneously the Director did not favour the idea of closing all the special schools immediately. The Director favoured the admission of Depressed class pupils in ordinary schools from another view point i.e. by securing their admission in ordinary schools not only the prejudice against them would gradually diminish but by their receiving education with the more advanced castes, they would be more likely to progress.⁶¹

A committee appointed by the Government of Bombay to enquire into the condition of the Depressed classes made

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

the following recommendations.⁶²

- (i) Re-affirmation of the Government policy that there should be equality of treatment of all classes of children in publicly managed Institutions.
- (ii) Encouragement of separate schools as opposed to segregate schools for Depressed classes.
- (iii) More frequent interchange of teachers in common and separate schools.
- (iv) Abandonment of titles 'Depressed classes' and 'low caste' schools.
- (v) Institution of additional scholarships and relaxation of age limit in certain conditions.
- (vi) Increasing the number of teachers belonging to Backward classes in primary schools.

It has been reported that the recommendations were acceptable to the Government but the degree of success to which they were carried out varied from Inspectorate to Inspectorate.⁶³ In the year 1930, the Government appointed a Backward class officer and provided him with staff to watch over the interests of the Backward classes. It also provided reservation of seats in educational institutions to the pupils of Depressed classes.⁶⁴

⁶²Report, Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, op.cit., 53.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Report. The Progress of Education in India, 1930-31, Delhi, Govt. of India, p.49.

c) Bengal

The Educational progress among the Depressed classes was quite encouraging in Bengal during this period. In the year 1922-23, the number of pupils belonging to the Depressed classes rose from 96,552 to 1,28,144, a notable increase for a single year. Apart from the Governmental help, 'non-official bodies i.e. missionary societies, the Hindu Relief Society, the Society for the Improvement of Backward classes and the Boards of Santhal education were doing excellent work in maintaining and aiding schools for the Depressed classes and aboriginals.⁶⁵ The quinquennium on the Educational Progress for the period 1927-28 reported with satisfaction that education was spreading faster among the Backward than among other classes. Furthermore, it was reported that the increase in the number of Depressed class girls at school was particularly satisfactory.⁶⁶

d) United Provinces

In the united provinces, the majority of pupils belonging to Depressed classes were receiving instruction in the ordinary schools. In 1927-28 the number of special schools for them was 869 and about 27020 Depressed class pupils were enrolled in them.⁶⁷ A Committee appointed to enquire into and report on the state of primary education

⁶⁵Report, op.cit., 59.

⁶⁶Report., op.cit., 53.

⁶⁷Report, op.cit., 59.

of boys of educationally backward communities had recommended certain measures in 1927. In the light of its recommendations, the following rules had been made for the District Boards:

- (i) In areas occupied by members of the Depressed classes, the board should establish ordinary primary schools in preference to establishing special schools,
- (ii) The board may appoint a supervisor for Depressed class pupils provided he is fit for the post and belongs to the Depressed classes.
- (iii) In the schools situated in the localities of Depressed classes, the teachers should, as far as possible, be drawn from the Depressed classes.⁶⁸

The reports for the period 1927-32 show that in the United provinces 'the practice of boys of the Depressed classes sitting outside the class room or in a separate corner had disappeared by that time'.⁶⁹

e) Punjab

In the year 1922-23, the Punjab Government had addressed letters to local bodies suggesting measures for attracting members of the Backward or Depressed classes into schools such as the provision of free school books and materials.⁷⁰ The records for the subsequent periods show positive trends

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Report, op.cit., 53.

⁷⁰Report, Indian Education in 1922-23, Calcutta, Bureau of Education, 1924.

in enrolment. The award of scholarships and other concessions had much been appreciated. The government of Punjab had also taken steps to encourage training of Depressed class teachers. The report for the quinquennium 1927-32 show that as many as 40 students from the Depressed classes were being trained in the government Normal school, Jullender alone.⁷¹

f) Bihar and Orissa

The progress of education among the Depressed classes was rather slow in the province of Bihar and Orissa as compared to several other provinces, But nevertheless, the provincial authorities had started looking into the problem. Many of the children were being admitted into ordinary schools. As reported in 1928, in Orissa the caste prejudice was gradually breaking down and there was some increase of enrolment. But in some parts the prejudice was strong and boys of the untouchable caste had to sit apart in as many of the ordinary schools and outside the school altogether when it was held in a private 'Bathika' (residence) or temple. To stimulate education among these classes, the government of Orissa had appointed one senior and two junior officers.⁷² Explaining the reasons for slow progress, the report for the period 1927-32 mentions, 'the enrolment figures in Bihar have remained practically stationary, but

⁷¹Nurullah & Naik, op.cit.1, Pp.725-26.

⁷²Op.cit.,59.

Depressed class pupils are now found in larger number in ordinary schools in which teaching is more efficient than in the special schools reserved for them.⁷³

9) Central Provinces and Berar

In the year 1922-23, an interesting step taken by the Government of Central Provinces, following the recommendations of a special committee, was of granting to teachers of elementary schools a bonus of Rs.3/- for every child of Depressed class successfully prepared for the primary certificate examinations.⁷⁴ As would be seen from the tables on enrolment for the period, the progress of their education was not every encouraging. The report for the period 1927-28 enumerated the following reasons for the slow progress.⁷⁵

- (i) The Apathy of parents;
- (ii) Need for earning money;
- (iii) Lazy habits of mind and body;
- (iv) Neglect by teachers.

The Government had planned steps to discourage the opening of schools especially meant for the children of the Depressed classes and also to encourage their admission in ordinary schools.

⁷³Op.cit.,53.

⁷⁴Report, op.cit.,70.

⁷⁵Report,op.cit.59.

A Review of the Educational Progress
of the Depressed Classes upto 1932.

The provincial reports on the educational progress of the Depressed classes show that the various provincial governments had taken different steps to promote education among these classes. An estimate of the success of these measures can be had from table V on the enrolment of the Depressed class pupils in the various provinces during the period.

TABLE - V

Depressed Class Pupils under Instruction
in 1922, 1927 and 1932.

Province	Enrolment in 1922	Enrolment in 1927	Enrolment in 1932
Madras	157113	273926	338578
Bombay	36543	60260	69186
Bengal	96552	344179	440054
United Provinces	59873	94669	125965
Punjab	3732	19502	34664
Bihar and Orissa	15096	25006	24971
Central Provinces and Berar.	28910	34531	47501
Total	397819	806658	1080659

Source: Quinquennial Reviews and General Educational tables for the period.

It would be seen from table-V that there was an increase in the enrolment of the Depressed class pupils in all the provinces throughout the period. Whereas the overall increase shows a positive trend in the educational progress of these classes, it is difficult to arrive at any conclusions in the absence of the population figures of these classes for the respective areas and also due to lack of information on the stagewise distribution of Depressed class pupils over a period of successive years. The report for the period 1927-28 mention that during the year 1927-28, there was an increase of 7.9% in the enrolment of the Depressed class pupils as against an increase of 5.5% in the total enrolments for the general population. But at the same time, the percentage of Depressed class pupils to their population was 3% as against 4.74% for pupils from the general population of the country. From these figures, it can only be deduced that during this period, the pace of educational progress of these classes was better than the average and it held the promises that the wide gap caused due to the educational backwardness of the Depressed classes could be filled up if due attention was paid to the education of these communities.

Secondly, the pace of educational progress of the Depressed classes differed from Province to Province. Bengal took the lead in expanding education among these classes. Bombay, Madras and United Provinces followed Bengal and the increase in enrolments in these provinces speak of the

achievements of the provincial governments in this matter. A review of the steps planned by the provincial governments to accelerate the development of education among the Depressed classes in the light of the increase in enrolment figures for the various provinces would show that much of the hinderance to the promotion of education of these classes was due to the social resistences. Once the voluntary organisations took up their cause or the general public accepted the admission of Depressed class pupils in the common schools at par with other caste children, the Depressed classes reacted quickly and the enrolments of their pupils increased. Incentives and provisions which facilitated education by reducing its cost factor on the parents also attracted more numbers.

In the absence of any information on the stagewise enrolment of the Depressed class pupils, it is difficult to know the state of progress at the secondary and higher levels of education for these classes. But it appears from the reports that most of the Depressed class pupils did not continue their education beyond the lower primary stage. A great hinderance to the development of secondary and higher education among these classes was the absence of special hostels for the Depressed class pupils in the towns and cities and also the lack of educational institutions providing secondary and higher education in the rural areas.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Bahishkrit Hatkarni Sabha and the Depressed classes Education Society had rightly sensed that the establishment of hostels for the Depressed class pupils was a pre-requisite step for inducing these classes to higher education.
